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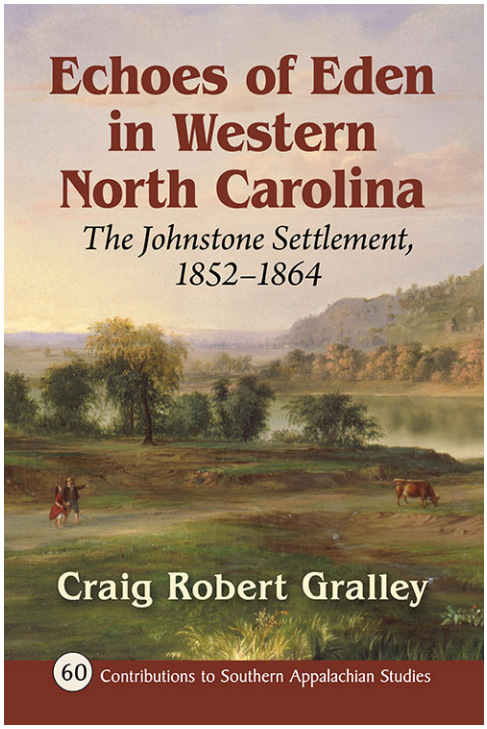
Discussion Guide

THE JOHNSTONE MIGRATION IN CONTEXT

THEN AND NOW

Echoes of Eden in Western North Carolina: The Johnstone Settlement, 1852–1864



A wealthy Southern enclave. A community vanished.
A story buried for 170 years — until now.

Craig Robert Gralley

McFarland & Company • Contributions to Southern Appalachian Studies, No. 60

Overview

The decision to migrate is rarely a simple choice; it emerges from a powerful mix of pressures that push people from familiar ground and pull them toward the promise of a better life. For the Johnstone settlers, leaving Charleston was a response to mounting personal and communal fears—urban decline, the threat of slave insurrection, and perhaps most significantly, environmental degradation that led to recurring waves of disease and the death of loved ones, especially their children. At the same time, Dunn's Rock offered an alluring Eden: a temperate, healthful, and unspoiled environment where they imagined stability, safety, and renewal.

This section considers the Johnstone migration within the broader wave of westward movement from the Carolinas in the 1850s and considers how it echoes in the story of migration today and tomorrow.

Readings

Please note some readings are on-line or are offered as comprehensive summaries to honor copyright prohibitions. Full articles or books are provided where permissions were obtained or where there are no copyright infringement issues.

- Gralley, Craig Robert. *Echoes of Eden in Western North Carolina: The Johnstone Settlement, 1852-1864,* Introduction; Chapter 2, "Making a Home in Eden: The First Johnstone Settlers Arrive;" and "Epilogue." Reading from the book.

- Censer, Jane Turner. "Southwestern Migration Among North Carolina Planter Families: 'The Disposition to Emigrate.'" *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Aug., 1991) pp.407-426. Summary provided; Full article is attached courtesy of Dr. Jane Turner Censer and *The Journal of Southern History*.

- Lustgarten, Abrahm. "How Climate Migration Will Reshape America." *New York Times*, July 2020. Summary provided; Full article available as a link on-line (at end of summary).

- Rogers, Tommy W. "The Great Population Migration from South Carolina, 1850-1861." *The South Carolina Historical Association Magazine,* Jan., 1967, vol. 68, No. 1 (Jan. 1967) pp. 14-21. Summary provided.

Supplemental Readings

- Lustgarten, Abrahm. "The Great Climate Migration." *New York Times,* July 2020. Summary provided; Full article available as a link on-line (at end of summary).

- International Catholic Migration Commission, *Cultural Assimilation vs. Cultural Preservation: The Migrant Dilemma,* 2025. Summary provided; Full article available as a link on-line (at end of summary).

Discussion Questions

Note: These discussion questions span a wide thematic range and are intended as points of departure rather than a scripted sequence. Facilitators should break apart multiple question sets and select individual questions most appropriate for their class or adapt them to fit specific readings. (See Facilitator's Notes for more on how to guide the discussion.)

Historical Context: Migration, Culture, and Community

During the years leading up to the Civil War southern planters considering migration were assessing their futures with an eye to greater independence, wealth, and status. Placing the Johnstone Settlers within this broader migratory wave helps us to better understand their motivation to move.

1. How did the Johnstone Settlers' migration resemble broader 1850's planter wave described by Censer and Rogers—and where did it diverge? What made their particular response to mounting pressures—environmental, social, and personal—distinctive?

2. Censer finds that migration among planter families was mostly a kin-based, collective project rather than an individual adventure. How central were kinship networks in the Johnstone settlers' decision to leave coastal South Carolina? What role did the Flat Rock summer community play and what does this suggest about the relationship between the benefits of kinship and migration?

3. How did wealth and social standing shape the Johnstone settlers' migration experience, from the decision-making process through the founding of their settlement? How does their experience compare with the small farmers and tenants who were also leaving the Carolinas at the same time?

4. Censer notes that many migrating planter families tried to recreate the social world they left behind rather than reinvent themselves. To what extent did the South

Carolinians at Dunn's Rock and Flat Rock succeed in this effort? In what ways did the mountain environment—its geography, climate, and existing population—resist or complicate that project?

5. Rogers frames South Carolina's outmigration as an ecological crisis: soil exhaustion and the collapse of cotton productivity driving demographic change. How does this environmental framing help explain not just where people went, but the urgency with which they left? Does reading the migration as an ecological response change the way you interpret the Johnstone settlers' own stated reasons for departure?

6. How did the settlers' social, economic, and political background shape their attitudes toward the local Appalachian population at Dunn's Rock? What were the specific consequences of those attitudes for relations between the newcomers and established mountain residents? How did those strained relations contribute to the settlers' ultimate fate?

7. Does knowing the settlers' motives change the way we understand the region's history?

The Enslaved Community of the Johnstone Settlement

1. The Johnstone settlers exercised careful agency in their migration—they examined their personal lives, scouted the land, and brought their kin networks with them. In every one of these dimensions, the enslaved were denied agency entirely. Enslaved were sold and families split up and new family units formed. What does this contrast reveal about the relationship between freedom and migration?

2. How might the coastal enslaved people brought to Dunn's Rock and Flat Rock have experienced forced relocation to a new environment in the mountains? Consider what they lost—community ties, familiar landscapes, cultural networks and how their lives changed based on the personal circumstances of their enslavers.

3. The settlers held deeply contradictory attitudes: they feared slave insurrection in Charleston, yet they brought the enslaved with them to their mountain refuge. What does this contradiction tell us about how the settlers understood the people they held in bondage—simultaneously as a threat, a necessity, and an extension of their own households? What did John Axson Gadsden's marriage to Eliza Gen say about his mindset toward the enslaved?

4. As the Civil War progressed, enslaved people were moved en masse from the coast to the Flat Rock for "safekeeping." How might the enslaved reacted to this second forced relocation—especially as the enslaved that remained along coastal South Carolina were being liberated by Union troops and those relocated as enslaved were viewed by the Flat Rock population as competitors for food and other scarce resources?

5. The Censer and Rogers summaries each treat enslaved people largely as an economic variable—as property moved west to produce wealth, or as a factor in inheritance calculations. What is lost when we analyze the history of migration through economics alone? How would you reframe Censers' and Rogers' stories if you centered the experience of the enslaved rather than that of the planters?

6. Do you think the relationship between the settlers and enslaved changed after the move to western North Carolina? What complications would migration bring to the enslaved set free in 1865? Did any of the Johnstone settlers' attitudes toward the people they had enslaved appear to shift after the Civil War and emancipation?

7. How do migrations today compare with that experienced by the Johnstone Settlers? Of their enslaved? Consider the variables of freedom, choice and location.

Environmental and Ethical Dimensions: Then, Now, and Tomorrow

Although separated by time, the Johnstone settlers' reasons for leaving—fear, environmental stress, and the search for safety—echo many motivations behind migration today and expectations for migration tomorrow. Comparing past and present helps illuminate how communities respond to people moving for a better life.

1. Both Gralley and Rogers identify man-made causes for ecological damage that led to planter migration. In what ways were these two cases similar? Different? Does this understanding change the way you think about migration today?

2. Rogers shows that South Carolina's outmigration was driven in significant part by soil exhaustion—an ecological collapse caused by unsustainable agricultural practices. Gralley identifies the cause of infectious disease as a contributing factor for the Johnstone Settler migration. Do you see parallels between the ways antebellum South Carolinians identified and responded to environmental warning signs and the ways Americans are responding to climate signals today? What implications do these responses have for the coming wave of climate migration described by Lustgarten?

3. Do you consider the Johnstone settlers "Environmental Refugees"? Does applying that label to wealthy nineteenth-century planters clarify, complicate, or dilute our understanding of contemporary climate migrants who are leaving because their homes are literally becoming uninhabitable?

4. The Johnstone settlers came out of desperation and desire: they wanted safety, health, beauty, and the perpetuation of their social world. Are there parallels with the movement of wealthy and upper-middle-class Americans today who relocate to rural or small-town environments and whose arrival, like the settlers', can reshape housing markets, local culture, and political dynamics in ways that strain relations with long-

established residents? What does the Johnstone story suggest about how such tensions tend to unfold?

5. Lustgarten describes "bluelining"—insurance and other financial institutions quietly withdrawing from climate-vulnerable communities, accelerating decline and trapping the least wealthy residents. How does this dynamic echo the nineteenth-century pattern, in which the departure of planters and farmers thinned South Carolina's social fabric and hardened its political culture as described by Rogers? Who is left behind when those with resources leave—and who bears the cost of their departure?

6. Do people have a fundamental right to relocate when their environment becomes unlivable or their economic livelihood is destroyed?

7. Do migrants bear responsibilities toward the communities they join—responsibilities the Johnstone Settlers arguably failed to honor? How do we think about rights and responsibilities when the migrants arrive with far more resources than the receiving community?

8. In the supplemental reading, the ICMC distinguishes between cultural assimilation and cultural preservation as two poles that migrants navigate. The Johnstone settlers chose a third path: they did not assimilate into Appalachian mountain culture, nor did they simply preserve their coastal Carolina identity. How does this dynamic—the migration of a dominant culture into a less powerful one—differ from the assimilation/preservation tension the ICMC describes? Do you see analogues in contemporary migration patterns?

9. Lustgarten's climate migration model suggests that the places Americans are likely to move toward are themselves not without vulnerabilities. What does the Johnstone story caution us about the idea of a safe destination? Is there an "Eden" in climate migration?

Personal Reflection

1. When you think about leaving a place you love — whether you've done it or only imagined it — what is the hardest thing to leave behind? Is it people, landscape, memory, or something harder to name?

2. Does your own family carry a migration story? Did they leave against their will? Were those forces primarily environmental, economic, political, or social—and how clearly could your ancestors have named them at the time? What did that cost them that never showed up in any practical accounting? Does knowing the Johnstone story change how you understand your own family's history of movement?

3. Of all the people in the Johnstone story—the settlers, the people they held enslaved, the local Appalachian residents who watched them arrive, the children of all three communities who would live through the Civil War—which figure do you find most interesting and complex? What does your answer reveal about the assumptions and frameworks you bring to this history?

4. If you had lived in coastal South Carolina in the 1850s—with access to the same information, fears, and resources as the Johnstone settlers—would you have stayed or left? Which push and pull factors would have weighed most heavily? How would your race, class, and gender in that world structured the very terms of that choice?

5. Do you have a place you consider home that no longer exists in the form you knew it? Similarly, if everything familiar to you — landscape, community, language, family — were taken overnight, what do you think you would grieve first?

6. Lustgarten closes his article by describing a moment of stark personal clarity: a climate expert tells him simply, "Yes," he should sell his house in fire-prone California. The personal and the analytical converge. Has any part of these readings—the historical case, the climate modeling, the ethical questions—produced a similar moment of clarity or unsettling recognition for you? What do you see differently now than you did before?

7. If a trusted expert told you tomorrow that you should leave where you live now, would you go? What would make you stay?

8. How have these readings and discussions challenged your views about migration? Understanding the historical arc and influence of climate on migration?

Summary

Jane Turner Censer

"Southwestern Migration Among North Carolina Planter Families: 'The Disposition to Emigrate,'" *The Journal of Southern History,* Vol. 57, No.3 (Aug., 1991) pp.407-426.

In the nineteenth century, the idea of going West shimmered across North Carolina's planter class—part fantasy, part strategy, part family drama. Jane Turner Censer's article opens by reminding us that the western migrant has long been a heroic figure in American memory, but the southern migrant is a more complicated creature. Because slavery moved west with them, their story has always been entangled with the expansion of a plantation economy. As she notes, "the South and its western migrants have been somewhat peculiar because black slavery moved west with the southern settlers."

Earlier historians tried to explain this movement in sweeping terms. Oscar and Mary Handlin imagined the classic figure of the restless younger son, stifled by the rigid hierarchy of the Southeast, striking out to carve new plantations in the Old Southwest. James Oakes, in The Ruling Race, pushed this further, arguing that slaveholders were driven by a materialistic, success-oriented ideology, a relentless quest for more land and more enslaved labor. Migration, for Oakes, was the natural expression of this acquisitive worldview.

Joan Cashin, by contrast, saw something more intimate at work. In her study of southern migrants, she argued that most were young, unmarried men seeking emotional and economic independence from their fathers. Migration was a break with patriarchal authority, not simply a chase after cotton profits.

Censer enters this debate with a different kind of evidence and a different kind of story.

A Fever Shared by Many—But Acted on by Few

She begins with the voices of North Carolinians themselves, who spoke of migration with a mixture of excitement and dread. George Badger observed in 1834 how widespread the urge had become: "*How general throughout this country is the disposition to emigrate, even amongst those who are in situations of comfort & occasionally of affluence.*" Another man confessed he was "infected with the same migratory fever."

Yet enthusiasm did not predict action. Many who talked endlessly about Alabama or Mississippi never left. The gap between desire and departure is one of Censer's central insights—and one that complicates Oakes's and Cashin's models.

The Migrants Were Older, Married, and Calculating

Contrary to Cashin's portrait of youthful migrants, Censer finds that the typical migrant from planter families was not a young bachelor but a married man in his thirties, often with several children. Over 70 percent migrated between ages 25 and 39; nearly three-fourths moved only after marriage. These were not the Handlins' restless younger sons. They were established householders making strategic decisions.

And unlike Oakes's restless strivers, they were not impulsive. They wrote to congressmen for data on soil, yields, transportation, and health. They took scouting trips. They carried letters of introduction. Migration was not an ideological expression of ambition—it was a carefully weighed family calculation.

The Real Engine: Family Size and Inheritance

Censer's most original contribution is her demonstration that family structure, not personality or ideology, best explains who left.

North Carolina planters practiced partible inheritance: land and enslaved people were divided equally among children. In small families, this worked. In large families, it produced shrinking futures. Migration became a structural solution to a structural problem.

Censer shows that:

• Only 15% of families with three or fewer children produced migrants.
• Nearly 70% of families with ten or more children did.

As she writes, "*Almost 70 percent of the planter families with ten or more children contained at least one migrant*."

This finding challenges Oakes directly. Migration was not primarily the product of a restless, acquisitive ideology. It was the predictable outcome of demographic pressure. It also complicates Cashin's argument: the migrants were not young men escaping their fathers, but older men responding to the arithmetic of inheritance.

Migration as a Kin-Based Project

When families moved, they moved together. Brothers, sisters, in-laws, widowed mothers,

teenage siblings—Censer finds that in at least twenty-nine families, multiple relatives settled in the same county. Migration was a collective strategy, not an individual adventure.

This kin-based pattern also undercuts the Handlins' image of the lone, ambitious younger son. The West was not a place to reinvent oneself; it was a place to recreate the family world on new soil.

One Move, Not Many

Oakes's model of the serial migrant—the man who moved repeatedly in search of ever-greater wealth—also falters under Censer's evidence. Over three-fourths of migrants made only one long-distance move. Those who moved repeatedly were usually financially distressed, not ambitious.

Winners and Losers

Migration amplified fortunes. Some migrants became extraordinarily wealthy—three times more likely than non-migrants to own more than $50,000 in real estate by 1850. But others failed dramatically. Nearly 20 percent of mature migrants owned little or no land.

The West was a place of magnified outcomes, not guaranteed success.

Censer's Intervention in the Historiography

By grounding her analysis in a complete sample of planter offspring—not just letter-writers— Censer reframes the story of southern migration. She shows that:

- Migrants were older, married, and embedded in kin networks.
- Migration was driven less by ideology than by inheritance pressure.
- Movement was usually a single, strategic relocation, not a restless quest.
- Families, not individuals, were the unit of migration.

In doing so, she offers a corrective to Oakes, Cashin, and the Handlins. Migration was not primarily about ambition, rebellion, or youthful restlessness. It was about preserving status, managing family resources, and sustaining the plantation world across generations

Summary

Abrahm Lustgarden

"How Climate will Reshape America," *New York Times*, July 2020.

Abrahm Lustgarten's article is both a sweeping investigation and a personal reckoning, tracing how climate change is poised to trigger the largest internal migration in American history. He begins with the visceral immediacy of California's 2020 fire season—"900 blazes incinerated six times as much land as all the state's 2019 wildfires combined"—and the moment when he found himself rehearsing escape plans as flames approached his home. The global crisis he had spent years studying had arrived at his doorstep. "Suddenly," he writes, "I had to ask myself the very question I'd been asking others: Was it time to move?"

This collision of the personal and the planetary forms the article's first major theme: **climate change is no longer distant**. It is dissolving the boundary between global abstraction and lived experience. Lustgarten's own fear mirrors a broader cultural shift as Americans begin to recognize that climate change is not something that happens elsewhere—it is happening to them.

The End of the American Illusion of Safety

A second theme emerges from Lustgarten's examination of how Americans have built their lives in defiance of environmental reality. For decades, the nation's wealth, technology, and government subsidies created a powerful illusion that danger could be engineered away. Americans "gravitated toward environmental danger," settling deserts, floodplains, and coastlines, encouraged by policies that "defy nature." Federal flood insurance rebuilt homes "six times over in the same spot," while subsidized water made desert cities boom even as the Colorado River dwindled.

But the systems that once insulated Americans are now failing. The article argues that the illusion of safety is collapsing under the weight of megafires, extreme heat, rising seas, and drought. By Lustgarten's accounting, **162 million Americans** will see environmental decline, and **93 million** will face "particularly severe" changes. By 2070, millions may live "outside the ideal niche for human life."

Markets as the First Responders to Climate Reality

A third theme is that **markets—not governments—are the first to recognize the true scale of climate risk**. Lustgarten recounts how the 2017 Tubbs Fire destroyed a Santa Rosa neighborhood insurers had rated as "basically zero risk." One risk modeler described the devastation simply: "The destruction was complete."

This shock triggered a recalibration within the insurance and mortgage industries. Insurers began dropping policies. Banks began quietly refusing to lend in vulnerable neighborhoods—a practice Lustgarten calls **"bluelining."** These are often the same neighborhoods once harmed by redlining, revealing how climate change magnifies historical inequities.

The financial system, Lustgarten argues, is already adjusting to a new reality. As one expert warns, "once this flips… it's likely to flip very quickly." When insurance retreats, mortgages dry up, and home values fall, entire communities can enter a downward spiral: shrinking tax bases, failing services, and accelerating out-migration. This is the moment, he writes, "when the real migration might begin."

Climate Migration as a Social and Economic Shock

Lustgarten situates the coming movement of people within a long American history of climate-driven displacement. The Dust Bowl uprooted 2.5 million people and reshaped the nation's economy, culture, and politics. The migration ahead will be far larger. Sea-level rise alone could displace **13 million Americans**, and tens of millions more may move because of heat, drought, and fire. "Even 13 million climate migrants," he notes, "would rank as the largest migration in North American history."

This movement will not be orderly. It will strain infrastructure, deepen inequality, and transform cities. Atlanta, Houston, Orlando, and Austin may each receive hundreds of thousands of new residents, even as they face their own climate vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, rural and coastal communities—especially low-income, Black, Indigenous, and immigrant neighborhoods—will be hit first and hardest. Climate migration, Lustgarten shows, is not just a physical relocation but a redistribution of vulnerability.

A New American Geography

A major theme of the article is the remapping of the United States. As the South and Southwest grow "inhospitable, dangerous and hot," the Northeast and Upper Midwest emerge as potential refuges. Cities like Buffalo, Detroit, Duluth, and Milwaukee—once symbols of industrial decline—may become havens, with "excess capacity in infrastructure, water supplies and highways" turning into strategic advantages.

This northward shift is not speculative; it is already underway. Lustgarten's mapping work suggests that by 2070, large swaths of the country will be outside the climate niche that

has historically supported American life. The nation's demographic center of gravity will move accordingly.

The Emotional Weight of Leaving Home

Yet Lustgarten insists that migration is not merely a rational response to environmental data. It is an emotional rupture. "Nobody wants to migrate away from home," he writes, "even when an inexorable danger is inching ever closer." The decision to leave is shaped by identity, memory, and belonging. This theme gives the article its human core: climate migration is not just a demographic trend—it is a story of loss.

The article ends with a moment of stark clarity. Lustgarten asks climate-migration expert Jesse Keenan whether he should sell his house in fire-prone Marin County. Keenan cuts him off: "Yes." The personal and the analytical converge. The future he has mapped for the nation is the future he must now confront himself.

Summary

Taken together, the article's themes form a single argument: Climate change is about to reshape America—not only its landscapes, but its markets, its cities, its inequalities, and its sense of home.

The forces that once allowed Americans to ignore environmental risk are failing. Markets are already adjusting. Communities will follow. The United States is entering an era of profound mobility, and the choices made now—by policymakers, by cities, by families—will determine whether the transition is managed or chaotic.

Lustgarten's piece is both a warning and a reckoning. It asks not only where Americans will go, but what kind of nation they will become as they move.

The full article is available on-line:
Abrahm Lustgarten: *How Climate Will Shape America*

Summary

Tommy W. Rogers

"The Great Population Migration from South Carolina, 1850-1861," *The South Carolina Historical Association Magazine*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Jan. 1967) pp. 14-21.

In the decades before the Civil War, South Carolina experienced one of the most dramatic population outflows in the United States. Tommy W. Rogers opens his study with a simple but striking observation: Americans have always been "a people on the move," and few states embodied that restlessness more intensely than South Carolina. By mid-century, the state was exporting its people at a rate that astonished even federal officials. As Rogers notes, by 1850 **41 percent** of all living persons born in South Carolina were residing elsewhere—"a very remarkable proportion," in the words of Census Superintendent Joseph C. G. Kennedy.

Why they Left: Cotton, Soil, and the Lure of the Southwest

The exodus was not random. It was rooted in the transformation of the southern economy and the ecological exhaustion of South Carolina's land. Cotton culture had surged westward into Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and beyond, while the soils of the Carolina Piedmont—once productive—declined under what one contemporary called a "careless system of indifference." A. G. Sumner, writing in De Bow's Review, contrasted the worn Carolina fields with the "glorious west, with soil as deep as its extent of acres was broad," a place that seemed to stretch out "many thousand hands" to welcome newcomers.

Small farmers were the first to go. Their out-migration had begun by 1800, but as the plantation system expanded inland after that date, the pace quickened. Rogers cites Alfred Glaze Smith's estimate that **nearly half** of all white South Carolinians born after 1800 eventually left the state. The movement was so pronounced that by 1854, of the twelve South Carolina College graduates who had become governors, **five governed other states**.

Where They Went: A Southern Diaspora

The census of 1850 provides the first clear statistical picture of this dispersal. Of the 186,479 South Carolina–born people living outside the state, **70 percent** lived in just three destinations:

- **Georgia** (52,154)
- **Alabama** (48,663)
- **Mississippi** (27,908)

These states were not just popular—they were transformed by the influx. South Carolinians made up **45 percent** of all in-migrants to Georgia, and nearly **20 percent** of all non-native residents of Mississippi. Smaller but significant clusters appeared in Arkansas, Florida, Texas, Louisiana, and even far-flung places like Illinois and Indiana.

By 1860, the pattern had shifted westward again. Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi still held the majority of migrants, but the most dramatic growth occurred in **Texas**, where the number of South Carolina–born residents more than doubled—from 4,482 to 10,876. Arkansas saw a similar surge. The frontier kept moving, and South Carolinians moved with it.

A State That People Left—Not One They Entered

If South Carolina sent its people everywhere, it received almost no one in return. In 1850, only **12,653** free persons born in other states lived in South Carolina—less than one in ten of all free residents. The imbalance was staggering: for every one person who moved into South Carolina, **fourteen** South Carolina–born people lived elsewhere.

This demographic reality shaped the state's intellectual and political life. During the colonial era, South Carolina had benefited from a steady inflow of northern migrants—ministers, educators, reformers, and professionals. By the mid-nineteenth century, that stream had dried up. Historian David Duncan Wallace lamented the loss of such figures, noting that earlier newcomers like Ramsay, Cooper, Maxcy, and Jasper Adams had been "the most precious drops of her lifeblood."

The Social and Political Consequences

The exodus was not simply a demographic curiosity—it reshaped the state's social structure and political trajectory. As small farmers sold out to expanding planters, South Carolina developed the **largest average farm size in the nation** by 1850: an astonishing **541 acres**, more than four times the national average. Counties became dominated by large holdings, enslaved labor, and a shrinking free population.

Rogers connects this transformation to the rise of South Carolina's distinctive political radicalism. Frederick Jackson Turner had argued that the state's shift from a quasi-western frontier society to a consolidated slaveholding region was "the clue to [Calhoun's] career"—a key to understanding how a once-nationalistic state became the intellectual engine of states' rights and secession.

Exporting People—and Ideas

South Carolina's migrants did not leave their politics behind. As Rogers notes, the "sowing down of the South from the Savannah to the Rio Grande with South Carolinians" helped spread the state's political principles across the region. Figures such as William Lowndes Yancey, P. G. T. Beauregard's mentor Dr. Gildersleeve, and physician J. Marion Sims carried South Carolina's cultural and ideological imprint into Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

A Final Portrait

By 1860, the pattern was unmistakable. South Carolina remained a state people left, not one they entered. Its soils were depleted, its small farmers pushed out, its political culture hardened, and its influence—ironically—extended across the South through the very people who had abandoned it.

Rogers's narrative is not one of failure but of transformation. The state's demographic hemorrhage reshaped the South as a whole, scattering tens of thousands of Carolinians across the cotton frontier and imprinting their ideas on the region's political future.

Supplemental Readings:

Summary

Abrahm Lustgarden

"The Great Climate Migration," *The New York Times*, July 2020
Published by the Anti-Slavery Office, No. 25

Abrahm Lustgarten's article opens in the highlands of **Alta Verapaz, Guatemala**, where subsistence farmers like **Jorge A.** confront a collapsing natural world. For five years, "*it almost never rained*," and when the rains finally came, they arrived as a catastrophic flood that destroyed the last of Jorge's maize. He waded "*chest-deep into his fields searching in vain for cobs he could still eat*," only to watch the rains stop again, killing even the okra crop he had financed by signing away his tin-roof hut. Facing starvation, Jorge concluded that "*if he didn't get out of Guatemala, his family might die, too*."

Lustgarten situates Jorge's story within a broader pattern: the **emergence of climate-driven migration on a global scale**. In Alta Verapaz, half of all children are chronically hungry, and families are being pushed toward the same "*excruciating decision*" Jorge faced. The culprit is a shifting climate—especially the intensifying El Niño cycle—which is expected to make semiarid regions of Guatemala "*more like a desert*," with rainfall decreasing by up to 60 percent and soil moisture by as much as 83 percent. By 2070, staple crop yields in Jorge's region may fall by nearly a third.

The article argues that humanity is entering a new era in which the **climate niche that has supported human civilization for millennia is shifting northward**. A landmark study cited by Lustgarten warns that the planet may warm more in the next 50 years than in the previous 6,000, creating "*extremely hot zones… potentially placing one of every three people alive outside the climate niche where humans have thrived*." In some regions, simply going outdoors for a few hours "*will result in death even for the fittest of humans*."

People are already moving. In Southeast Asia, more than eight million have migrated toward the Middle East, Europe, and North America. In the African Sahel, millions more flee drought and crop failure. If these trends continue, Lustgarten writes, the world will witness "*the greatest wave of global migration the world has seen*."

Migration, he notes, can be beneficial—especially for aging nations in the global North—but only if governments prepare. Without planning, the movement of hundreds of

millions could become destabilizing. The alternative is stark: wealthy nations may "*seal themselves off, trapping hundreds of millions of people in places that are increasingly unlivable*."

To understand how climate will shape future migration, The New York Times Magazine and ProPublica partnered with researchers to build a **new climate-migration model**, integrating more than 10 billion data points. Early results suggest that in the most extreme climate scenarios, **over 30 million people** could head toward the U.S. border in the next 30 years. Even under modest emissions reductions, roughly **680,000 climate migrants** from Central America and Mexico may arrive by 2050; without reductions, that number exceeds one million.

Lustgarten emphasizes that the model is not a crystal ball but a tool for imagining plausible futures. Its most important finding is moral rather than numerical: it reveals "*the staggering human suffering that will be inflicted if countries shut their doors*."

The article then turns to **El Salvador**, where climate stress interacts with violence and poverty to push people from rural areas into cities—and often northward. Delmira de Jesús Cortez Barrera, born near the Guatemalan border, watched her rural livelihood collapse after a climate-worsened coffee blight "*virtually wiped out El Salvador's crop*," cutting harvests by 70 percent. Drought and storms further eroded rural life, creating what a U.N. group called "*a progressive deterioration*" of livelihoods.

When gangs murdered her husband, Cortez fled to San Salvador, where she now sells pupusas for "*$7 a day*," sending money home to feed her daughters. Her story illustrates how climate change acts as a "**threat multiplier**"—deepening poverty, fueling violence, and accelerating migration.

As rural livelihoods collapse, people flood into cities, which quickly become overcrowded and unstable. Lustgarten notes that by midcentury, **67 percent of the world's population** will live in urban areas, and within a decade, "*four out of every 10 urban residents… will live in slums*." In El Salvador, already one of the most densely populated countries in the hemisphere, the U.N. projects the population will be **86 percent urban** by 2050.

The modeling suggests that climate outcomes depend heavily on policy choices. If wealthy nations reduce emissions but harden borders, Central American cities will still grow—but more slowly, with worsening poverty and fewer opportunities. More people will remain trapped in failing rural areas, "*becoming trapped and more desperate than ever*."

Lustgarten closes this section by emphasizing that cities offer both hope and danger. They promise opportunity, but they can also become "*traps*," especially in places like San Marcos, where thousands live in ramshackle structures without electricity or water. Even

before the pandemic climate migration was accelerating, and the systems meant to absorb it are already strained.

The full article is available on-line:
Abrahm Lustgarten: *The Great Climate Migration*

Summary

International Catholic Migration Commission, *Cultural Assimilation vs. Cultural Preservation: The Migrant Dilemma,* 2025.

The article frames migration as a timeless human experience, noting that people have always moved "*in the quest for better living conditions, economic opportunities, or safety from conflict*." Yet with every crossing of borders—geographical or cultural—migrants confront a profound tension: whether to assimilate into the host society or preserve the culture they carried with them.

Cultural Assimilation: Opportunity and Risk

The article defines **cultural assimilation** as a process in which migrants adopt "*the cultural norms, values, and behaviors of another community*." This can include language, dress, social customs, and even the gradual relinquishment of one's original identity. Assimilation can be voluntary—an adaptive choice—or forced, imposed through "*systemic or overt pressures*." The article highlights the forced assimilation of Native Americans as a "*glaring example*" of cultural erasure.

Assimilation can open doors: better jobs, smoother integration, and a sense of belonging. But it also carries the danger of losing one's cultural roots. The article warns that "*the line between assimilation and loss of one's cultural roots can often blur*," leaving migrants vulnerable to identity fragmentation and generational conflict.

Cultural Preservation: Identity, Continuity, and Rights

In contrast, **cultural preservation** is described as the active maintenance of traditions, languages, festivals, foodways, and art. These practices help migrants sustain "*a sense of belonging and continuity amidst the dissonance of migration*." Preservation is not merely sentimental; it is tied to human rights. The article emphasizes that "*the freedom to practice one's culture is seen as a fundamental right*," essential to dignity and psychological well-being.

The text also connects cultural preservation to resilience, noting that understanding "*the psychological impact of forced migration*" reveals how cultural continuity can protect mental health during upheaval.

The Migrant's Balancing Act

Most migrants live in the space between these two poles. The article describes this as walking "*a tightrope between cultural assimilation and cultural preservation*," each offering benefits and challenges. Assimilation may ease economic and social integration, but it risks "*the potential erasure of unique cultural identities and traditions*." Preservation strengthens identity but may slow acceptance in the host society.

The article underscores that the loss of cultural diversity is not just a personal tragedy but a global one: "*a loss of cultural preservation… can have a profound impact not only on individual migrants but on the global tapestry of cultural diversity*."

Toward Inclusive Societies

The article concludes by urging societies to foster dialogue, education, and openness. As migration continues to reshape the world, it argues that communities must "*respect, celebrate, and understand the richness of cultural diversity*." Only through inclusive environments can migrants maintain both their individuality and their sense of belonging.

The full article is available on-line:
ICMC: Cultural Assimilation vs. Cultural Preservation