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Harlem Renaissance

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Harlem, at the present, is the neighborhood of New York. It became a part of New York City in 1873 and has been a big residential area of African-America people since 1920s. Before that, it was organized by Dutch people. That's the reason why the area's name is Harlem which is from Haarlem, a municipality and a city in Netherland. It also was a target place for Italian and Jewish immigrants.<sup>1</sup> There, in Harlem, were a plenty of history about the African-American community took place, but the most significant and interesting one is the Harlem Renaissance.

The word "Renaissance" should be described first for better understanding. Renaissance took place at Italy and then spread to the whole Europe roughly around 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>. It was when people tried to develop new styles or new ways of working and thinking. This event is called Cultural Movement. For example, there was a new way of painting which is called Oil painting. There was also wider of openness of the science which had been banned by the church. So the word Renaissance is used for the same situations that happen on another region as well.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maurasse, J. David. *Listening to Harlem : gentrification, community, and business*. Great Britain: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 2006. P.17

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "Renaissance." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 9 February, 2012. < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance>.>

After the Civil War in 1865, it was the period when opportunities of education and job for black people raised.<sup>3</sup> By this reason and so forth, the middle class of black people initially emerged in USA.<sup>4</sup> So In the early 1900s, the huge portion of African-America people moved up north, to cities like New York, which could be a good place to start their new life and find the better job.<sup>3</sup> This is called the Great Migration. In the early 1900s, there was an African-American migrate to the Harlem area. Those are from southern parts of Manhattan, the south or even Africa and the Caribbean came to Harlem.<sup>5</sup> Those people were seeking the chance for job, wealthy, and various things to make the life better. As a result, the Harlem was eventually considered to be the Capital City of African-America people.

Even the Civil War is ended, there still be the equality gap between Black and White people. The racism among black and white people also continues and even got worse especially in the southern part of America.<sup>3</sup> In the northern part of America, the influence of racism is weaker but still enough to let the government and white society ignored them (not to mention about Equality). Combined with huge population of African-America coming to the Harlem, as a result, the Black community has to protect themselves. They organize their community by providing a political group to lead the community, providing the social services and their community security.<sup>5</sup> For example, the National Urban League (NUL) founded in 1910 helps increase the civil right and supports all the anti-racial discrimination events. Also around 1913, The United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was

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<sup>3</sup> A&E Television Networks, LLC. "Harlem Renaissance." Biography.com. 9 February, 2012.  
< <http://www.biography.com/tv/classroom/harlem-renaissance>.>

<sup>4</sup> Hyra, S. Derek. The new urban renewal : the economic transformation of Harlem and Bronzeville. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London. 2008. P.129-130

<sup>5</sup> Maurasse, J. David. Listening to Harlem : gentrification, community, and business. Great Britain: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 2006. P.15-18

founded in order to help in economic development and opportunities for Black people. So the Black community, in Harlem and other regions, were getting somewhat better. This can be considered as the real beginning of the Harlem Renaissance.

Harlem, by its location and status, is the perfect place to launch an artistic as well as political movement.<sup>6</sup> So with the higher concentration of Black population from many places in Harlem combined with the wealthier status among them, the situation of Renaissance was developed. Black people then entered the suitable time for expression and professional success.<sup>6</sup> But the exact date of the Renaissance remains uncertain.

There were many famous black people happen. Those who are remarkable: for example, Langston Hughes, He became famous with his writing about time when the Harlem in the vogue<sup>7</sup>. He is a black poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He invented the new style of poetry: Jazz poetry.

W.C. Handy, he is a composer who is considered to be the Father of Blues. He was once denied to enter the famous night club in Harlem, but he could hear his music played from the inside of the club.<sup>6</sup> Also, Benny Golson, His name was mention on the filmed named The Terminal and still alive. He was a saxophonist and one of the 57 notable jazz musicians who appear on the famous photo named A great day in Harlem by Art Kane, a freelance photographer.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Maurasse, J. David. *Listening to Harlem : gentrification, community, and business*. Great Britain: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 2006. P.21

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "Langston Hughes." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 11 February, 2012. < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langston\\_Hughes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Langston_Hughes).>

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "A Great Day in Harlem." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 12 February, 2012. < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Great\\_Day\\_in\\_Harlem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Great_Day_in_Harlem).>

W. E. B. Du Bois was a black sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, author, and editor. He was the front leader of civil right movement and also the equal right for black in the Renaissance period.

Countee Cullen is one of the black poets. He had got many awards from his poet,<sup>9</sup> for example *The Ballad of the Brown Girl*, *Crisis* and *The Black Christ*, since he started his University at New York University (NYU) in 1923. This also showed that the equality of the black people had become better. He became famous around 1920s which is in the between the Harlem Renaissance.

It also was the beginning of the new kind music, also known as Black music, called Jazz which became widespread and popular in America at this period.<sup>10</sup> Even there were many clubs playing Black Music, The Black was not allowed to enter that club except for the famous Black artist that's allowed just to play in those clubs.<sup>11</sup> This also showed the good signal of the black equality.

As noticeable, there were many black people who were very good in many fields of art, political and literature. These people, with their talented, took the opportunities from the Harlem Renaissance period to grasp attention from White and prove that Black people are good and somehow better. They are the representative of Black people that's accepted by White people. Not only that, the new Black art

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<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "Countee Cullen." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 12 February, 2012. < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countee\\_Cullen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Countee_Cullen).>

<sup>10</sup> A&E Television Networks, LLC. "Harlem Renaissance." *Biography.com*. 12 February, 2012. < <http://www.biography.com/tv/classroom/harlem-renaissance>.>

<sup>11</sup> Maurasse, J. David. *Listening to Harlem : gentrification, community, and business*. Great Britain: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 2006. P.21-22

became the mainstream of that time, and was played and imitated more by White people.<sup>12</sup>

Since the black people had been slaves or lower-class people, White people usually insult the capability of Black people.<sup>13</sup> No matter what's the reason, they just do not like African-America people. But the Harlem Renaissance had made a changing of how White people think of Black people. African-America people develop their own culture to be better and express them to the world. White people, even they do not like the Black people, is hard to refuse that Black work of art is good. So this was like the making of Blacks acceptance in the Whites' thoughts. This could be one of the best good strategies to overcome the racism and inequality without the violence and direct political movement.<sup>12</sup> Creation of higher culture and letting it flow and accept throughout the region seemed to be the gorgeous way to gracefully gain the equality and push the racism asides.

Even the Harlem Renaissance ended by the depression,<sup>12</sup> but the Renaissance contributed so many benefits, than its lasting time, to the mankind in the form of new-style art, just like jazz, and a political movement, activism. But the most significant contribution is to African-American people, their equality become higher and more acceptable by the Whites. The Harlem Renaissance has paved the way of the equality and initially destroyed racism among Blacks and Whites.

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<sup>12</sup> A&E Television Networks, LLC. "Harlem Renaissance." Biography.com. 12 February, 2012. < <http://www.biography.com/tv/classroom/harlem-renaissance>.>

<sup>13</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "American Civil War." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 12 February, 2012. < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Civil\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War).>