



# Staging Migrations toward an American West: From Ida B. Wells to Rhodessa Jones

*Marta Effinger-Crichlow*

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*Staging Migrations toward an American West* examines how black women's theatrical and everyday performances of migration toward the American West expose the complexities of their struggles for sociopolitical emancipation. While migration is often viewed as merely a physical process, Effinger-Crichlow expands the concept to include a series of symbolic internal journeys within confined and unconfined spaces.

Four case studies consider how the featured women—activist Ida B. Wells, singer Sissieretta "Black Patti" Jones, World War II black female defense-industry workers, and performance artist Rhodessa Jones—imagined and experienced the American West geographically and symbolically at different historical moments. Dissecting the varied ways they used migration to survive in the world from the viewpoint of theater and performance theory, Effinger-Crichlow reconceptualizes the migration histories of black women in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America.

This interdisciplinary study expands the understanding of the African American struggle for unconstrained movement and full citizenship in the United States and will interest students and scholars of American and African American history, women and gender studies, theater, and performance theory.

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