



## Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity

By Jacqueline Najuma Stewart

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**Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity** By Jacqueline Najuma Stewart

The rise of cinema as the predominant American entertainment around the turn of the last century coincided with the migration of hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the South to the urban "land of hope" in the North. This richly illustrated book, discussing many early films and illuminating black urban life in this period, is the first detailed look at the numerous early relationships between African Americans and cinema. It investigates African American migrations onto the screen, into the audience, and behind the camera, showing that African American urban populations and cinema shaped each other in powerful ways.

Focusing on Black film culture in Chicago during the silent era, *Migrating to the Movies* begins with the earliest cinematic representations of African Americans and concludes with the silent films of Oscar Micheaux and other early "race films" made for Black audiences, discussing some of the extraordinary ways in which African Americans staked their claim in cinema's development as an art and a cultural institution.

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#### Review

"With this book, Stewart establishes herself as the authority on early Black cinema. The historiography is meticulous, original, and compelling. Stewart puts theory and history into productive conversation. An extremely important work."

#### From the Inside Flap

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"As a child in West Virginia, I loved the movies, but I had little idea that my people's history was being constructed (and deconstructed) as I watched them. Jacqueline Najuma Stewart's bold new book lets us see how black history was, in part, made at the movies. The history of the Great Migration has rarely been so vivid or compelling."—Henry Louis Gates, Jr., author of *America Behind the Color Line: Dialogues with African Americans*

"Jacqueline Stewart's *Migrating to the Movies* finally brings the unmistakable sparkle of brilliance to the field of racial constructions in early cinema. Part of Stewart's magic in this book is her substantial gift for critical insight, while the other part of this inimitable brew is her uncanny grasp of this particular topic. As an avid student of silent film for the past decade, I've been patiently waiting for a work that would juggle the obvious sociological weight of the raw material while also grappling with the technological and aesthetic complexities at stake. *Migrating to the Movies* is the first book to achieve this, and it is an indispensable volume on racial constructions of vision and the scopic gaze in the early twentieth century."—Michele Wallace, author of *Dark Designs and Visual Culture*

#### From the Back Cover

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