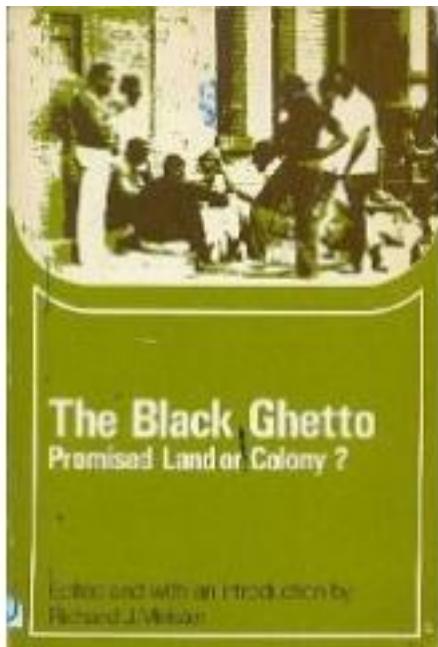


The Black ghetto: Promised land or colony?



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BETWEEN~TANCEADDITIONAL READING189199212 The urban experience has not been the same for the black American as it has been for the white. For whites, the city has offered opportunity and mobility. The city has not offered blacks the same avenues of progress. The purpose of this collection is to explore how black Americans have viewed the city and to examine how they have responded to it. As early as the seventeenth century American towns held recognizable black populations. But because one's skin was black, whether he was enslaved or free, meant that his position in society differed from that of the white urban dweller. His mobility was limited by written and unwritten laws. Even when northern states abolished slavery after the American Revolution, the newly freed blacks still faced white racism. Blacks withdrew

into their own neighborhoods and established their own institutions. Whether black separatism was caused by white hostility or motivated, at least partially, by group consciousness is debatable. By the mid-nineteenth century certain political, economic, and social patterns regulated the role of blacks in the pre-industrial cities. Blacks, even those with property, were disfranchised in most of the northern states. Only occupations which whites did not desire were opened to blacks. And when such an occupation became desirable blacks were forced out. Although their neighborhoods were scattered throughout the city, blacks had little contact with whites. Blacks had their own churches, benevolent societies, and

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目录:

[The Black ghetto: Promised land or colony? 下载链接1](#)

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