

and was therefore unconstitutional. Defenders of the Negro Seamen Acts responded that South Carolina had a right to protect its citizens from “moral pestilence,” and compared the laws to maritime quarantine regulations enacted to prevent the importation of deadly infectious diseases. But proponents more generally argued that the court’s decision violated the state’s sovereignty and independence, thus placing the emerging doctrine of states’ rights at the heart of the defense of the Negro Seamen Acts.

Officials in South Carolina accordingly disregarded the ruling and continued to imprison free black seamen, igniting what some historians consider the first nullification crisis between the state and federal governments. Despite this consistent and fervent defense of the Negro Seamen Acts and the principle of states’ rights, the acts did undergo several alterations. The South Carolina legislature passed the first modifications to the acts in December 1823, repealing the enslavement provision and exempting free black sailors on naval vessels contingent on their remaining on board their ships while in port. But at the urging of the South Carolina Association—a group of prominent Charlestonians formed after the Vesey conspiracy to preserve order and implement stricter controls over the city’s black population—the 1823 law also enacted more severe penalties for free black offenders, and, in 1835, the enslavement provision was reinstated. In 1856, the Negro Seamen Acts were again amended, allowing free black seamen to remain on board their vessels rather than being removed to the jail after captains provided bonds to ensure that their colored mariners would not go ashore. Like previous versions of the law, however, this provision produced unintended consequences. One ship captain petitioned the Charleston City Council in March 1858 asking to be relieved from a fine, claiming that his free black crewmen had been lured ashore by persons desiring to collect the portion of the fine given to informants.

Protests and legal battles over the Negro Seamen Acts persisted throughout the remainder of the antebellum period, and champions of the acts and the principle of states’ rights consistently came to their defense, sometimes using violent or extralegal means. For instance, when Massachusetts agent Samuel Hoar arrived in Charleston in late 1844 to initiate legal suits again challenging the arrest of free black citizens of the Bay State, the South Carolina legislature condemned him as a seditious danger to public safety, and Hoar was compelled to flee under the threat of mob violence. Similarly, South Carolina authorities derided the

Massachusetts legislature in 1845 for its increasing hostility toward the institution of slavery. White Southerners were thus increasingly suspicious of any action that challenged their peculiar institution or the laws enacted to police the South’s considerable slave population. Before long this sectional rift would boil over into a Civil War that would abolish slavery and the Negro Seamen Acts.

See also: Vesey, Denmark

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New Negro Movement

The New Negro movement was a bold effort to transform American images of African Americans through art and literature, while instilling race pride within the black community itself. Pursuing racial renewal through cultural diplomacy, the new Negro movement gave birth to the Harlem Renaissance (1919–1934), a period of black artistic efflorescence. A golden age of black cultural nationalism, the Harlem Renaissance was a grand response to the call of W. E. B. Du Bois, who, in November 1920, wrote that an age of black literature was due. The literati of the Harlem Renaissance—Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, and others—were the vanguard of the new Negro movement, fulfilling their roles as part of what W. E. B. Du Bois called “the talented tenth.” Graphic artists, such as Aaron Douglas, William H. Johnson, and Miguel Covarrubias, complemented their verbal genius with visual forms. Collectively, the writers, artists, intellectuals, and performers were known as the “new Negroes,” and their era would be called the Harlem Renaissance. For the first time in American history, African Americans could rightfully

claim to have produced a distinctive culture and to have contributed significantly to the American experience.

The term “new Negro” actually predates the “new Negro movement” itself. Henry Louis Gates has traced the use of this metaphor back to its origins. The term “new Negro” had been variously used to refer to transplanted Africans as slaves in the New World, then to newly emancipated slaves, and then to politically activist African Americans. In 1900, Booker T. Washington wrote *A New Negro for A New Century*. From 1905 to 1910, the Niagara Movement, an organization founded by W. E. B. Du Bois, became the forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an interracial organization founded in Springfield, Illinois in 1909. The New Negro movement should be distinguished from Hubert Harrison’s radicalist “new Negro manhood” movement. From August–October 1919, Harrison (d. 1927) edited the ephemeral *New Negro* magazine, but stood outside the mainstream new Negro movement. Although it championed many of the political ideals of black activists of the time, the new Negro movement itself was not political.

The term “new Negro” was already a social reality, and the new Negro movement simply solidified the emergent and robust self-consciousness of that new reality. The “new Negro” was really the product of the Great Migration (1915–1920) of more than a million blacks who moved from the rural South to the urban North in search of prosperity. In Harlem, a black middle class emerged, and a convergence of social forces made Harlem the cultural capital of African Americans from the 1920s to the mid-1930s. The new Negro movement stood in tense counterpoise with separatist Jim Crow laws—America’s apartheid.

Meanwhile, in December 1924, *Vanity Fair* heralded the advent of the “new Negro” in a two-page feature, “Enter, The New Negro, a Distinctive Type Recently Created by the Coloured Cabaret Belt in New York.” Mexican caricaturist Miguel Covarrubias drew striking images of African Americans that radically departed from the old stereotypes, and African American writer Eric Walrond, future author of *Tropic Death* (1926), wrote the captions. In the *Vanity Fair* feature, Walrond proclaimed the demise of artistic stereotypes of the “old Negro”. At a time when African Americans had virtually no political recourse, their voice could best be heard through their distinctive music, poetry and art—a creative and humanistic effort to achieve the goal of civil rights by producing positive images of African Americans and promoting activism through art.

In its heyday, the effective leader of the new Negro movement was philosopher Alain Locke (1885–1954), whose roles as both race leader and cultural pluralist proved a rare combination. As the first African American Rhodes Scholar, his exquisite education abroad in Oxford and Germany—culminating in his Harvard doctorate in philosophy—prepared Locke to become the most important African American intellectual between the great W. E. B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King Jr. As the spokesman and chief strategist of the new Negro movement during the Harlem Renaissance period and beyond, Locke resolved to sweep away the pejorative stereotypes of the “old Negro” through the transformative ideas and visual rhetoric of art, music, drama, and literature.

The most spectacular cultural product of the new Negro movement was the Harlem Renaissance. The ideology of the new Negro movement expressed itself through the Harlem Renaissance, which sparked a new pride in everything African American, and presented, to both white and black audiences, the artistic and literary gifts of the “talented tenth”—the vanguard of that African American elite who could best represent the new image of African Americans to America at large. This was a watershed period in African American history for psychological revalorization and race vindication. Although blacks were being objectified as icons of exotic, African-rooted primitivism, the Harlem Renaissance achieved a major objective of the new Negro movement, which was to instill a race pride in blacks and a corresponding respect for blacks by mainstream America.

Locke’s cultural pluralism was a novel strategy: Launch a cultural movement that would enrich America and gain the respect of the white majority, and the masks of black stereotypes (which were nonthreatening because they reinforced black inferiority in the eyes of whites) would disappear, revealing the true humanity of African Americans beneath the façade. Although its success was short-lived, the new Negro movement was brilliantly conceived and masterfully promoted.

The Harlem Renaissance presented itself as a microcosm or “self-portraiture” of black culture to America and to the world. For Locke, art ought to contribute to the improvement of life—a pragmatist aesthetic principle that may be characterized as “meliorism.” The new Negro movement transfused black consciousness by shaping a new self-image through powerful literary and artistic images. Although the movement is frozen in history, Locke’s ideology is very much alive. In 2004, philosopher José Medina

transposed Locke's "new Negro" ideology and applied it to the concept of the "new Hispanic." As for reliving the experience of the Harlem Renaissance, which is the legacy of the new Negro movement, this can be experienced in a new way today, thanks to the Virtual Harlem Project, developed by the Electronic Visualization Laboratory of the Department of Computer Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The new Negro movement also had a transformative effect on America at large. The writers of the new Negro movement fundamentally altered the way in which America views itself, although that change has been slow in coming. The changes in race relations today are partly the delayed impact of the new Negro movement, which advocated what Alain Locke would later call, "a new Americanism."

See also: Du Bois, W. E. B.; Harlem Renaissance; Hughes, Langston; Locke, Alain; McKay, Claude; Negritude

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New Orleans Riot of 1900

The week of July 23, 1900, proved to be one of the bloodiest weeks in the Crescent City's history. Police went on a manhunt for Robert Charles (1865–1900), a biracial man who shot 24 whites including seven police officers, even

as a mob composed primarily of white men and boys thronged the streets inflicting random acts of violence on blacks who were routinely chased, beaten, and shot.

The events began in New Orleans on Monday evening, while the 34-year-old Charles and his 19-year-old roommate, Lenard Pierce, sat quietly on the doorsteps of a white family's house at 2815 Dryades Street. According to historian William Ivy Hair, the two men were awaiting the return of Charles' girlfriend, Virginia Banks, who lived nearby in a back room of 2849 Dryades Street when three New Orleans policemen, Sergeant Jules C. Aucoin, Patrolman August T. Mora, and Officer Joseph D. Cantrelle, approached the two men claiming that they looked suspicious. When the officers approached Robert Charles, he did not have a previous criminal record in New Orleans, although he had once been arrested in Mississippi in 1894 for peddling alcohol in a dry county. Charles moved to New Orleans shortly after his brush with the law, but voluntarily returned to Mississippi in October 1896 to stand trial for the charge, and received a verdict of not guilty.

The exchange between Charles, Pierce, and the three officers is sketchy, with conflicting accounts of the ensuing gunfire that erupted between Officer Mora and Robert Charles. Reverend D. A. Graham of the A.M.E. Church in New Orleans reported to the Indianapolis newspaper, *The Freeman*, that when the policemen began clubbing Charles, he drew the Colt revolver he was carrying in an inside coat pocket. Afterwards, Officer Mora admitted to using his billet and drawing his gun before Charles drew his pistol. Both men were shot in the exchange, although Charles escaped with a bullet wound in his leg.

Seven white police officers and a civilian arrived at Charles's one-room home at 2023 Fourth Street sometime during the early morning hours of July 24, precisely the location where Charles had fled to dress his wound. The officers intended to kill him on sight. Instead, another gun battle ensued with Charles killing Captain John T. Day and Patrolman Peter J. Lamb. Charles fled and took refuge at the home of acquaintances Silas and Martha Jackson. He remained hidden in the Jackson's home located at 1208 Saratoga Street for the week, even as violence raged on in a city boiling with racial conflict.

By Wednesday, July 25, a white mob estimated in the thousands began a tragic reign of lawlessness in which numerous black men and women were assaulted and killed, including a newsboy who was knifed, a man who was dragged from a car and beaten to death, and a 75-year-old