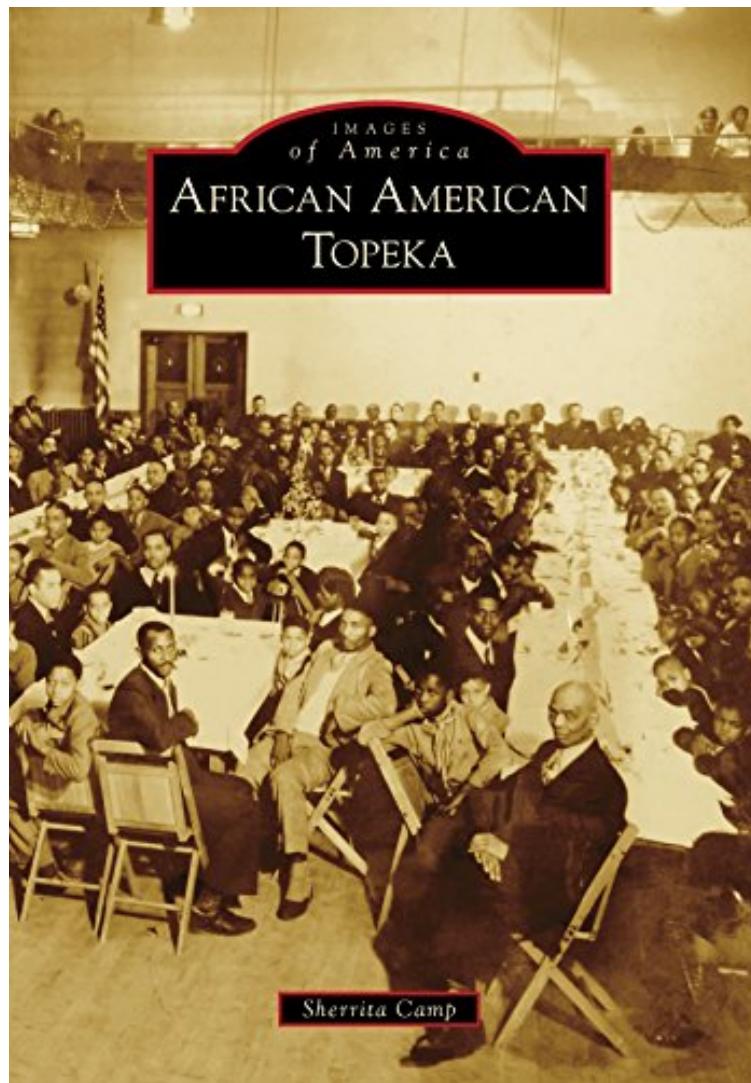


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## African American Topeka (Images of America)

*Sherrita Camp*  
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**Sherrita Camp : African American Topeka (Images of America)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised African American Topeka (Images of America):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy TodTutorIt is an important book for African American history libraries2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Topeka's African American Community in PhotographsBy Robin FriedmanSherrita Camp's new book, "African American Topeka" (2013) offers the reader the opportunity to learn about the history of African American life in a medium-sized American city west of the Mississippi River, Topeka, Kansas. A long-time resident of Topeka, Camp is a historian and a genealogist. As Camp's pictorial history emphasizes, Topeka has played two significant roles in African American history. The first occurred in the years following the end of Reconstruction in 1877. African Americans in the South sought to escape the coming

Jim Crow regime and moved in large numbers to Kansas and Topeka. This migration has become known as the "Great Exodus of 1879". The African Americans settling in Topeka were called "Exodusters". Because many of the migrants were from Tennessee, the community they established became known as "Tennessee Town", and it retained its character for generations. Camp's book offers photographs and biographies of many of the Exodusters, many of whom still have descendants in Topeka. In 1879, the prominent journal "Harper's Weekly" ran articles about the Exodusters. This volume includes valuable photographs of the migrants gathering at places such as Vicksburg to seek a new life. The Harper's series shows stages of the migrants' long and frequently hazardous journey to Topeka as well as scenes of provisions made in the new Topeka community to accommodate the sudden large influx. When the migrants arrived, they found a city that did not have the extremes of Jim Crow even though it was segregated in many respects. The second significant contribution of Topeka emphasized in this book reached its climax in 1954 when the Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board of Education* that held that segregated public schools violated the Constitution. The *Brown* decision had its origins in Topeka. The city segregated its elementary schools but not its junior high or high schools. Four Topeka families with young children, including the Browns, brought suit challenging Topeka's "separate but equal" policy in the city's elementary schools. Camp offers many photographs of Topeka's schools at the time and of the children. She also emphasizes that by the late 1940's Topeka had developed a strong African American middle class. African American attorneys trained and practicing in Topeka took the case through the lower courts and, with the assistance of the local NAACP, brought the national organization into the case for the Supreme Court proceedings. Camp's history strongly emphasizes the role of Topeka's African Americans in *Brown*. The community had a long history of challenging segregation practices in education and elsewhere. In 2004, the 50th Anniversary of the *Brown* decision, the Monroe School in Topeka became a National Historic Site under the administration of the National Park Service. The stories of the Exodusters and of "*Brown*" are more than enough to make this book appealing. Camp also offers photographs of the African American communities, relatively prosperous and self-contained, that developed in Topeka over the years. Many of these communities were destroyed by urban renewal in the early 1960s. The book also emphasizes the religious nature of African American life in Topeka with photographs of many of the early churches and other religious organizations and their histories. The book describes the many community organizations that brought cohesiveness to local life. It discusses individuals from Topeka who achieved fame, including the poet Gwendolyn Brooks and the bluesman Gatemouth Moore who became the first blues singer to perform at Carnegie Hall. With its emphasis of important national events, this book also has a strong local feel. It includes many photographs of students, residents, and community leaders painstakingly identified by name. "*African American Topeka*" is part of a series of volumes of local American photographic histories published by Arcadia Publishers. Although the books are marketed to local audiences, I learn a great deal when I have the opportunity to read about a community I don't know. I have particularly enjoyed learning about local African American communities through the series. Readers interested in local African American history, especially as it involves an early migration and the "*Brown*" decision will enjoy reading this photographic history of Topeka's African American community. Robin Friedman0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great BookBy CustomerThis book was fantastic! I was born and raised in topeka and i didnt know a fraction of the information in this book! I read this on kindle but i will be buying a physical copy to add to my personal library so my future children will know all about where they're mother came from and the rich black history in this town. Sad part is none of this is taught in our schools . But im grateful to have found such an amazing book!

African Americans arrived in Topeka right before and after the Civil War and again in large numbers during the Exodus Movement of 1879 and Great Migration of 1910. They came in protest of the treatment they received in the South. The history of dissent lived on in Topeka, as it became the home to court cases protesting discrimination of all kinds. African Americans came to the city determined that education would provide them a better life. Black educators fostered a sense of duty toward schooling, and in 1954 Topeka became a landmark for African Americans across the country with the *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* case. Blacks from every walk of life found refuge in Kansas and, especially, Topeka. The images in *African American Topeka* have been selected to give the reader a glimpse into the heritage of black life in the community. The richness of the culture and values of this Midwestern city are a little-known secret just waiting to be exhibited.

About the AuthorAuthor and historian Sherrita Camp has explored black heritage going back to the days of slavery and the Exodus of 1879. Her extensive family research into the lives of Topekans has allowed her to share with the reader a unique approach to African Americans in Topeka through genealogy.