Decades ago, thousands of Louisiana's black residents fled to the North in search of a better life. Today, another migration is taking place. This time, though, Louisiana is losing its best educated, most promising young black people to other states. In this installment of a monthly series, The Advocate looks at Louisiana's population trends and how they are affecting a key part of its population. 

FINDING OPPORTUNITY ELSEWHERE

BY EDWARD PRAIT

Raytheon software engineers — and Southern University graduates — David Anderson, left, and Cheryl Jenkins, center, talk to Southern student Vincent Stokes in front of a map showing the red-colored states in which Raytheon offers employment opportunities. Louisiana is not among the states. The two recruits were among representatives of 80 out-of-state companies at the university's Career Exploration Day Wednesday. In all, 110 companies and agencies were represented.

Raytheon staff photo by Travis Spradling

"There's more opportunities. There's more money. It's a better atmosphere," he said. "I'll move, the economy will be better." If he could find a good-paying job in his field in Louisiana, Stokes said he would stay close to his family. His options to stay are limited, especially because beyond competitive salaries, out-of-state companies offer relocation benefits that make his decision easier.

"As I've been in college, I've come to realize that if I want to get the most out of my money, relocating is the way," Stokes said. Like Stokes, many students do not want to leave the state. One Communications recruiter Jennifer Aldridge said the Baton Rouge company does not have to try hard to compete with out-of-state companies because students are trying to stay in state. For every job, the company selects out of state, it says that they do have to try hard to compete with out-of-state companies because students are trying to stay in state. For every job, the company selects out of state, it says that they do have to try hard to compete with out-of-state companies because students are trying to stay in state.

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LEAVING LOUISIANA

By EDWARD PRATT

Glen Lewis (left) and his brother, Brian, grew up in a black neighborhood in New Orleans. "We didn't have a lot, but we didn't want for food or education," says Lewis, who was a long-time employee of the New Orleans public school system. "We learned to work hard, to make the most of what we had." Lewis retired from the school system in 2000 and now runs a for-hire limousine service in Atlanta. He and his family say they have been impressed with the city's growth and its educational opportunities, which they believe are more abundant than those available in Louisiana.

"I understand that the potential of what I am doing here is greater than what I could ever hope to achieve in Louisiana," Lewis said. "I've been able to make a greater impact here, and I believe that my work is having a positive effect on the lives of those I serve." Lewis said he has been able to provide more services to more people in Atlanta than he ever could have in Louisiana, where he was limited by the state's strict regulations and funding constraints.

"I think that it's important for all of us to consider the potential of what we can achieve outside of our comfort zones," Lewis said. "We should not be afraid to take risks and explore new opportunities, even if they are outside of our usual sphere of influence. We should always be open to new experiences and challenges."