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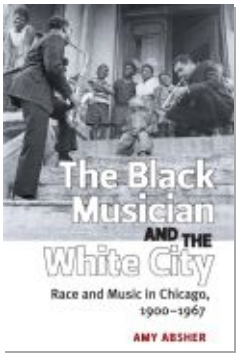
Chapter 2: From South to South Side: Musicians in 1940s Chicago



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CHAPTER 2

From South to South Side

Musicians in 1940s Chicago

In the early 1940s, African American musicians arrived in Chicago by train. They disembarked at the Illinois Central Railroad station on the edge of downtown and the South Side "black belt." In comparison to their homes in the southern United States, the speed of the city was shocking and they felt confused by the crowds of people. Just crossing the street would have been life threatening due to the velocity of taxis and trucks rounding street corners. If they arrived at night, the migrants first noticed the city's lights and the businesses that never seemed to close. If the migrants arrived during the day and it was summertime, the smell of the paper mills and the slaughterhouses was overwhelming.

For many of the musicians, Chicago was the only city in their minds. Throughout their lives they had been connected to Chicago through the railroad; the Caterpillar company, which made the farm equipment in use by the 1940s; blues records that were pressed and recorded in the city; and the catalogues from Sears and Montgomery Ward, through which they bought their instruments.[1] Between 1942 and 1945, the U.S. Navy recruited over 5,000 Black musicians, from across the country, to play in military orchestras. All 5,000 were stationed at the Great Lakes Training Station and took their weekend leaves in Chicago.[2] Other musicians were migrating to the city for wartime jobs. According to blues guitarist B. B. King, Black musicians felt that if they could save up enough money, then they could move to Chicago, where they might have a chance to make it as professional musicians.[3] What the musicians, and other migrants, found upon arriving in Chicago was a landscape largely shaped by

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uniquely urban forms of segregation, which was evident the minute they arrived in the city.

One of these wartime migrants was guitarist and singer Muddy Waters. Stepping off the train in Chicago in 1943, Waters felt as if he had entered a foreign country. "I wish you could've seen me," he told *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1978. "I got off the train and it looked like this was the fastest place in the world: cabs dropping fares, horns blowing, the peoples walking so fast."[4] "I had some people [in Chicago]," Waters explained, "but I didn't know where they was. I didn't know nothing."[5] "But I figured if anyone else was living in the city," he told *Down Beat* in 1975, "I could make it there too."[6] For example, he knew that musician Robert Nighthawk had left Mississippi for Chicago and had quickly cut a record.[7] The presence of other musicians in the city made a difference to Waters. "If you don't know nobody, you're lost, you know," he explained.[8]

In coming to Chicago, Waters was seeking an established network of family from his home on the Stovall Plantation in Mississippi and of musicians who played music similar to his. It is not surprising that he knew people in the city or that he came to Chicago in part because he knew people there. By 1930, there were 234,000 African Americans in Chicago.[9] Due to a surge in migration during World War II, 20 percent of the southern-born population of African Americans was living outside the South by 1950. Scholars of this issue have determined that these migrants were not only displaced farmers, like Muddy Waters, and industrial workers, but also urban, educated, and occupationally skilled men and women.[10] The musicians reflected the diversity of the migration. While many were blues musicians from the rural South, there were also musicians from the southern cities, trained in classical and religious music, migrating to Chicago. The history of the musicians and segregation demonstrates that class, education level, and genre of music were to a point irrelevant in Chicago. The musicians were all subject to the same racial boundaries and laws of propriety—such as segregated public schools, limited employment, and limited housing—as any other African American in wartime Chicago.

When the musicians arrived in the 1940s, they found a city struggling to balance the tradition of municipal white supremacy and the demands for Black dignity and equality. Segregation in Chicago, as it was throughout much of the North, was a social reality enforced by violence, politics, market practices, and public policies. Though, unlike the South, it lacked whites-only signs over water fountains and was a place where Blacks were

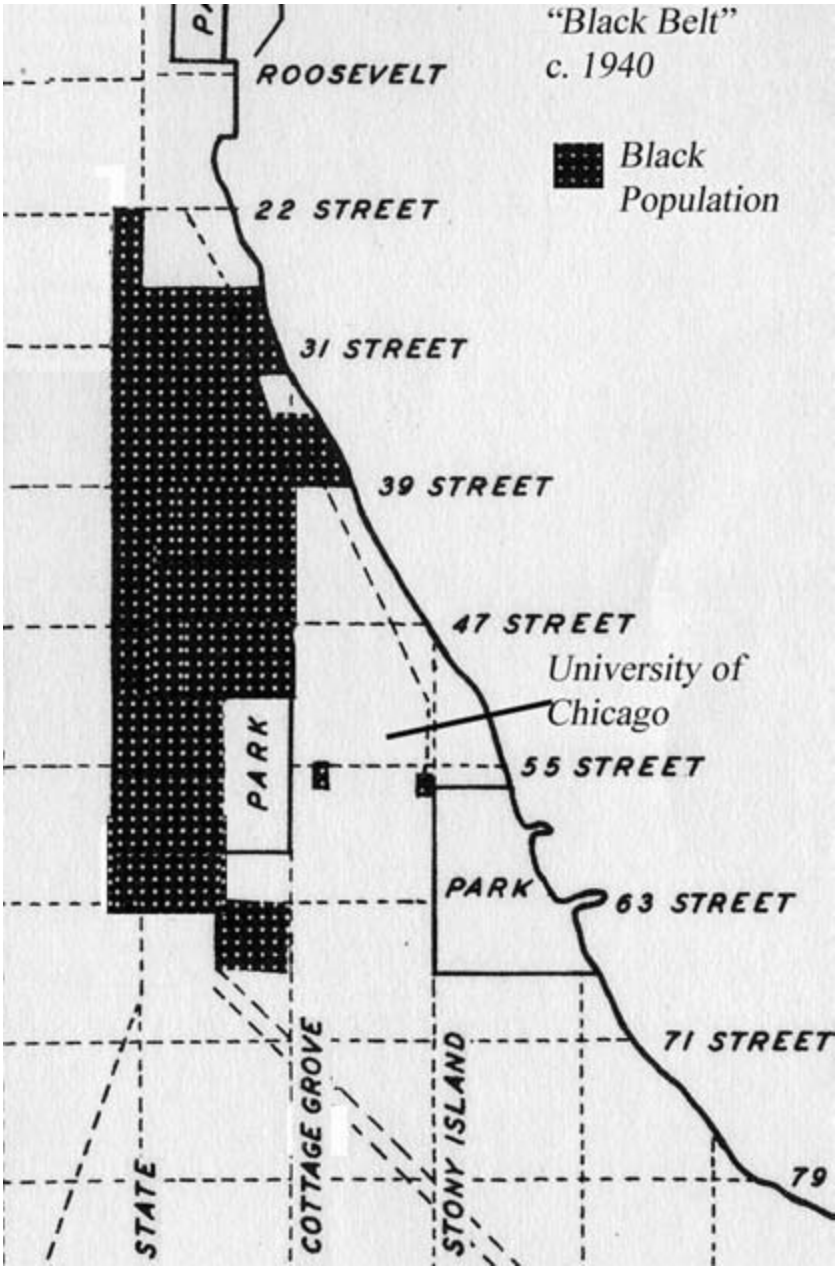
free to vote, Chicago in the 1940s was a city where African Americans constantly pressed up against racial traditions. Wartime migrants to Chicago could expect substandard education and housing. They were given the worst and most dangerous jobs in the factories and slaughterhouses with no hope of ever being promoted.[11] The only physical places the majority of whites and Blacks shared were buses, streetcars, and trains.[12]

To survive the various manifestations of segregation in the city, the musicians migrating to Chicago in the 1940s had to form a community whose structure differed from what they had known in the South, and to draw on the strength of the existing musician community in the city. Many of the migrant musicians thought that the best way to accomplish this was by banding together in performances, establishing music programs in the public schools, and joining existing professional organizations like the National Association of Negro Musicians and the American Federation of Musicians union local. All of these activities added to the African American-led institutions that were the foundation of the Black cultural sphere on the South Side. Others in the migration survived the city by walking a thin line between being union members in good standing and questioning Black-led institutions. The migrant musicians' experiences in Chicago in the 1930s and 1940s reveal that the Black-led institutions were both sanctuaries from segregation and prisons built and maintained by segregation.

CHICAGO-BOUND: MUSICIANS IN THE SOUTH

For the rural musicians, there were numerous reasons to migrate to Chicago. The most obvious push factors were changes in the southern economy and the threat of racial violence. In the case of bootlegger and sharecropper Muddy Waters, who migrated to Chicago in 1943, the arrival of tractors in the Mississippi Delta created tension in his relationship with the white plantation owners. After several years of operating the tractor, Waters believed he deserved the same pay that the lead man received because they were both operating machines, which meant that Waters thought of himself as a skilled laborer. Waters asked for a raise, and in so doing entered into a conflict with the overseer. The overseer's anger surprised and frightened Waters. He knew that he would not be able to work on the plantation any longer.

The overseer was Ellis Rhett—whom Stovall residents remembered as



Map 5. This map demonstrates the "black belt" by 1940. Based on maps created by the Social Science Research Committee at the University of Chicago, From the Map Library, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. Created by the author.

being "mean" and as "the kind of man that gave the South a bad name." The grandmother of Waters's wife warned Waters of the impending violence. She knew Rhett had once beaten a tenant with a horse bridle. She told Waters to leave to save his life. The promise of violence pushed him to abandon the plantation two days later, carrying one suit of clothing and a Sears Silvertone guitar.[13]

Statistics suggest that Waters was wise to leave the plantation. In Mississippi, it was not uncommon for lynchings to be announced in the local papers so that country folk would have time to come to town to watch the ritualized murder. The resulting scenes of bodies hanging from trees, which Billie Holiday gave voice to in the song "Strange Fruit," often were photographed and sold as commemorative postcards. Statistics indicate that between Reconstruction and the emergence of the modern civil-rights era in the 1950s, there were 539 African Americans lynched in Mississippi. Between 1930 and 1950, there were 33 lynchings reported in the state, more than in any other state. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that Waters's home on the Stovall Plantation was in the Mississippi Delta. This area became infamous in later decades for the lynchings of teenager Emmett Till in 1955 and civil-rights workers Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney in 1964. No doubt the statistics and the media coverage of the violence underestimated the number of individuals killed. The threat of violence was enough of a reason for men like Waters to move.[14]

The fact that Waters took with him a Sears Silvertone guitar while fleeing the South is also worth noting. Most likely, it was the most expensive item he owned. In addition, it indicates that he saw himself as a musician and that he thought the guitar would be essential in Chicago.

The guitar method developed in the Delta distinguished the music of this area from that in other parts of the United States. The vital advance was the way the Delta players combined rhythmic elements with melodic slide techniques in their compositions. The existing recordings, such as "Preachin' the Blues," and documentary evidence attribute this change to Son House, who developed the style for which Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters became famous. These men—House, Johnson, and Waters—were the masters of the style because they could fret and slide the bottleneck in such a way that they gave the instrument speech-like inflections.[15] These innovations made the guitar the essential instrument for this type of music. The guitar's portability also made it ideal for the migrant musician traveling to Chicago.

Just as Waters's guitar came from Chicago, so too did most of the recorded music in the Mississippi Delta. Waters's own personal collection of recordings was an important link between Chicago and the South in that the majority of the records were recorded in Chicago. He owned records by Bill Monroe, the King of Bluegrass, and by the blues players who were remaking African American music at the time. The record collection suggests that Waters was not rooting his music only in the Black traditions of the South. Rather, he was listening to the cutting edge of white music and the musical transition between Delta blues and the electric blues from Chicago before he migrated there.

For example, one of Waters's favorite performers, Arthur Crudup, was a migrant from Mississippi who turned to playing music on the streets of Chicago because he could not find any other work. In 1940, he began recording for RCA Victor's Bluebird label. His 1941 recordings, which were part of Waters's record collection, featured an electric guitar. However, even after recording, Crudup continued to do menial work and farm labor in an attempt to earn enough money to return to Mississippi because he could not make a living from his music. It is doubtful that Crudup ever made more than ten dollars from his recordings, the amount paid to him at the recording sessions. Though Elvis Presley covered his songs, such as "That's All Right Mama," he never received any royalties.

Because it included Crudup's, Charley Patton's, and Bill Monroe's music, Waters's record collection is evidence of the transition in music and the transition of Waters into a man who could picture himself migrating to Chicago and becoming a professional musician. He noted that he learned to play his Sears guitar in part by listening to the Chicago recordings, which permitted him to build a persona—that of Muddy Waters the professional musician. When he listened to the Chicago recordings, he was listening to his future.

The changes solidifying in Waters's identity were part of a larger cultural movement in the Mississippi Delta under way at the time. The jukebox playlists in the public houses in Clarksdale, Mississippi, the largest town in the Delta, reflected this cultural shift. Artists on the jukeboxes included jazz greats like Louis Jordan, Earl Hines, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie, all of whom were prominent in the Chicago scene. The jukeboxes recorded the number of requests made for each song, revealing that the top-two requests for 1941 through 1942 were for jazz musicians recording and working in Chicago at the time: Count Basie's "Going to Chicago" was number one and Louis Jordan's "Pine Top Boogie Woogie" was num-

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ber two.[16] Other important Chicago artists, such as Memphis Minnie and Artie Shaw, also appeared on the jukebox lists. The jukebox songs suggest that Mississippi culture was far from isolated and that popular music recorded in Chicago was a prominent feature of the Delta soundscape. This is in part because Chicago was a geographic hub for recording and distribution, but it was also the city where African American artists recorded and the primary city in the minds of those thinking of migrating.[17]

The African American migrant community and the community in the South recognized the power of this music, as their choice to hide and suppress certain recordings reveals. For example, "Bilbo is Dead," released on Aristocrat (the original name of Chicago's independent recording company Chess) in 1947, celebrated the death of Mississippi Senator Theodore G. Bilbo by suggesting it was a great day for Blacks.[18] Dozens of other songs protested racism, such as those concerning the Scottsboro Boys' trial, and lynchings, such as those chronicling the murder of Emmett Till. The political albums were not sold outside the Black community and were absent from the radio and jukeboxes because African Americans feared the racial violence that might follow the playing of the albums in public.[19]

A survey conducted in the Delta by Fisk University sociologists in the early 1940s focused on the reasons that audiences chose certain songs. The survey asked the following questions: "What kind of music do you like best?" "What kind of songs do you know?" "What do you like to dance to?" "Who is your favorite musician?" And, "What is your favorite song?" The lists of favorite songs and artists compiled in the jukeboxes and in the survey reveal that many of the songs were recent releases. Among them were blues recordings by Lemon Jefferson, Memphis Minnie, and local Mississippi hero Charley Patton. Along with recordings by Gene Autry, Hank Williams, Count Basie, and Louis Jordan. The only two songs in the survey that mention a city in the title are "Sweet Home Chicago" and "Going to Chicago."[20]

The survey revealed a racial pride among the audience. Repeatedly, in answering the survey questions, the informants kept insisting that they liked music by Black performers precisely because the artists were Black. The sociologists conducting the survey saw this as a sign of the rapid social changes occuring in the Delta, making the song preferences and lyrics a protest against the "bulwark of racial segregation." The informants were suggesting a growing race consciousness in the Delta because they identified certain music as "Negro music." One of the informants even went so far as to say, "Always will like Negro music, because that's my race

and they can beat white singing any day." Another informant contended, "Negroes have a better voice for music. And too, they is my own color."[21] African American musicians shared this belief. For example, Muddy Waters believed that he heard skin color. "I pictured so many people from the records. I knowed their color. I knowed their size. When I sees 'em, I was all disappointed. Charley Patton, he had that big voice. I thought the dude weighted two hundred fifty, you know, and he's big and black, much blacker'n I am. When I seen him, he was brown-skinned and neat. I said, 'It can't be.' He's a little man, pretty, yellow-skinned. Say, 'Hey, this man can't be doing this.'"[22]

What is apparent in the survey was that African Americans living in the Delta had a sense of their own importance, and the cultural importance of African Americans, in part because of the fame of musicians, which paralleled the growth of Black culture and consciousness then underway in the northern cities. African Americans in the Delta did not know the troubles of migrant artists such as Arthur Crudup. All the listeners knew was that he had moved to Chicago and recorded. The more the Mississippi audience participated in the Chicago/Delta cultural network, characterized by migration and the exchange of goods such as music, the more this racial pride and this vision of Chicago asserted themselves. The music from Chicago was a pull factor that made migration more likely, but it also increased feelings of self-worth and thereby increased the threat of racial violence.

CHICAGO BREAKDOWN

The southern wave of musicians—largely blues musicians—entered Chicago not as virtuosos, but as wartime workers during World War II. The Black migrants filled the warehouses, factories, and truck cabs by day, and at night they became musicians and audience members. For example, Muddy Waters arrived on a Saturday. By the following Monday he had a job in the Joanna Western Mills paper factory making cardboard boxes and loading forklifts. He started out on the swing shift. It was the first time in his life he had worked eight hours a day. Though he had spent his entire life working on a cotton plantation, he admitted that laboring in Chicago was "the heaviest jive you ever saw in your life." After a week, he had made nearly fifty dollars, which motivated him to take overtime. Working twelve hours a day, he brought home a hundred dollars a week.

"Goodgodamighty, look at the money I got," he thought, or perhaps exclaimed. "I have picked that cotton all the year, chop cotton all year," he explained, "and I didn't draw a hundred dollars."[23]

Men like Waters did not always keep the factory jobs for long. "I got a job at the paper mill . . . and then I got a little job workin' for a firm that made parts for radios." Eventually, he drove a moving truck and worked the numerous apartment evictions on the West and South Sides. This job provided the opportunity to acquire cheap furniture and to locate available apartments in the overcrowded city.[24] Besides his day job, he worked seven nights a week playing at house parties, making five dollars a night.[25]

Other possibilities for the newly arrived musicians included playing on the street in the Maxwell Street Market District, a former Jewish neighborhood on the Near West Side. Guitar players in the Market District had to rent electric current from nearby apartments and run cords down to street level. The street, rather than the nightclub, became a classroom as the 1940s generation of African American migrant musicians learned to play the electric blues by watching other musicians.[26]

Playing on the street was not a possibility in the Chicago winters. The primarily blues musicians took advantage of the cold weather by pragmatically expanding their cultural reach beyond the "black belt" and the small African American settlement on the Near West Side by playing on the city's trains and streetcars.[27] Changing the location of Black music in the city took African American culture beyond the carefully constructed racial boundaries of the slum. Traditional music venues, such as nightclubs and symphony halls, had been segregated since the early twentieth century. Playing on the street and in the streetcars was a creative way of violating segregation standards by way of claiming new places for music.

The pragmatic attitude toward segregation, and toward the musicians' union regulations and traditions, was pervasive among blues and jazz musicians, who consistently breached the color line and appropriated space for Black music. Playing on Maxwell Street, which led to living around the market area, thus expanding the "black belt" outside of the South Side, and the routine of playing while riding public transportation when the weather turned bad were only part of the schemes and strategies the musicians developed. They also practiced the art of "scabbing"—playing non-union jobs—by showing up at a bar and requesting permission to play a few songs. Scabbing challenged the physical boundaries of the Black cultural influence by contesting white-controlled space in the city, as well

as the control of the segregated music union over the musicians' professional lives.

Jimmy Rogers, who played harmonica and guitar with Muddy Waters, learned "scabbing" from Johnny "Daddy Stovepipe" Watson. Rogers recalled:

> During the time I was living on Lake Street—1752 West Lake Street—and Stovepipe he knew the city just like a book, you know—all on the South Side, West Side, North Side—all over so I would follow him around—we'd call it scabbin—you know. You hit here, you just set up with asking this guy that owns the club if he wouldn't mind you playing a few numbers—quite naturally it was good for business, he would say okay. You'd play a number or two, they'd like it—you'd pick up a buck here, a buck there, you know. One club was 708 E. 47th Street—we'd play there during the time I was scabbin.'[28]

Men like these had to play house parties and on the street because segregation in the music venues resulted in an insufficient number of jobs, and because of great competition between Black musicians for union work in the clubs that contracted with Black performers.[29]

Further complicating the migrants' ability to make a living from music in the early 1940s was the American Federation of Musicians union's ban on new recordings. The ban was due to the rationing of acetate and the controversy over royalties, and lasted from August 1942 through November 1944. This made for an active club circuit for the well-known recording stars, but not for the newly arrived musicians from the South, whom the audiences had never heard before.[30] Performers such as Bill Broonzy, Tampa Red, and Memphis Minnie held recording contracts, which gave them the lion's share of live gigs in Chicago's Black music venues.

For Black women, public performance was a slightly different situation than it was for the men. There were women performing in the clubs, such as Memphis Minnie, who was one of the first musicians to adapt the electric guitar to blues, and jazz trumpeter Dolly Jones, who regularly bested male musicians in "cutting contests."[31] Sister Rosetta Tharp paralleled Memphis Minnie by introducing electric guitar to gospel music.[32] In addition, women were the majority of accompanists in the Black churches, as well as the majority of attendees at the churches.[33] For many female musicians, however, public performance was impossible. It was

not considered appropriate for women to perform in public. For example, Estelle "Mama" Yancey did not begin performing regularly in public until she was in her seventies. Both her father and later her husband, famed boogie-woogie pianist Jimmy Yancey, forbade her from performing outside the home.[34]

The difficulties of employment for African American musicians differed greatly from those of European American musicians in Chicago during the late 1930s. Many of the white musicians felt a deep sense of angst in balancing their need to make a living with their need to be artists. These men tied their status as musicians to their craftsmanship and not their commercial abilities. For example, one man explained what it took to be commercially successful.

> How do you get ahead in this business? Well, you don't have to play very well. All you have to do is be willing to be commercial. Know all the old songs and just stick to the melody and play with a corny tune.[35]

Another saw extensive contact with the audience as a detriment to the development of artistry because the musicians had to not just play but entertain saying:

> we do an imitation of Rube Goldberg, that guy in the comics. We all stand in a line and I goose the guy in front of me, he breaks a phonograph record over the next guy's head, and that guy squirts the leader with a seltzer bottle. Sounds disgusting, doesn't it?[36]

The worst job, from the European American perspective, was "strolling."

> We stroll, you know, walk from table to table and "play your favorite tune." There's nothing lower than strolling. That's as bad as you can get. They tell me it was all the rage during the 'twenties. Man, it's horrible. Of course it pays like crazy, but it sure is a drag.[37]

Black musicians, on the other hand, rarely expressed being unfulfilled as artists *because* they had found work. Nor did they protest against close proximity to the audiences on the street corners. This leaves open the possibility the Black musicians were able to fulfill their artistic ambitions while working, or else the struggle to make a living was all encompassing, making their goals center on finding work rather than on being art-

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ists. After all, playing in a "strolling" band or a comedy band meant that the European Americans were working and not playing on the streets or begging for work as in "scabbing." White musicians only reported being unemployed as a result of a conflict with the musicians' union or as a result of moving to Chicago and having to wait out the standard six months before the union would allow them to work as musicians.

The differences between Chicago's white and Black musicians went beyond work patterns. The impact of segregation also manifested itself in health disparities. There appears to have been no large difference in the primary causes of death for white and African American musicians. The top three causes of death were virtually the same for both groups: heart disease, cancer, and pneumonia. However, African American musicians were on average more than six times more likely to die from violent death than white musicians.[38] In addition, Black musicians were more than three times more likely to die from tuberculosis or a rheumatic heart condition than white musicians.[39] Within the musician population, although relatively small,[40] the higher rates of tuberculosis, rheumatic heart disease, and violent death among African American musicians suggests the power of poverty and segregation in Chicago. Each of these causes of death can be directly linked to inadequate housing, diet, and medical care indicative of individuals living at the bottom of a social structure. These conditions may have originated in the South, but segregation in the city did not help. Rather, the city ensured poor living conditions, and segregation in the union meant fewer and lower-paying jobs for African American musicians. The interaction between the social structure and the opportunity structure contributed to African American musicians' living, on average, twelve years less than the average white musician.[41] What can be surmised from the comparison of the Black and the white musicians is that there were two Chicagos. This is not a surprise, but it does illustrate that race was a critical factor in terms of the Black musicians' experience.

BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN: LIFE IN THE SEGREGATED UNION

The musicians migrating to Chicago in the 1940s found that the musicians' union played an important part in maintaining the differences between the white musicians and the Black musicians. In 1902, Black musicians in Chicago, hoping to secure pay and job security, petitioned

to join the American Federation of Musicians. The city's white musicians refused to allow Black members in their local, but did permit the Black musicians to form their own local.

The formation of the Black local reflected the political atmosphere in which it was born. In the first decades of the twentieth century, it was common for African Americans in Chicago to be refused membership and services throughout the city. Whereas in the nineteenth century, Black community leaders refused to form autonomous institutions for fear of endorsing segregation, Black leaders in the early twentieth century purposely built autonomous institutions as a way of resisting segregation through the establishment of race consciousness.[42] The rejection by the white local may seem to have forced them to form the Black local. Yet, they did have a choice. They could have formed a local that was dependent on the white local. Instead, they demanded a local with the same rights as the white local, suggesting that they were attempting to take control of their situation through organizing and defense.

Even though the union bylaws gave the two locals equal access to the city, a system of segregation, similar to those in other music union towns like Los Angeles,[43] emerged. White musicians dominated the North Side, the symphony, and the radio stations, while the Black musicians held the South Side, and initially, Black musicians embraced their separate sphere of influence because the South Side had more clubs than the North Side and because they did not anticipate that radio and recorded music would change the place of music in the city.[44]

The origins of separate locals are not complex: they existed at the request of the White local. The Federation did not issue a charter for a Black local unless the White local demanded it. By the 1940s, there were 723 American Federation of Musicians locals throughout the United States and Canada, of which 36 were "colored" locals, meaning that in 36 areas there were two locals. Adding to the confusion over the status of Black musicians was the existence of Black subsidiary locals, mostly in the southern states, that worked under union bylaws but were given no representation in the union. Segregation extended to union branches without a Black local in that they did not allow Black members to enter the union halls. Instead, Black members had to go around to the back of the building to pay their union dues. The inequality in the union left the African American musicians in Chicago, according to *Music Master,* the Black local's publication, with few choices if they wanted to work and receive labor protections. "Organized labor can do much to alleviate this

deplorable condition, by accepting the Negro in their respective unions as American citizens instead of accepting them on a subsidiary basis, or by granting them separate charters," *Music Master* argued. "A Negro will never prove himself a good unionist until he is given an opportunity to be one."[45]

The presence of segregation in the union was never so blatant as it was in the union's national conventions. The first national convention that Chicago's Black Local 208 attended was in 1938 in Tampa, Florida. The hosting white union branch would not give members of Local 208 credentials to enter the hall, so Local 208 had to turn to the Urban League for help. The segregation of the convention extended out into the city of Tampa in that the musicians found that they could not go into downtown Tampa after dark.[46] The treatment that the members of Local 208 experienced in Tampa was standard at every convention they attended because the conventions were always held in southern cities. Convention discrimination seemed most aggravating during World War II. *Music Master* noted that at the 1942 convention, whose theme was democracy, the convention venue would not permit African American delegates to enter unless they were escorted by a white union delegate.[47] Furthermore, there were times when the African American delegates could not stay in the same city as the convention because of the lack of a Black district. Cabs would not pick them up, bellboys ordered them around, and Local 208 men often found it difficult to buy food in the convention cities. The union did nothing to help. These kinds of conditions persisted until 1964 and the passage of the Civil Rights Act.[48]

One consequence of having separate locals was the birth of a white leadership that derived its power from segregation. James "Caesar" Petrillo, president of Chicago's white Local 10, embodied this leadership. In 1931, leaders from Local 208 went head to head with Petrillo when they demanded that the locals merge. Local 208 leaders drew up a merger plan, but after four hours of discussion and debate, Petrillo indicated that Local 10 would have to give the topic further consideration. A month later, the board of Local 10 met and promptly vetoed the merger, saying that it "did not react to the best interest of either organization, and that Local no. 208 be informed of this fact, as it is felt that the present arrangement of the two separate organizations, having proven itself satisfactory over a period of years, be continued."[49] The failure of the Black demand for a merger demonstrated Petrillo's position and was a harbinger of things to come.

Petrillo was confident in his ability to maintain segregation, and the

threats by Black musicians to organize against him meant nothing. Petrillo's sense of security came from years of watching as rival union movements failed, which only strengthened his position in the AFM. He took control of the union local in 1922 and steadily increased its membership. Before the 1930s, Chicago had four primary musicians' protective organizations. Three of them were for European ethnics and the fourth was for Black musicians. In 1937, Petrillo succeeded in bringing into the American Federation of Musicians of the competing organizations—such as the Polish American Musicians' union and the American Musicians' union. Petrillo was able to pull off this coup by offering the competing organizations full membership in his local without charging them an initiation fee. Thereby, he was able to destroy his competition, increase membership in his local, and prove his power as a labor organizer. As a bonus, he ensured that his local would not have to pay out death benefits to the new recruits.[50] Unbeknownst to the new members, they would not receive a death benefit, according to the bylaws of the union, without paying the initiation fee. This was a piece of information that their families discovered only at the time of the members' deaths. Furthermore, in the 1950s, when greater numbers of Hispanics and Filipinos moved to Chicago, Local 10 took them in as white members.[51]

The absorbing of the various European ethnics, Hispanics, and Filipinos placed Petrillo, who was the son of Italian immigrants raised in poverty on the West Side of Chicago, in a position in which he decided who was white and deserving of the privileges of that social status within the musician community. Petrillo's definition of white depended on maintaining the perception that there was a difference between the white musician and the African American musician. Petrillo never brought in the Black musicians, which was economically devastating to them in the 1930s due to the changes occurring in the industry, such as the growing presence of mechanically reproduced music played in bars and the slow disappearance of many Black-owned venues.[52]

As the president of Local 10, Petrillo was as bad as any other local leader concerning segregation. If Black musicians tried to find a job in a white union club, Petrillo would threaten the club owner and send in "goons" to destroy the venue. Also, if the Black local attempted to picket a venue, Petrillo used his contacts within the electricians' union, the actors' union, and the stagehands' union to prevent them from supporting the Black local.[53] When he campaigned to be the federation's national president, he tried to appeal to the Black vote by offering concessions.

As federation president, he appointed Black members to the union committees and tried to prevent African American members throughout the United States from suffering the humiliation of having to go to union halls' back doors to pay dues.[54] In regard to the remainder of the segregation rituals, he was silent, suggesting that he only made concessions when it would win him votes.

Petrillo's presidency of the federation coincided with key changes in the music industry—namely, the commercial use of recorded music replacing the live musician in the music venue. So stringent and total was his domination of the industry in the early 1940s that Petrillo easily used strikes as a tool to prevent the broadcasting of copyrighted material until musicians received royalties and guarantees of jobs. Specifically, Petrillo fought for live musician jobs by insisting that radio stations only allow a union musician member to flip the records: these men became known as "pan-cake flippers." At amateur shows, whether on the radio or not, Petrillo demanded that a number of union musicians equivalent to the number of amateurs be employed despite the fact that the union members would not be performing. He applied the same standards to the legitimate theater. However, all of these new jobs were open to white musicians only.[55] As it turned out, "Caesar" was an excellent name for Petrillo. He was an "autocrat," as *American Mercury* argued,[56] but by demanding that musicians be paid for their music, he was also improving an industry that once paid musicians in liquor rather than in cash.

Petrillo's maintenance of, and in some cases authorship of, union segregation, contributed to the rise of a specific form of Black union and community leadership that built up the Black local as a way to counter segregation. In reinforcing the development of the autonomous Black cultural sphere on the South Side, Black union leaders believed that the community could draw strength from creating a separate sphere of influence—in the nightclubs, in the union, and in the schools. Though the South Side was a place defined by segregation, Black union leaders and music educators imagined that a distinct Black identity and culture could be formed there in opposition to the segregationists' idea of African Americans. They believed that it was possible to form this identity of opposition because whites did not internally control the South Side.[57]

Walter Dyett—bandleader, music educator, and union man—came to epitomize Black union leadership. Dyett was born in Missouri in 1901 and moved to Chicago in 1921 after completing his military service. In 1931, he began his career as the music teacher at Chicago's Black high

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schools, Wendell Phillips and DuSable. Training with Dyett was considered a "tradition" in the Black community.[58] Dyett taught a generation of musicians in Chicago, many of whom were the children of southern migrants. He could count among his students many of the city's most famous performers—including Nat "King" Cole, Benny Green, John Gilmore, Johnny Hartman, and Dinah Washington. So strong were the community ties created by Dyett that when musicians moved to New York City, they often continued to live and work with Chicago musicians with whom they had gone to school.[59]

The presence of the music program at DuSable High School was historically significant because it provided a foundation for the formation of a second generation of African American musicians in Chicago.[60] It also made jazz into an academic pursuit as serious as European-based orchestral and band music. Its place in the curriculum combated the idea that jazz was a music based on emotion rather than study. Dyett's efforts continued the process by which Black folk music changed from an essentially oral tradition to a written tradition communicated and learned in an academic environment. This was a tremendous development in the course of African American history and it occurred in a Black public school.

Dyett brought his belief in the need for professionalization among Black musicians to the Black union local's board of directors, on which he served from 1945 to 1965.[61] He also brought to the union board a strong belief that, though integration with full equality and protections from discrimination was ideal, it would be impossible for Black musicians to live and work equally in a union led by whites. This belief was born of a lifetime of experience with racism—including service in the segregated U.S. military during World War I, a career in the segregated public schools, and life in the segregated music union—that was proof to Dyett that only a Black musician would protect the rights of other Black musicians. In a system dominated by whites, integration, Dyett feared, would be a new form of oppression in which the Black musicians would lose their cultural distinctiveness and the safeguard of the Black public sphere, which included an apartment building that only rented to musicians, a credit union, and rehearsal space all owned and managed by the Black local.[62] Dyett believed in autonomy as a way to oppose and condemn segregation, but the growth in power of the Black local may have had an unintended consequence in that it provided Petrillo with the room to argue that segregation was "entirely satisfactory to the colored membership."[63]

In fact, the Black local's rank and file were well aware of the union's

relationship to segregation. The membership passed around rumors that Petrillo had made a contract with the crime syndicates[64] and that the Black leaders had orchestrated a secret agreement with Petrillo to maintain segregation.[65] These rumors reduced Petrillo's legitimacy as a labor leader. As for the Black leaders, the rumors suggest that the Black musicians thought of their leaders as benefiting from and complicit in segregation. Jazz bassist Milton Hinton summed up the situation by contending that the Black leaders were to blame for segregation, saying that back in the 1910s and 1920s they had "wanted to maintain a separateness between black and white musicians, because of the fact that on the South Side, which was black territory, this is where it was most lucrative and where the money was made."[66] The prosperity of the South Side continued, Hinton contended, until large hotels, such as the Congress Hotel, were built in the downtown area and radio emerged as the music medium.[67] The white local dominated the new medium and the downtown area and defended it as fervently as the Black local had defended the South Side, Hinton argued.[68]

Working in a union defined by the two contrasting beliefs represented by Petrillo and Dyett was a difficult reality for the Black musicians. On the one hand, they had to be members to work in legitimate venues, such as nightclubs. The union locals guaranteed a pay scale, regulated the workweek, and provided death benefits. Membership in the union also, at times, seemed to maintain rather than challenge the city's segregation. The result was a situation in which Black musicians belonged to the union as a way of negotiating the segregated city while simultaneously undermining the union by playing on the street, on the city's trains, and by scabbing. Many of them were friends with white musicians—with whom they may have played with in their homes, in the city's music schools, and at times in the illegal after-hours clubs, though they did not share a union. The economic segregation forced musicians, Hinton recalled, to break union rules by playing beyond the territory of the union. The musicians had to make a living, which necessitated that they load up the car and seek out venues along the highways where there was no pay scale or union rules. They would walk into an establishment and start playing. If they did not make much money, they would leave and drive further down the road. "We were hungry you know," Hinton explained, "and our families needed to be fed. . . ."[69]

The response of the Black membership to segregation demonstrated that the complexities of segregation required an equally complex system

of resistance. For the most part, as long as there were ample jobs on the South Side, there were few organized protests against the white union leadership. Unfortunately, the lucrative South Side music culture would not last forever.

VENUES

On the surface, the division of the city into a white area and a Black area may seem imprecise and abstract, but union history demonstrates that it was in fact purposeful and political.[70] The lines of division followed the segregation in housing, public spaces, hotels, and theaters throughout the city. In choosing to defend Black spaces in the city, the Black union leaders were appropriating space that had been defined by segregation in the hopes of transforming the designated Black areas into a representation of racial pride. In Black music, the Black union leaders saw a tool that promised to subvert the intentions of segregationists to stifle Black culture. The Black union leaders' choice reflected the mood of the entire Black community in the early twentieth century. Faced with growing racial oppression and the subsequent economic difficulties caused by racial circumscription, Black leaders developed a philosophy of self-help and self-sufficiency.[71]

The Black musicians supported the division of the city by belonging to the union, but they also subverted the power of the union by scabbing, playing in house parties, and playing on the streets. The result was a complex system of venue. Some of which were legitimate—such as nightclubs, that functioned within the union system, and some illegitimate—such as the streetcars or bars that accepted "scabbing," that functioned outside of the union. The system of venues became representative of both the landscape of the Black public sphere, the diverse ways in which musicians lived, negotiated, and resisted segregation.

In the 1940s, there were few legitimate union venues for the classically trained Black musician. Basically, it came down to playing at various South Side high schools and churches. Few venues spoke to the role of segregation in shaping the Black public sphere, as well as the churches and schools on the South Side. Segregation in Chicago's schools began just before World War I and became the norm during the 1920s.[72] The migrants had brought Black religious institutions, which began in 1816 when the African Methodist Episcopal church split from the main denomination

over racial issues, with them to Chicago in the late nineteenth century.[73] From the beginning, the Black churches and schools in Chicago were founded on the idea of self-help and stood against the aggression of white institutions.[74] When there were no venues for Black classical musicians outside of the Black Belt, the churches and the schools provided performance space just as they provided social services for the Black community that the city did not. The existence of the community institutions indicates that African Americans had developed a pattern of behavior that confronted the problems of the urban environment through community-driven programs and by appropriating space for the purpose of resisting segregation.[75]

Poro's Beauty College, located at 4414 S. Parkway, was also a site of classical music. The city's Black opera company rehearsed there. Unlike the churches and the schools, beauty parlors and salons were not forced on the Black community by institutional segregation. Instead, they represented the growth of Black entrepreneurial enterprises in Chicago that focused on the specific needs of African Americans. For Black women, the salons were a place safe from the interference of white Chicago and as such became a site of what novelist Ralph Ellison termed the "unrecorded history" of African American culture and resistance. At Poro's, the operas and the hairstyling were both ways in which African American women could rehearse their challenge to white dominated concepts of class and beauty. In these rehearsals, they could act out Chicago leader Ida B. Wells-Barnett's argument that African Americans represented the highest level of civilization and white Americans were the lowest form of civilization. The combination of the beauty college and the Black opera speaks to the manner in which African Americans used space in the "black belt" to redefine Black aesthetics and culture.[76]

The community felt encouraged when Caterina Jarboro played the title role in *Aida* in a Chicago Opera performance at the New York Hippodrome in 1931 because it was the first time a Black woman appeared in a leading role with a major American opera company. Shortly thereafter, soprano Camilla Williams won the title role in *Madame Butterfly.* The pride felt for the singers was similar to that expressed when the Rochester Philharmonic performed William Grant Still's *Afro-American* Symphony in 1931 and when the Chicago Symphony performed Florence Price's Symphony in E Minor at the Chicago World Fair's in 1933.[77]

Yet, by the 1940s, it seemed as though the triumphs of the classical performers had changed little in terms of recognition and treatment of

African Americans. Classical musicians sought to fight against the segregation of the city by turning to their professional organizations, such as the National Negro Opera Company, which staged a production of Verdi's *La Traviata* in the outdoor amphitheater located on the Potomac River behind the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. The National Negro Opera Company was conceived in 1941 as an opportunity for "ethnic groups" to create "operatic compositions, using the cultural background of Negro Spirituals and Creole folk songs as the motif." Nonetheless, for the majority of classically trained musicians, these kinds of events were not the norm. By the mid-1940s, it was rare to attend a public performance of African American classical musicians even within the South Side. It was even harder to assemble an African American company. One conductor noted, "It was not even possible to find the first violin section among the Negroes in America." The problem was not a lack of trained musicians; rather, the difficulty lay in the fact that musicians had to work several jobs at once to make a living and were not able to focus on developing technique. The musicians were forced to work more than one job because of the lack of support for symphonies. "We have sufficient instrumentalists all over the country," wrote one reporter, "some in the jazz world," demonstrating that the musicians readily crossed genre lines to find work, "who would give their eye-teeth to join a symphony organization—if they were assured living wages along with their allegiance to the higher form of music. Where are our civic minded gentry, eager to uphold the tradition of the race as capable of filling the highest niches—in citizenship, religion, arts and science?"[78] Though there were hundreds of African Americans in Chicago who were classically trained, they had too few opportunities to perform because of the segregated union and the daily reality of segregation in the city which limited both employment and venues.[79]

In contrast, there were numerous union venues for blues and jazz music, which often were filled by musicians with classical training.[80] The posh clubs, such as the Rhumboogie, El Grotto, and Club Trianon, had been in operation since the 1920s and were well-known throughout the city. Upscale clubs shared the South Side with seedy bars known as "joints." The South Side music area that spread out east from State Street was infamous for "Saturday night tavern brawls, Sunday morning visits to the Provident Hospital emergency room and Monday morning appearances in the Fifth District Police Court at 48th and Wabash." The favorite "joint" among blues and jazz musicians in the 1930s and 1940s was

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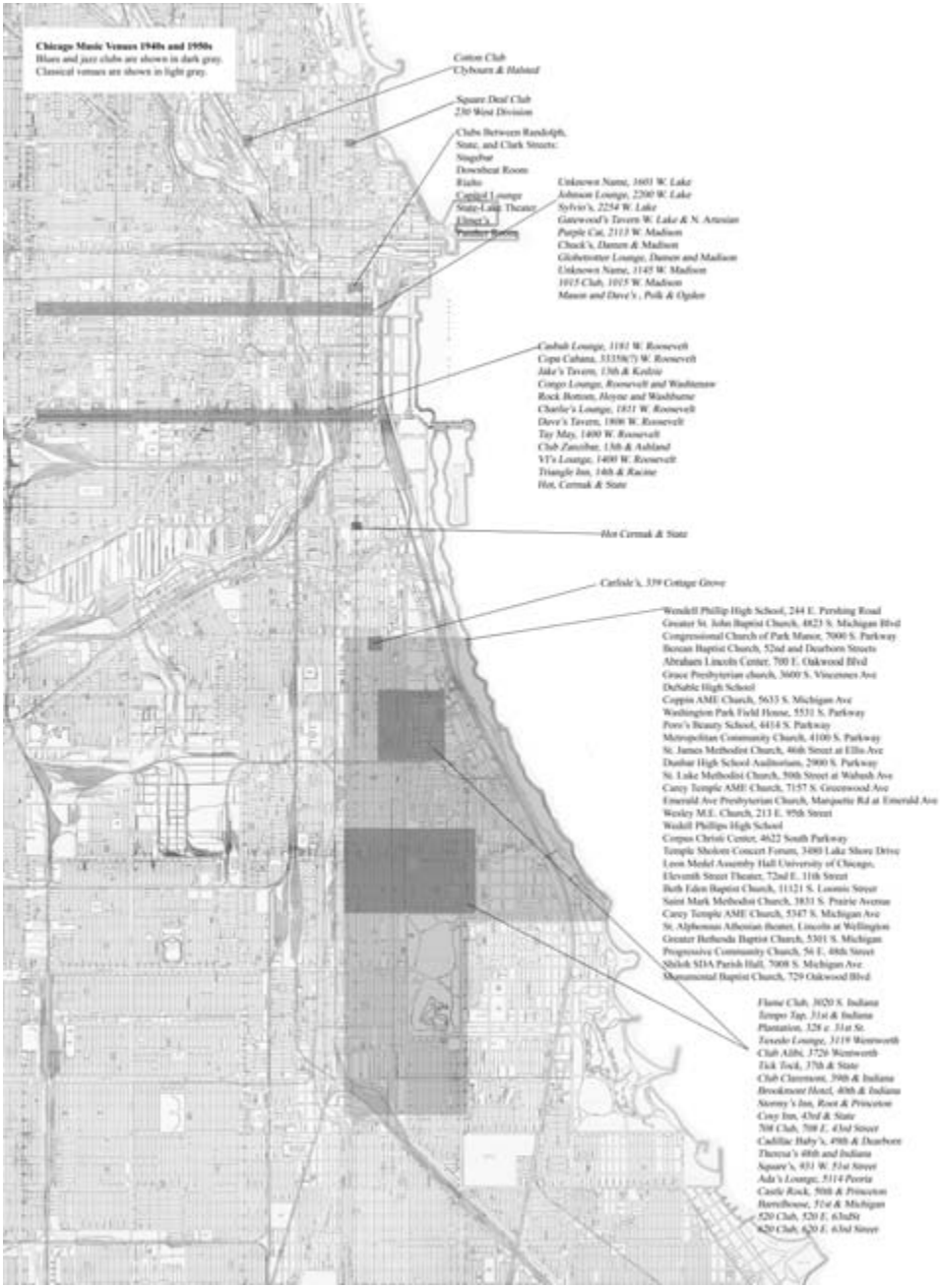
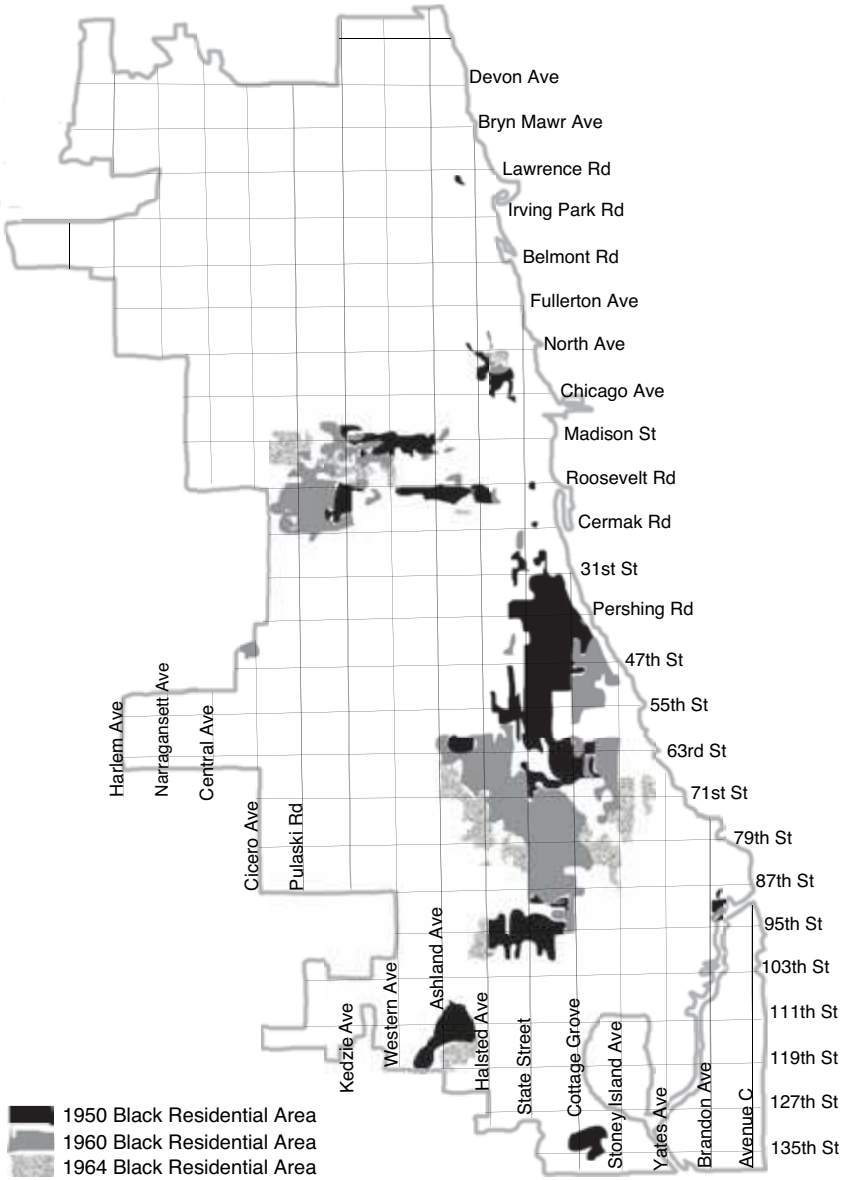


Map 6. Venues. Based on the ephemera and manuscript collections of the Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College, Chicago. Created by the author.



Map 7. Based on The Urban League's "Negro Residential Areas" from the Map Library, Regenstein Library, at the University of Chicago. Created by the author.

the 708 Club because the bandstand was behind the bar. It was at times unclear whether this was to protect the musicians from the audience or the audience from the musicians, given that performers at the 708 were renowned for attacking audience members who heckled.[81]

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Stroll, South State Street, represented the core of the South Side music community and the most overt example of the community's move toward autonomy. However, by the 1940s, nightclubs in the city had grown beyond the Stroll. The clubs began to appear along Roosevelt Road (12th Street), on the edge of Bronzeville, and the South Loop, and on Monroe Street, located within the core of the downtown area known as the Loop. These new clubs were emerging at the lakefront and running west through nonresidential areas of the city that paralleled the newly built expressways and an area of the West Side that would not become densely African American until the 1960s.

Though there was an increase in blues and jazz clubs on the North Side by the 1940s and into the 1950s, few of the clubs employed African American musicians or were frequented by African American audiences. Among those that did employ Black musicians and accepted Black patrons were the Zanzibar, the Tay May, Dave's Tavern, and Sylvio's. These venues were all on the peripheries of African American residential areas. The downtown venues such as the Rialto, the Stagebar, and the Downbeat Room booked famous Black musicians, such as Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway, who were based out of New York and were not members of Chicago's Black union local. Chicago's Dinah Washington purposefully sought work in the downtown clubs because she knew that the audiences would be white and that this would help her singing career, as the white audience had helped Billie Holiday and Sarah Vaughan before her. Washington was not concerned that these venues discouraged Black patrons by seating them in the back of the club and charging them more for drinks. Nor was she concerned about the local Black musicians who backed her performance. In these clubs, Black musicians were prohibited from mixing with patrons and were verbally and physically abused by club owners.[82]

The audience may not have been fully conscious of the venue segregation because there were Black headliners, such as Duke Ellington or Nat "King" Cole, who played in the downtown theaters. These performers had the advantage of being famous and having a large white audience. In addition, many held union cards from locals outside of Chicago or the union's international card carried by traveling musicians who did not have a home base.[83] From the perspective of the audience, Chicago was

better than other cities because there were no whites-only signs on the theaters. If one had enough money, one could see the big names in the downtown clubs.[84] When audiences, either white or Black, saw African American musicians perform outside of the South Side, they were probably unaware of the difficulties of the job for the bandleaders who may have been breaking any number of union rules, compromising their political and social beliefs to have access to a job, tolerating mistreatment by the club owner, or attempting to create new work patterns governed by different rules than in the legitimate venues.

While Black musicians had played outside of the South Side in the late 1910s and early 1920s, and the Black audience felt free to follow them, the segregation of venues, in accord with union segregation and paralleling the segregation of housing and public accommodations, had grown regrettably elaborate by the early 1950s.[85] Yet, appearances by Black headliners in the white sections of Chicago suggests that the segregation was still permeable by the 1950s, a fact proven daily by the working musicians who were "scabbing" and undertaking other work activities that undermined the union. The existence of a porous segregation was not a sign of waning intolerance or racially utopian nightclubs; rather, it was a design flaw that musicians exploited whenever possible. For those trying to work in the system, it was clear that their "breaks" were only going to come from other Black musicians and outside of Chicago.[86] What is also clear is that by the 1950s, jazz and blues had moved beyond the South Side, but the majority of Black musicians were unable to follow. Where the South Side had once been a gilded cage capable of providing employment opportunities for large numbers of Black musicians, by the late 1940s and early 1950s it was a prison reinforced by both the city's and the union's racial traditions.

BLUES MUSIC: ARTICULATING THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE

The generation of migrant musicians that came to Chicago during the late 1930s and early 1940s used their profession as a way of creating a discourse that challenged the social order, encouraged social movements, and articulated the needs and motivations of the underclasses. The result was a music that struggled to untangle the concepts of political and cultural power[87] that were at the core of segregation.

In constructing their discourse, the performers explored the trope of mobility by drawing on ideas of "North" and "South." By using the music to examine the individual's internal conflict concerning whether to stay in the North or return to the South, the musicians were able to examine the myths surrounding the city and the migrants' success there. The songs suggest that the songwriters saw their lives in danger of decaying under the pressures of alienating work and the loneliness of urban life.

Feelings of nostalgia for the consistency the South offered, as opposed to the unanticipated evictions and urban homelessness of Chicago, were constant themes in the music of this era. Consider Jazz Gillum's 1941 "Down South Blues," which imagines the South as a fallback position, suggesting that the migrants did not feel rootless:

> It soon will be cold, you hear me sing, yes I mean,
> It soon will be cold, I ain't got no place to go,
> I'm going back South, where the chilly winds don't blow.[88]

Cow Cow Davenport's "My Jim Crow Blues" suggest that the South in his memory was not only a point of departure and a place of torment, but, for better or for worse, it was dependable.

> Lord but if I get up there, weather don't suit—
> I don't find no brown. Go tell that bossman of mine,
> Lord I'm ready to come back to my Jim Crow town.[89]

Memphis Minnie presented migration as a constant need, which brought the migrant poverty and harassment from police in "Nothin' in Ramblin,'" recorded in Chicago in 1940:.

> I walked through the alley: with my hand in my coat
> The police started to shoot at me: thought it something I stole
> The peoples on the highway: is walking and crying[90]

These lyrics offer an opposite view from the opinion of musicians such as J. B. Lenoir in his oral history. "The way they do's you down there in Mississippi it ain't what a man should suffer, what a man should go through. And I said, after I seen the way they treat my daddy I never was goin' to stand that no kind of way," Lenoir explained. He played for Memphis Minnie, Muddy Waters, and Chuck Berry.[91] His success in the North

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may have shaped his feelings concerning the South—as is apparent when his experience is compared with that of Arthur Crudup, who worked and recorded music to earn enough money to return to the South. What can be concluded from the comparison of the song lyrics and the oral histories is that the songwriters were engaged in a discourse over the nature of place. These songs are part of a musician discourse that articulated a deep despair on the part of some new migrants in the 1930s and early 1940s as to their place in the city and their relationship to both the city and the mythologized South. In this way, the blues was a pronouncement of the choice to leave the South. It was the music of those who remained in the South, and those who decided to return.[92]

Bill Gaither's and Big Bill Broonzy's 1941 "Creole Queen" described the migrants' hardships:

> But since I been up North I been sleepin' on the bar-room floor.
> I been on relief in Chicago and soup-lines in Kokomo (twice)
> But I'm going right back down South where I won't be driven from door to door[93]

Compare Gaither's and Broonzy's mention of the "soup-lines" and being on "relief" to the redemptive mechanization of the ineffable North, such as airplanes and trains, as depicted in the gospel hymns, such as "Jesus is my Aeroplane"

> (verse 3)
> You can't find no soul to rest
> Some of these mornings He's coming again
> Coming through in a Aer-O-plane.[94]

and "Death is Riding Through the Land"

> (verse 2)
> Death is bringing down your great airplanes
> Overturning automobiles
> He's wrecking trains causing hearts to fail[95]

The comparison of the lyrics of gospel and blues songs suggests that northern modernization was a divine act and suffering was corporeal.

The lyrics may not be suggesting that the migrant wanted to return

to the physical location of the South or be mythologizing southern living in the same way that the minstrel songs, which were having a resurgence in popularity at the time, did by portraying the South as a kind of utopian hedonism synonymous with virility.[96] Rather, the "I" seeks the familiar aspects of labor and the dependability of food and weather the South offered. This was a South of memory juxtaposed to the reality of poverty and grueling industrial labor in the North, which Broonzy and Gaither's songs understood to be Chicago. That same year, 1941, Broonzy recorded "Make my Getaway," which presented the opposite perspective on migration. ". . . Gal I'm going up North," he sang, ". . . Lord, I'm gonna pack my suitcase, Boy I'm gonna make my getaway,"[97] which suggests that there was no consensus on whether or not one should migrate.

The lyrics examined above, and countless others from this generation of musicians, suggest that the drive to escape suffering was a unifying theme among the songwriters. More than that, the songwriters were using music to articulate the rules governing the relationships between people and their understanding of space. They accomplished this by using music to make visible the rituals involved in migration[98] and through touring, which connected Chicago to other African American settlements. An example of this is Broonzy's "Going Back to My Plow," recorded in 1941. This song recalls the economics of the south as being a factor in the choice to migrate, saying:

> Farming is all right, little girl if you know just what to do, (twice)
> 'Cause it killed my old grandpap, oh lord, I declare I'm going to make it kill me too.[99]

Broonzy's vision of farming shared a great deal with the field song that declared, "Ought's a ought, figger's a figger/ All for the white man. . . ."[100] His lyrics suggest that the relationship between Blacks and whites was the same as the relationship between Blacks and the labor. Both were governed by the inevitability of suffering. In this sense, Broonzy's songs depicted the South as a place of death by labor. Considered in the context of the gospel hymns produced in the same period, "Make my Getaway," like Broonzy's other lyrics, suggest that rapture, or death, offered the only freedom, and the only choice in life was *where* one would suffer. In this context, the North was preferable to the South because migration was a personal choice.

Broonzy's 1941 songs may seem inconsistent with the historical nar-

rative because it was a pivotal year in African American history. Chicago labor leader A. Philip Randolph, of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened to march on Washington if President Roosevelt did not desegregate the defense industry. Randolph was successful in forcing desegregation on the president and the industry in the summer of 1941. The opening up of these jobs was a huge shift. In 1931, 43.5 percent of African Americans in Chicago were unemployed. By 1940, African American unemployment had dropped to 16.7 percent.[101] The war meant employment for Blacks in Chicago, but it did little to alleviate the segregation in public housing, labor unions, and schools. As the blues songs suggested, the increase in employment did not end the feelings of alienation, brought on by the urban environment and the nature of industrial jobs, that Black migrants felt in Chicago.

Nor did the war end the idea that they might one day return home to the "South" if racism ended there. The 1947 song "Bilbo is Dead," which celebrated the death of Senator Bilbo of Mississippi, a legendary racist, suggested those who had moved to the city were "broke and had to get a loan." With the death of the senator, the migrants could "hurry back to Mississippi." The song suggests that migration changed a person forever; when the prodigals returned home, they felt like "fatherless" children and as the "lonesome stranger" in their "own hometown."[102]

The Chicago lyrics of the 1940s also suggest that there was diversity in the migration experience. It was in no way solely the smooth transition from southern oppression to northern prosperity that the leading African American publication, the *Chicago Defender* reported. Generally, the paper promoted institution-building and the Black middle class as stewards of the newly arrived laborers. In its crusade to inspire the migration of millions, the paper demanded "every black man for the sake of his wife and daughter should leave even at a financial sacrifice every spot in the South where his worth is not appreciated enough to give him the standing of a man and a citizen in the community. We know full well that this would almost mean a depopulation of that section and if it were possible we would glory in its accomplishment."[103] The song lyrics suggest that the migrants found a different Chicago. They were struck by how cold it was and how that cold added an extra dimension to the demeaning experiences of starving and standing in relief lines, and the alienation they felt at being evicted. It is understandable that these themes appear in the lyrics from the depressed 1930s, but there are elements of them in the lyrics of the more prosperous World War II era as well. Though jobs were

prevalent in wartime Chicago and the previous "white-only" industries—such as meatpacking and manufacturing—opened up, the migrants still experienced the conflicting longing for the southern Black community, while at the same time resenting the violence and poverty that the South guaranteed. The newspaper did not focus on these stories. Choosing to portray Chicago as the "Promised Land," indicated that the Black media were not altogether reflective of the migrant experience. The songwriters were using music to examine the myths surrounding the city, such as that of the "Promised Land" promulgated by the *Chicago Defender.* It also ensured that the musicians would grow in popularity and become harbingers of a new age of transformation in the city, in the music, and in the reach of the segregationists.

"JAZZ IS DEAD": THE CHILDREN OF THE MIGRANTS

By the 1940s, a generation of dissatisfied youth began to emerge among the musician community. They were the children of migrants, and many had migrated as children to Chicago. This group had experienced the range and the contradictions of discrimination in the city, which left some feeling that the culture of the Western world was a "dead culture" and the Black music tradition was an artistic prison.[104]

The musician youth had a number of shared experiences. Many grew up on the South Side of Chicago. As children, they watched Louis Armstrong with King Oliver's Creole Band perform, and they were well aware of the great Black intellectuals. Many of the migrants' children were trained as musicians by Captain Walter Dyett—the music teacher at DuSable High School and one of the leaders of the Black union local. Others found Dyett difficult to be around and preferred to study in conservatories. They benefited from the scholarships, competitions, and education programs of the NANM. When the young musicians left the Black neighborhoods to attend the University of Chicago or Northwestern, they were confronted with the limitations of being African American in the city. At Northwestern, they were not allowed to live on campus, which meant daily train rides from the South Side. Once on campus, they were denied entrance to university spaces, such as the pool. For those who attended the University of Chicago, the reality of campus segregation meant that they had to walk from the Black neighborhoods into white Hyde Park. As they traversed the racial boundaries, they rarely saw other Black students,

but they did see African Americans on their way to work as domestic labor in the campus area. Once they arrived in the university music departments, the young Black musicians found that their professors limited them to studying spirituals and Black choral music.[105]

When they were children, they benefited from the examples of the community's dedication to self-sufficiency in the public schools and churches. As professional musicians, they found that the Black-led union local—an example of the self-sufficiency movement—was powerless to help them find symphony and other well-paying jobs outside of the South Side. The lack of symphony and compositional employment forced many to change instruments, according to Milton Hinton, who started out as a violinist but had to switch to bass because it would be easier for him to find work if he focused on jazz bands.[106]

The employment situation was such that skilled and trained artists slowly grew "listless" and "lost any hope of aspiring to be anything," according to Hinton. He watched as his friends "reached maturity," and "if there was no place to work, I began to see them lose their creativity, and their hope for the future, and they began to settle for second best." Hinton recalled that those with academy training taught music while others "began to settle for going to the post office and working on the weekends. 'Get me a job at the post office,' which is a safe governmental job."[107]

There were so many musicians and singers working at the post office in Chicago that there were two large choral groups, with supporting orchestras, composed entirely of Black clerks and carriers. The post office offered a degree of equality and security not offered in other jobs throughout the city, such as in the white-union-controlled manufacturing and slaughterhouse jobs, which were more commonly held by white musicians.[108]

Where as many chose the post office, others, like Hinton, found that they had to leave Chicago so that they could work as composers and musicians. For example, Margaret Bonds, born in Chicago in 1913, studied composition at Northwestern University. Bonds spent much of her career composing music to accompany the poetry of Langston Hughes. Hughes had been a visitor to her mother's home, but she had never read his early poetry as a child. Instead, she discovered Hughes's poetry in the Evanston, Illinois, public library's basement when she was a student at the university. "I was intrigued," she wrote, "by his first published poem. . . . I myself had never suffered any feelings of inferiority because I am a Negro, and I had always felt a strong identification with Africa, but now here was

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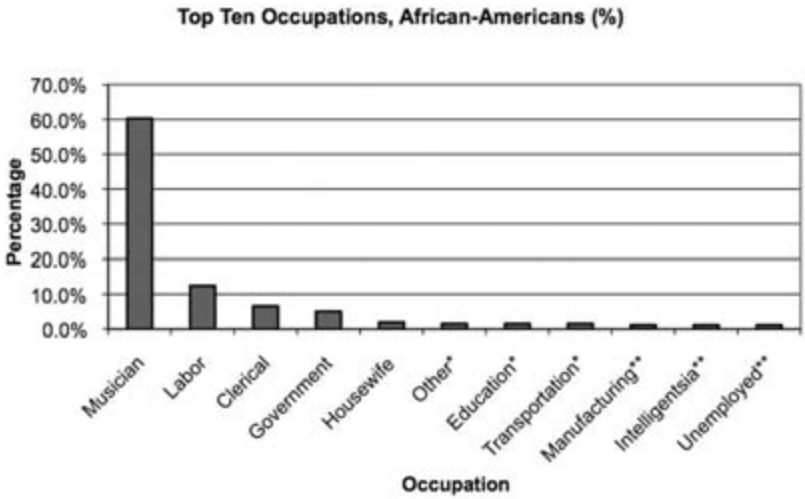

Figure 2: Statistics support Hinton's arguments regarding the type of day jobs worked by musicians. The chart is based on a census of 1,984 death certificates of Black musicians in Chicago. The certificates were collected by the American Federation of Musicians upon the death of the member musician. By maintaining their membership in the union despite the fact that they were not making their living as musicians suggest that they continued to think of themselves as musicians.

this poem with so many different things I had known and was not able to express verbally."[109] This experience inspired her to write compositions based on Hughes's poetry—a decision that would bring her fame, as well as demonstrate how composers participated in the development of racial pride and used their skills to disrupt racism.[110] To further her career, she had to migrate to New York, where her work brought together the freedom poetry of the Harlem Renaissance with the revolution in music at the heart of the Chicago Renaissance.

The frustration that drove Hinton's and Bonds's generation from Chicago also found expression in composer Edward Bland's 1959 cinematic opus, *The Cry of Jazz.* Born in Chicago in 1926, Bland was well versed in the segregation of the city and the limitations placed on musicians both physically and artistically. In the film, Bland juxtaposed scenes of Sun Ra and his Arkestra with barbershops, pool halls, street corners, slums, and

churches. Though the Black scholars of the previous decades found much to criticize in these aspects of African American life, Bland found these places to be at the heart of the Black struggle to constantly create, and recreate, Black culture and Black community. To view the places of Black life otherwise, Bland argued, would mean that the African American had accepted the "future-less future" of the "dehumanizing portrait America has drawn of him. . . ."[111]

For Bland, contradiction between freedom and "restraint" was at the core of jazz because the need to repeat the chorus and the harmony limited the musician's creativity. The chorus in jazz, Bland argued, represented the "denial of a future and the American way of life," and the harmony reflected the "endless humiliation of daily life." Jazz composition was bound to these elements, just as African Americans were contained in the slum, Bland argued. In contrast, improvisation represented freedom, which Bland characterized as a "recreation of the present." Bland further contended that like the chorus and the harmony in jazz, the humiliations of segregation, poverty, and violence conflicted with the "negro's image of himself" found in the churches, the pool halls, the arms of a dancing couple, and the jazz band. These were the spaces where African Americans, according to Bland, explored the conflict between freedom and racial circumscription.[112] In *The Cry of Jazz,* Bland symbolized these ideas in images of a burning slum, filmed on location in Chicago, and abandoned instruments lying around a player piano. Jazz could not grow "because it was not meant to grow," he insisted. Jazz was merely a "glimmering" of a "raising" consciousness that would transform America. "The jazz body must die because the restraints on the Negro must die," Bland argued. The jazz spirit, he promised, would "remake serious music, but the sounds of jazz will not be used."

Bland's call to deemphasize the Black music tradition stemmed from his belief that by the 1950s the white audience had come to see blues and jazz as the only possible expression for African American popular musicians, just as the academic world had come to see spirituals as the only possibility for the classically trained African American musician and composer. He saw the constraints in music as parallel to the confinement of the ghettos. African Americans were not free, according to Bland, because they were caught within the limited imagination of the racist audience. The racist imagination had real consequences for Black musicians because it meant that they were not free to explore new forms of music

or work freely in the city. The lack of freedom necessitated breaking with the past.[113]

If one were to wonder what happened to Chicago's classically trained Black musicians, composers of art songs, atonal and experimental composers, and the cutting-edge jazz musicians by the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s, the answer is clear: they were working at the post office or they had left Chicago. As Bonds observed, musicians were trained in Chicago, but they worked in New York.[114] The racial division in the music union ensured that they would not find jobs because there was no call for African American orchestral arranging and composition skills in the city. Bland summed up the musicians' feelings of disenchantment by saying, "I didn't personally know of any African-American that could've passed a Chicago Symphony audition . . ." because of the symphony's institutionalized racism. In reflecting on his own compositional achievements, he wrote, "The only places I could've used those skills were in NYC, in Hollywood and European recording studios. . . ."[115]

For those musicians who continued to work and live in Chicago, there was a growing feeling that segregation had to be destabilized. If they were going to make a living as musicians, they were going to have to break the racial lines that governed the union, the venues, and the audiences. Only then could they spread beyond the confines of the South Side and the Black music genres to fulfill Nathaniel Dett's dream of a national culture defined by African American music and Edward Bland's dream of artistic, economic, and social freedom. As for the musicians who remained in Chicago they quickly learned the move toward integration came at a price in that it threatened the role of the Black-led institutions, at the core of the musician community, by suggesting they had outlived their usefulness.