

# 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  
Harvard Kennedy School  
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Professor Desmond Ang  
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Professor Claudia Goldin  
Harvard University  
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## Job Market Paper

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

The First Great Migration (1915–1940) marked a turning point in American history: after 50 years of limited migration following emancipation, 1.5 million Black southerners made the dangerous journey North. I use within-city and across-county variation in exposure to the Chicago Defender, the most prominent northern Black newspaper, to examine whether information on southern conditions and northern life sparked the first wave of migrants. The Chicago Defender expanded South in the mid-1910s by partnering with Black railway porters working for the Illinois Central railroad. In cities along the railroad, I find that individuals who lived near a porter carrying the Chicago Defender were more likely to migrate North than otherwise similar individuals who did not. Across counties, I find that Chicago Defender penetration increased out-migration and political organization, and decreased lynchings. Back of the envelope calculations indicate that the Chicago Defender led over 172,000 Black individuals to migrate North by 1940, caused 95 NAACP branches to open, and prevented 216 lynchings. My results demonstrate the value of information in guiding moves to opportunity.

## Papers in Progress

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

Teaching Mental Health: Evaluating India's Happiness Curriculum (with Kevin Carney)

Blowin' in the Wind: The Impact of Extreme Weather on College Major Choice and Green Innovation (with Chloe Tanaka)

## Other Publications or Working Papers

The Effect of Education on Later Life Health Revisited (with Ted Figinski and Alicia Lloro), *FEDS Working Paper 2022-007*

How Does Social Distancing Affect the Spread of Covid-19 in the United States? (with Bhashkar Mazumder), *Chicago Fed Letter No. 442*, 2020

## Teaching

Race and the State: The Role of Public Policy in U.S. Racial Inequality, Harvard Kennedy School Course Assistant for Professor Desmond Ang, 2023

	Intermediate Price Theory, Carleton College Teaching Assistant for Professor Jenny Bourne, 2017-2018
	Introduction to Macroeconomics, Carleton College Teaching Assistant for Professor Nathan Grawe, 2016
	Introduction to Microeconomics, Carleton College Teaching Assistant for Professors Nathan Grawe and Prathi Seneviratne, 2015-2016
<b>Relevant Experience</b>	Research Assistant, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 2018-2020 U.S. Department of Treasury, Office of Economic Policy, Summer Intern, 2017 Cornerstone Research, Summer Analyst, 2016
<b>Fellowships &amp; Awards</b>	Stone Ph.D. Scholar in Inequality and Wealth Concentration, Harvard Kennedy School, 2022 Ph.D. Affiliate of Centre for International Development, Harvard Kennedy School, 2022 Ph.D. Affiliate of Evidence for Policy Design, Harvard Kennedy School, 2022 Doctoral Fellow of Harvard Environmental Economics Program, Harvard Kennedy School, 2020 Top Undergraduate Senior Thesis, Minnesota Economics Association, 2018 Ada M. Harrison Prize in Economics, Carleton College, 2018 Phi Beta Kappa, Carleton College, 2018 Dean's List, Carleton College, 2016-2017
<b>Seminars &amp; Conferences</b>	Southern Economic Association 95th Annual Meeting, November 2025 Harvard Kennedy School Economics and Social Policy Seminar, September 2025 Harvard Economic History Workshop, September 2025 Harvard History, Culture, and Society Workshop, April 2025 Harvard Labour/Public Graduate Student Workshop, March 2025 Harvard Centre for International Development Ph.D. Retreat, February 2023
<b>Research Grants</b>	The Weiss Fund, with Kevin Carney, 2025 (\$14,343) USAID Development Innovation Ventures, with Kevin Carney and Labhya Foundation, 2024 (\$910,000) Stone Research Grant, 2024 (\$1,670) Fund for Innovation in Development, with Kevin Carney and Labhya Foundation, 2023 (€578,624) J-PAL Learning for All Initiative, with Kevin Carney, 2023 (\$43,276) The Weiss Fund, with Kevin Carney, 2023 (\$50,000) Stone Research Grant, 2023 (\$2,500) Mind Brain and Behaviour Initiative, 2022 (\$10,000) J-PAL Post-Primary Education Initiative, 2021 (\$31,724)
<b>Academic Service</b>	Referee for American Journal of Health Economics, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management Chair of Harvard Kennedy School Ph.D. Mentorship and Wellness Committees, 2020-2023
<b>Languages</b>	English (native), French (intermediate)
<b>Software skills</b>	Stata, Python, ArcGIS, R, LaTeX, RATS
<b>Citizenship</b>	Canada and USA