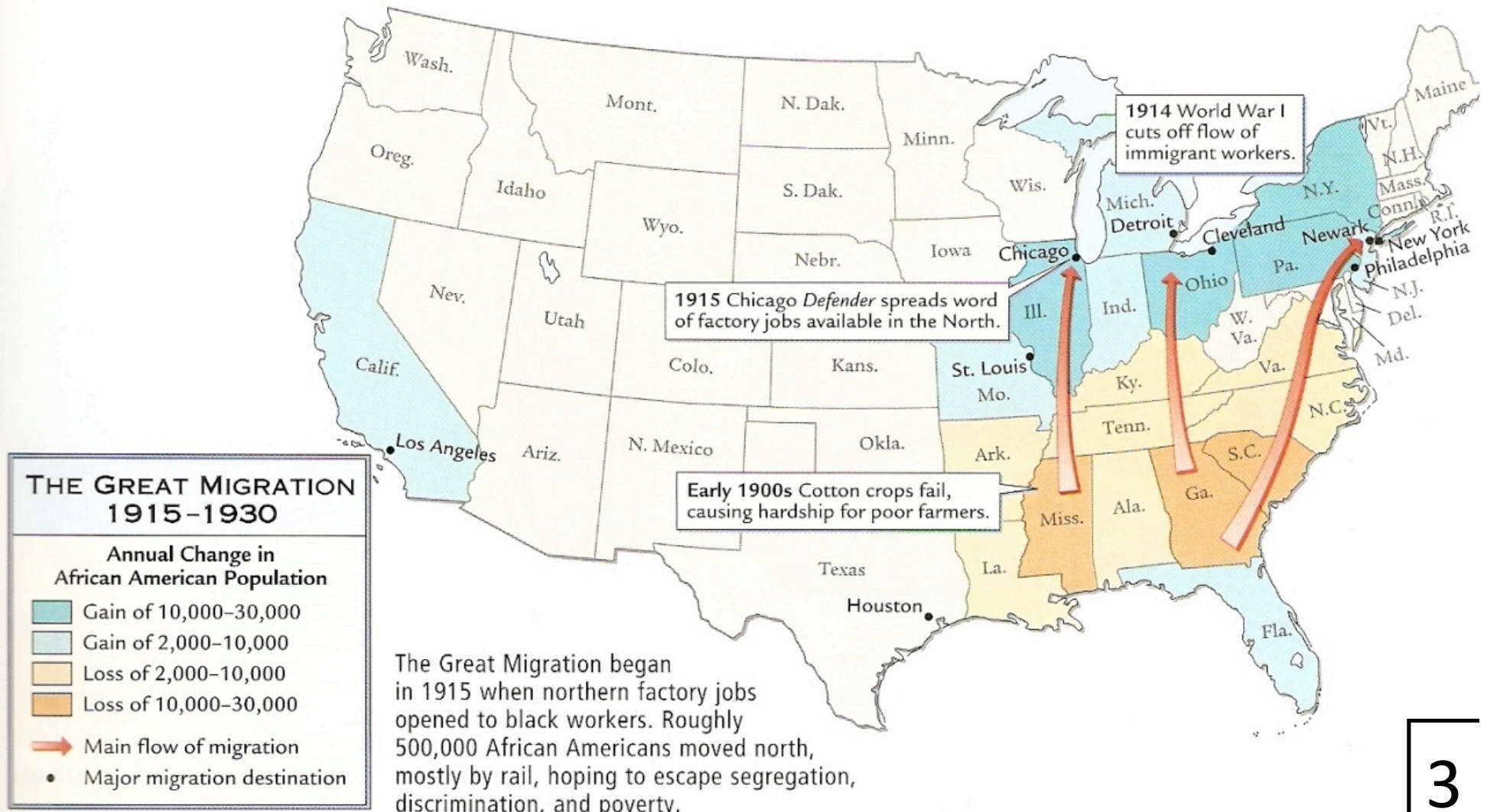


African Americans Respond to the Call to Join the War Effort



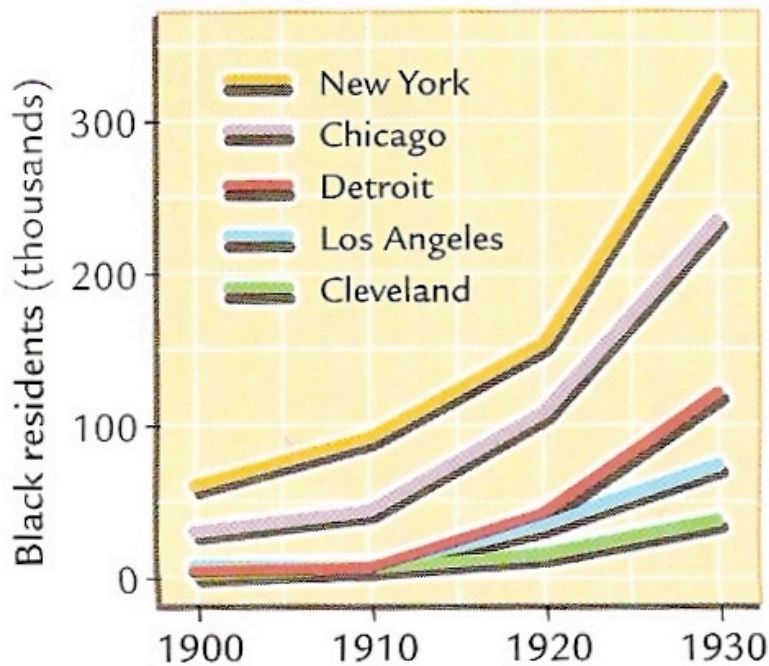
Source: *The NYSTROM Atlas of United States History*, 2005.

African Americans during World War I

3

Because of the war, hundreds of thousands of men were drafted into the army and European immigration slowed to a trickle. American industries found themselves desperately short of labor as they geared up for the war effort. The labor shortage created by the war influenced changes in the workforce. Jobs in US factories were often denied to African Americans because of racist policies and discrimination. However, during the war, these factories changed their policies and opened up jobs for African Americans, especially in the north. African Americans made great contributions to the war effort at home and abroad.

Consider: **Based on the images, what event occurred as a result of World War I?**



BLACK MIGRATION

During World War I, African Americans moved to cities in the North and West to start new lives with jobs in war-related industries. Even outside the South, however, blacks still faced many forms of discrimination.

Source: *The NYSTROM Atlas of United States History*, 2005.



Black troops in France, ca. 1918. "Negro troops in France. Picture shows a part of the 15th Regt. Inf. N.Y.N.G. organized by Col. Haywood, which has been under fire."

Source: National Archives and Records Administration, ca. 1918. http://bill.ballpaul.net/iaph/main.php?g2_itemId=959

"Colored Man is No Slacker," showing an African American soldier about to march off with his regiment, saying goodbye to his wife



Our Colored Fighters (Downing Films Co., 1918 (set in 1918))

One of the most influential black spokesmen in favor of participation in the war was W.E.B. DuBois, editor of the African American newspaper *The Crisis*. DuBois editorialized: “We of the colored race have no ordinary interest in the outcome, that which the German power represents today shall spell death to the aspirations of Negroes and all darker races for equality, freedom, and democracy. Let us not hesitate. Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and go shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy.”

Moved by such patriotic discourse, many African Americans eagerly joined the war effort. An even greater influence in their decision was the feeling that black patriotism and loyalty was on trial, thereby viewing the conflict as an opportunity to prove their worthiness and discard their second-class citizenship at home.



In 1918, in order to encourage recruitment, the U.S. government commissioned *Our Colored Fighters*, a 24 minute film featuring the training and combat participation of African-American troops. The film appeared in theaters throughout the United States, including a screening at the Manhattan Casino, one of Harlem’s primary entertainment destinations.

http://www.separatecinema.com/exhibits_soldiersoffreedom.html