

### Document C: Cotton Pickers in Northern Counties (Excerpt)

*Helen Pendleton was a white woman who worked for a charity in Georgia before becoming a supervisor for the Bureau of Charities in Newark. The passage below is from her article “Cotton Pickers in Northern Counties,” in which she described the challenges faced by African-American migrants in Newark. Survey magazine, a leading social work journal, published the article.*

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Early last spring, when a marked shortage of labor was felt, northern industries turned to the South and began to import Negroes by the thousand. Railroads and industrial plants furnished transportation and offered undreamed-of wages to the simple farm hands from the cotton fields of Georgia and Alabama. . . .

At first the railroad and other companies furnished the transportation, sending agents all through the South, who painted in glowing terms . . . the high wages and advantages of the North. But apparently that was not long necessary. The news spread like wildfire. . . . The Negroes sold their simple belongings, and, in some instances, valuable land and property, and flocked to the northern cities, even though they had no objective work in sight. And they are still coming. Enough money has been saved from their **unprecedented** wages to send for wives and children. Almost every day one may see in the Pennsylvania station groups of Negro women sitting patiently, surrounded by bundles and babies and shivering in cotton garments, waiting for night to come, which will bring the men to meet them. . . .

The industries of New Jersey went after these laborers because they needed them in their business. But, although the Negro is warmly welcomed as a laborer, it is increasingly apparent that as a Negro he is unwelcome. . . .

Soon after the migration began to be noticeable, suddenly, mysteriously, almost in a night, the signs To Let and For Rent in the part of the city where small houses and flats were available were changed to For Sale. . . . These humble newcomers, therefore, have been forced into finding lodgings in basements and in the worst parts of our city. . . .

**Source:** Helen B. Pendleton, “Cotton Pickers in Northern Counties,” *Survey*, February 1917.

#### Vocabulary

unprecedented: new and unmatched