

# AVINASH MOORTHY

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## Education

### Harvard University

Ph.D. Public Policy, 2020 to 2026 (expected)

### Carleton College

B.A. Economics, *magna cum laude*, 2018

## Fields

Primary Field: Labour Economics

Secondary Fields: Economic History, Political Economy, Development Economics

## References

Professor Will Dobbie  
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Professor Desmond Ang  
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Professor Claudia Goldin  
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## Job Market Paper

### *The Defender on the Move: Black Newspapers and the Great Migration*

After 50 years of limited migration following emancipation, 1.5 million Black southerners made the journey north during the First Great Migration from 1915 to 1940. Over the same period, Black political organization in the South surged and racial violence fell. I examine whether information on northern life and jobs sparked Black migration and southern activism using quasi-random variation in exposure to the Chicago Defender, the most prominent northern Black newspaper. Classifying the coverage of thousands of southern newspapers, I show that information about the North was limited prior to the Chicago Defender's entry in the mid-1910s. To reach southern readers, the Chicago Defender partnered with Black railway porters working for the Illinois Central railroad. In cities along the railroad, I find that individuals who lived near a porter selling the Chicago Defender were 33% more likely to migrate north than similar individuals who did not. These individuals pulled relatives to migrate, consistent with information diffusion across social networks, and moved to cities that received more coverage in articles, ads, and job postings. Counties with access to the Chicago Defender were 1.5 times more likely to form an NAACP branch and experienced 1.4 times fewer lynchings.

## Papers in Progress

Paywalls (with Desmond Ang, Stephen Pettigrew, and Ben Schneer)

Through the 2010s, the news media landscape shifted from an ad-supported to a subscription-based model. What are the effects of the transition? We examine the impact of local newspaper paywalls on news consumption, online browsing behavior and the implications for political and economic knowledge, voting, and community engagement. We assemble the most comprehensive database to date tracking the implementation of paywalls for the universe of daily newspapers in the US. We show that local newspapers skew right-leaning compared to other online news sources and attract readers who are older, whiter, and higher income. We find a sharp drop in time spent reading local newspapers after paywalls are implemented. Users shift news consumption towards national news sites with more left-leaning ideological slants, soft news and entertainment media. These substitution patterns cascade into a host of downstream outcomes, including a leftward shift among local residents in voting behavior and decreased knowledge of local economic conditions and social activity.

	Teaching Mental Health: Evaluating India's Happiness Curriculum (with Kevin Carney)
	Blowin' in the Wind: The Impact of Climate Disasters on College Majors and Innovation (with Chloe Tanaka)
<b>Other Publications or Working Papers</b>	<p>The Effect of Education on Later Life Health Revisited (with Ted Figinski and Alicia Lloro), <i>FEDS Working Paper 2022-007</i></p> <p>How Does Social Distancing Affect the Spread of Covid-19 in the United States? (with Bhashkar Mazumder), <i>Chicago Fed Letter No. 442, 2020</i></p>
<b>Teaching</b>	<p>Race and the State: The Role of Public Policy in U.S. Racial Inequality, Harvard Kennedy School Course Assistant for Professor Desmond Ang, 2023</p> <p>Intermediate Price Theory, Carleton College Teaching Assistant for Professor Jenny Bourne, 2017-2018</p> <p>Introduction to Macroeconomics, Carleton College Teaching Assistant for Professor Nathan Grawe, 2016</p> <p>Introduction to Microeconomics, Carleton College Teaching Assistant for Professors Nathan Grawe and Prathi Seneviratne, 2015-2016</p>
<b>Relevant Experience</b>	<p>Research Assistant, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 2018-2020</p> <p>U.S. Department of Treasury, Office of Economic Policy, Summer Intern, 2017</p> <p>Cornerstone Research, Summer Analyst, 2016</p>
<b>Fellowships &amp; Awards</b>	<p>Stone Ph.D. Scholar in Inequality and Wealth Concentration, Harvard Kennedy School, 2022</p> <p>Ph.D. Affiliate of Centre for International Development, Harvard Kennedy School, 2022</p> <p>Ph.D. Affiliate of Evidence for Policy Design, Harvard Kennedy School, 2022</p> <p>Doctoral Fellow of Harvard Environmental Economics Program, Harvard Kennedy School, 2020</p> <p>Top Undergraduate Senior Thesis, Minnesota Economics Association, 2018</p> <p>Ada M. Harrison Prize in Economics, Carleton College, 2018</p> <p>Phi Beta Kappa, Carleton College, 2018</p> <p>Dean's List, Carleton College, 2016-2017</p>
<b>Research Grants</b>	<p>The Weiss Fund, with Kevin Carney, 2025 (\$14,343)</p> <p>Development Innovation Ventures, with Kevin Carney and Labhya Foundation, 2024 (\$910,000)</p> <p>Stone Research Grant, 2024 (\$1,670)</p> <p>Fund for Innovation in Development, with Kevin Carney and Labhya Foundation, 2023 (\$680,530)</p> <p>J-PAL Learning for All Initiative, with Kevin Carney, 2023 (\$43,276)</p> <p>The Weiss Fund, with Kevin Carney, 2023 (\$50,000)</p> <p>Stone Research Grant, 2023 (\$2,500)</p> <p>Mind Brain and Behaviour Initiative, 2022 (\$10,000)</p> <p>J-PAL Post-Primary Education Initiative, 2021 (\$31,724)</p>
<b>Seminars &amp; Conferences</b>	<p>Southern Economic Association 95th Annual Meeting, November 2025</p> <p>London School of Economics Graduate Economic History Seminar, October 2025</p> <p>Harvard Kennedy School Economics and Social Policy Seminar, September 2025</p> <p>Harvard Economic History Workshop, September 2025</p> <p>Harvard History, Culture, and Society Workshop, April 2025</p> <p>Harvard Labour/Public Graduate Student Workshop, March 2025</p> <p>Harvard Centre for International Development Ph.D. Retreat, February 2023</p>
<b>Academic Service</b>	<p>Referee for American Journal of Health Economics, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</p> <p>Chair of Harvard Kennedy School Ph.D. Mentorship and Wellness Committees, 2020-2023</p>

<b>Languages</b>	English (native), French (intermediate)
<b>Software skills</b>	Stata, Python, ArcGIS, R, LaTeX, RATS
<b>Citizenship</b>	Canada and USA