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Continuous Versus Episodic Change: The Impact of Civil Rights Policy on the Economic Status of Blacks

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This paper examines the available evidence on the causes of black economic advance in order to assess the contribution of federal policy. Over the period 1920-1990, there were only two periods of relative black economic improvement -- during the 1940s and in the decade following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the institution of the government contracts compliance program. Black migration from the South, a traditional source of economic gains for blacks, almost stopped at about this same time, and recent evidence on the impact of black schooling gains indicates that educational gains cannot explain the magnitude of black economic progress beginning in the mid-1960s.



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