

**THE SEARCH FOR ANTI-RACIAL EXOTICISM  
BLACK LEISURE TRAVEL, THE CARIBBEAN, AND COLD WAR POLITICS,  
1954-1961**

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## ABSTRACT

By the mid-1950s leisure travel became both a new arena in the civil rights movement as well as a tactic in that struggle. Middle class African Americans felt their travel (both domestic and international) constituted both a critique of race relations at home and a realization of their rights as citizens. Alongside this development, I argue, was the proliferation of black travel columns and travel ads that simultaneously upheld the Caribbean as a model of racial progressivism while reinforcing its status as an exotic location dedicated to the pleasure of American tourists. By 1960 this ostensibly apolitical movement became politicized when ex-boxer Joe Louis met resistance from the mainstream press after promoting Fidel Castro's Cuba as a black American playground. In this second section I argue that the scandal surrounding Louis' PR campaign was revelatory of white unease regarding the transnational racial/political connections being forged between a selection of African Americans and Castro, thus constituting the story as yet another episode in the entangled development of the Cold War and the civil rights movement.

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**ILLUSTRATIONS**

- 37 Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart advertisement, in *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, A26.

## INTRODUCTION

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, Fred Avendorph, travel columnist for *The Chicago Defender*, began a series of three articles promoting the Caribbean as a prime vacation destination for middle class black Americans. Avendorph used the space to highlight four main points about the tightly packed collection of islands. First, Avendorph emphasized that “on most of the islands Negroes comprise better than 90 percent of the population, running through all the shades from ebony to white.”<sup>1</sup> Next, Avendorph promoted the increasingly Europeanized cultural expressions of the natives, claiming, “an interesting thing for the island-hopper is to note how the African has taken on the habits and attitudes of the mother country of his particular island.”<sup>2</sup> Then, the columnist advertised the remote, exotic nature of the islands: “the color scheme of the Caribbean justifies the true beauty of the rainbow with its traditional ‘pot of gold’ in the form of vacation treasures which every island has to offer the tourist. The sea is blue, azure, cobalt, turquoise, sapphire, violet, and every other tint in that part of the spectrum.”<sup>3</sup> Finally, Avendorph connected the islands’ blackness to something many African Americans would consider to be the region’s biggest draw: it was a place in which color discrimination and other forms of difference “have no place in the progress of each island’s economy.”<sup>4</sup>

The above piece stands as a microcosm of the way in which black American tourists thought of the islands of the Caribbean. Since the early 1950s, African American travel columnists began promoting the various locations of the Caribbean as both ultra-modern in its racial tolerance and culturally, economically, and socially backward. When travel writers spoke of modernity outside of the realm of race, they often tied such

expressions to Western origins—chic hotels, posh restaurants, European-influenced food, and sexy nightlife activities. Such descriptive tropes played into the African American imagination in two ways. First, descriptions of backward, leisurely natives reflected a traditional North American perspective regarding the Caribbean Other.<sup>5</sup> Second, the tropes positioned the Caribbean Islands as racially tolerant and largely African in their ethnic makeup. While this descriptive binary may strike one as contradictory, it was fundamental to successfully promoting the islands to African American tourists. Indeed, the rise in middle class black affluence following the Second World War slowly registered the “race” as an important market demographic. Nowhere was the slow recognition of African American consumptive power more evident than in the revived North American travel industry. Notions of racial progressivism were merged with an imperialistic outlook to form the perfect vacation for African Americans,

The proliferation of black travel advice columns, juxtaposed with the development of the civil rights movement, presented readers with descriptive analyses of various vacation destinations infused with ongoing (and often critical) commentary about the ongoing battle against segregation. In addition to these discursive elements, the columns urged black Americans to continue traveling (domestically and internationally); promising that increased encounters between blacks and whites would slowly chip away at the edifice of segregation. Like the larger civil rights movement playing itself out around the country, the black travel columns buttressed their claims with a belief in key components of liberal civil rights action—specifically the transformative power of consumption, moral reciprocity, non-violent and meaningful encounters with whites, and the legislative process.<sup>6</sup>

The increasing development of black leisure travel to the Caribbean, and its accompanying discourse, hit a high water mark in 1960 when the ex-boxer Joe Louis attempted to cash in on the trend by striking a deal with Cuba's newest leader: Fidel Castro. While the deal was nothing more than an informal arrangement between Louis' public relations entity, Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart, and Cuba's Tourist Commission (INIT), this joint attempt at promoting Cuba as a vacation destination specifically for black Americans caught the attention (and eventually the ire) of the mainstream press as well as US lawmakers. Though Louis' agreement with the INIT was an explicitly apolitical venture, aimed solely at generating revenue, it was momentarily thrust into the political arena with connections to the international Cold War as well as the international civil rights movement. This momentary collision placed Louis' character as an American, his political/economic motivations, as well as his "race" under the microscope of lawmakers and the mainstream press.

This is a story, then, with multiple historiographical strands. To start, this is a story about imperial visions of the Other. African American tourists and travel columnists, like their Anglo counterparts, imagined the various regions of the Caribbean as static, undifferentiated in their cultural and social composition, lazy, and ultimately devoted to the pleasure of North Americans. In this sense, this paper takes its place among the recent flowering tourism historiography. In particular, it is influenced by Dennis Merrill's conceptualization of US tourists as both informal instruments of foreign policy as well as absorbers of "foreign" cultures.<sup>7</sup>

However, I argue additionally that for many Americans, especially black Americans, leisure travel to regions such as the Caribbean involved what I call a

“simultaneous gaze.” This gaze consists of constructing places like the Caribbean with one’s home culture (in this case the US) as a constant referent. It was with the simultaneous gaze, I argue, that African Americans augmented their traditionally imperial perspective of the Caribbean with a sincere appreciation of the islands’ achievement of racial modernity. Thus, while the US (and the West) stood as culturally, socially, and economically superior to the Caribbean, its perceived lack of a real commitment to civil rights marked its inferiority in at least one area vis-à-vis the Caribbean. Finally, this paper takes its place among other discussions of American imaginations of the Other around this period—specifically with John Dower’s analysis of US depictions of the Japanese during WWII and Christina Klein’s analysis of Orientalist visions of Asia during the Cold War in *Cold War Orientalism*.<sup>8</sup>

This is also a story concerning the intertwined trajectories of Cold War politics and the civil rights movement. In the paper I attempt to highlight the ways in which these two international social and political developments intersected in the period between 1954 and 1961. This analytical framework continues the valued contributions of historians such as Mary Dudziak and Thomas Borstelmann—ultimately focusing on the manifold ways in which Cold War politics informed (or impeded) the efforts of civil rights activists, and how those activists shaped the development of the Cold War itself.<sup>9</sup> I wish as well, to further complicate the history of the domestic civil rights movement; thus following the tack of recent works by Peniel Joseph and Timothy Tyson. In a state of the field, published in *The American Historical Review*, Joseph argued that historians of the sub-field of civil rights must reorient their perspective on the multi-staged movement. In particular, Joseph stated that historians abandon the false dichotomy positing the early



stage of the movement (beginning in the early 1950s and characterized by a liberal political theory) as positive and the latter stage of the movement (beginning in 1965 and increasingly characterized by gun-toting, charismatic leadership, and manly bravado) as negative.<sup>10</sup> I wish to show that African Americans' construction of the Caribbean as concurrently modern and backward shows that as sensitive as blacks were to issues of race, the discursive characteristics of their travel columns remained firmly rooted in imperial constructions of the Other.

The paper starts with an analysis of the blossoming of black travel advice columns and the coexistent critique of North American race relations. More than a simply critique, however, the articles of people like Fred Avendorph and *The Pittsburgh Courier's* Billy Butler positioned leisure travel as a tactic in the fight for integration. As stated above, the critiques of Butler and Avendorph often took liberal perspectives, though this was not always true. Section two focuses on black American constructions of the Caribbean; specifically analyzing the simultaneous search for vacations free of racism and a fascination with the exotic. The source base for this section includes travel advice columns in periodicals such as *The Pittsburgh Courier*, *The New York Amsterdam News*, and *The Chicago Defender* as well as travel ads from these same dailies. Thus, I contend with both textual descriptions of the region as well as static images that, over time, seared themselves into the American imagination. I argue that such images, focusing mainly on scantily-clad women and stock photos of breezy palm trees, not only served as descriptive elements but actually came to represent locations such as Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica. Finally, section three outlines Joe Louis' attempt to capitalize on the growing trend of black leisure travel to the Caribbean and the backlash this endeavor garnered.

Here, I argue that while Louis' goal, like that of Avendorph and Butler, was to engage in an apolitical business venture, it was momentarily thrust into the political spotlight. This moment, like others analyzed by Dudziak, Borstelmann, and Van Gosse, highlighted the ongoing tension between the Cold War and the civil rights movement.

## CHAPTER ONE

### BLACK LEISURE TRAVEL AS ARENA AND TACTIC IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The struggle for civil rights brought momentous changes by 1954. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown vs. The Board of Education* overturned the legality of "separate but equal." For members of the country's black community the decision was the result of myriad struggles such as those in Greensboro, North Carolina—a story recited in William Chafe's *Civilities and Civil Rights*. The positive impact of *Brown* was limited, however. As the historian James Paterson argues, the decision provided for little in the way of reinforcement.<sup>11</sup> The subsequent publication of *Brown II* alleviated the vague language regarding a deadline for the full integration of US schools, but by this time the white backlash to the original court decision had picked up. Black newspapers across the country positioned the 1955 murder of 14 year-old Emit Till as indicative of the tension characterizing race relations at this time.

Against the tapestry of the ongoing civil rights struggles in varying parts of the country, black Americans began engaging in increased leisure travel. Their excursions, whether domestic or international, were constantly shaped by race. The historian John Martin encapsulates the condition of black leisure travel (domestic and international) best:

If you traveled from North to South when Truman was President, you stopped in Washington to switch to Jim Crow cars. If you were black in Washington you went to restaurants, theaters, and schools for blacks only; you lived in a segregated neighborhood because restrictive covenants kept you from whit. If you were black you could not perform on the stage of Constitution Hall,

owned by the Daughters of the American Revolution, though you could sit in the audience; in other theaters you could not sit, only perform. You could dine in Union Station, the YWCA, and some government cafeterias, though not in downtown restaurants.<sup>12</sup>

Things were changing, however, and a 1950 column by *New York Amsterdam News*' travel writer Sherwood Kendall noted the slow upward trend in African American travel.<sup>13</sup> Kendall claimed that prior to 1950; much of African American travel was limited to the domestic sphere, claiming, "Negro travel was entirely domestic, nearby and distant cities within the confines of the continental United States. They went to see relatives and friends or to visit the old home state. For relaxation, they spent a substantial amount at Negro summer resorts and throughout it all they were plagued, harassed and inconvenienced by the miserable and undemocratic set up in America that denied them the right of courteous consideration and first class dining facilities and hotel accommodations."<sup>14</sup> Kendall claimed, however, "[T]his situation has resulted in a slow but tremendous change in the vacation habits of 13 million Americans. We are gradually learning that things are different elsewhere." Other countries will receive us courteously, give us whatever we are willing to pay for, without quibbling, and treat us with the equality that betokens genuine democracy."<sup>15</sup> If domestic travel was interrupted, even barred, African Americans could look south. The Caribbean offered a seemingly safe haven for black Americans planning leisure travel.

By 1960, African Americans were using popular magazines such as *Ebony* as pulpits from which to agitate for change. In a June, 1960 edition of the magazine, African American students from six southern universities published an "Appeal for Human

Rights.” The document contained a categorized list of rights that the students declared “are inherently ours as members of the human race and as citizens of these United States.”<sup>16</sup> The sixth category, titled “Movies, Concerts, Restaurants,” succinctly captures the plight of African Americans in their domestic travel. The section asserts, “negroes are barred from most downtown movies and segregated from the rest. Negroes must even sit in a segregated section of the Municipal Auditorium. If a Negro is hungry, his hunger must wait until he comes to a ‘colored’ restaurant, and even his thirst must await its quenching at a ‘colored’ water fountain.”<sup>17</sup> Magazines such as *Ebony* not only served as platforms for calls to action, but also reflected change already taking place. One article, entitled “Now They Know,” claimed, “the New Negro, the college-bred youth, is demanding a hand and a voice in his destiny. And he has found new techniques for bringing his case to the attention of the public. His methods are quiet assemblies where he is denied service...his buying power gives voice to his disenfranchised millions.”<sup>18</sup> The development of black leisure travel brought with it a unique combination of non-violent, but certainly increasingly assertive, tactics as well as a faith in the transformative power of consumptive patterns.

Within this context emerged a special feature appearing in the travel section of *The Baltimore Afro-American*. The feature, titled “Travel vs. Discrimination,” was a six part series written by *Afro-American* contributor Billy Butler. In the series, Butler used several stories analyzing the consequences of increased black leisure and business travel and the effect it had “upon integration and understanding among peoples.”<sup>19</sup> The articles urged black Americans to continue traveling, to use their movement as a technology in the betterment of race relations, and to demonstrate to society that “generalities can no

longer be applied to us.”<sup>20</sup> For Butler, travel itself was a tactic in the movement for integration.

In his commentary on the struggle against segregation Butler used a few of the articles as platforms extolling the virtues of consumption as a primary weapon. In one April 1954 article Butler relates the story of W.C. Handy, a blues legend, who tried to order cheeseburgers at a Michigan diner. After being refused the right to eat in the diner, Handy returned the twelve cheeseburgers and instructed the clerk to give them to the next twelve white beggars. The story served as the basis for Butler’s argument that black travel, and the ensuing confrontations with white racism, would further the understanding and bonding needed in the pursuit of racial integration. Regardless of whether the event actually happened, or was simply a sort of social movement fable, its didactic approach to money as a useful medium for promoting integration was certainly real. Butler ended the article claiming triumphantly, “yes, many travelers are doing their share to educate and enlighten. The money they spend helps to open doors that might otherwise remain closed.”<sup>21</sup> Butler’s argument regarding the usefulness of consumption hinged on a social and political outlook similar to that of the NAACP at the time. The elite-led organization, focusing the majority of its activism in the 1950s upon matters of civil rights litigation and securing donations from liberal white benefactors, found much legitimacy in the power of consumption and the legislative process.<sup>22</sup>

Butler opened the final installment by claiming to be in accord with the epithet “money is the root of all evil.” But he added a corollary:

money, however, can be used effectively also in removing certain evils...particularly the evil of racial discrimination. The American dollar

commands respect all over the world and is undoubtedly the best door-opener ever invented to date<sup>23</sup>

Butler continued by stating flatly that the “almighty dollar doesn’t care who spends it.”<sup>24</sup>

The piece was ostensibly related to several trips taken by members of the black community in Baltimore. These trip reports were intended to serve as examples of successful holidays enjoyed by blacks both domestically and internationally—a rhetorical strategy aimed at perpetuating the trend of black American travel. Butler noted change already taking place as a result of black travel (and the consumption patterns that derived from it), referring to the “many hitherto staid and stuffy hotels which are now bidding for Negro banquets and conventions...and by airlines, ship lines, and travel agencies which are soliciting Negro patronage.”<sup>25</sup> It was Butler’s faith in the power of money that led him to hail the development of increased black travel as one of the primary weapons against segregation—a faith similar to that which generated much of the theory guiding the civil rights movement at this time.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to Butler’s laudatory appraisal of the dollar was a belief in Christian theology; specifically the Golden Rule—the idea that peace stems from doing to others what one would have done to them. In an April 1954 edition of “Travel vs. Discrimination,” Butler claimed, “any comments regarding the influence travelers are having upon racial discrimination would be incomplete without at least a token reference to the rather small but somewhat potent percentage of wayfarers who, due to lack of understanding or for other reasons, tend to make matters more difficult for those of us who find it necessary to travel.”<sup>27</sup> Butler’s allusion to Christian moralism was justified by an underlying belief that change would occur as a result of further socialization between

whites and blacks. However, Butler evoked the Golden Rule as a way of legitimating the culture of civility in which blacks across the country were encouraged to develop their civil rights programs. Such a tack allowed Butler to argue that just as increased black travel could destroy segregation; it could just as easily reinforce it. The danger of this occurrence lay in the propensity for some black travelers, claimed Butler, to engage in loud conversations in hotel lobbies, leave cigar ashes and cigarette butts in lobby chairs, and even engaging in reckless driving. Butler continued, “so when one of our horn-tooting gay young blades in a red convertible (top down) starts cutting in and out of traffic, endangering the wellbeing of others who are attempting to stay in line, we are inclined to opine that perhaps unimproved race relations are being aided and abetted.”<sup>28</sup> According to Butler, the increased spending power of black Americans, increased black business/leisure travel, and a faith in social reciprocity backed by one of the main tenets of Christianity had set black Americans up for success in their battle for integration. It was their victory to lose, Butler believed, and failing to operate according to the norms of everyday social interaction in the US was one way to do this. Failure to conform to Butler’s guidelines would perpetuate white racism. Interestingly, then, Butler lifts a portion of the responsibility for the existence of racism from the shoulders of whites and places it upon blacks themselves. As stated previously, residing in this formulation was an implicit dedication to the rules of civility—a loose framework of social norms believed essential to harmonious racial interaction.

The notion that civility was a key component to bettering relations between blacks and whites is not new. The historian William Chafe’s *Civilities and Civil Rights* analyzes the integration efforts engaged in by black residents of Greensboro, North Carolina.



Chafe argues that constraining the work of civil rights activists in Greensboro was a deep-seated, but seldom coherent framework of values centering on quiet consensus, order, and reverence for one's white counterparts. Actions that fell outside of what were deemed *civil* gestures, such as engaging in sit-ins or attempting to enroll one's child in an all-white school, were met with harsh responses by whites. Blacks insisting upon operating outside the rules of civility were smeared as rabble-rousers bent on destroying peace and order—thus doing more harm than good to the advancement of their “race.” Operating within such a climate, civil rights activists in Greensboro were left with little room for collective self-assertion and independence. Whites in Greensboro upheld the rules of civility as a way of maintaining order and retarding the pace of change. The historian Beth Tompkins Bates notes a similar dedication to the framework of civility in a piece for *The Journal of American History*, arguing that much of the work of the NAACP in Chicago in the 1930's and 1940's was shaped by its commitment to civil relations with whites.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Butler's April 1954 piece should be seen as part of a similar discourse: one that posits racial harmony as the product of unwavering politeness. Butler furthered this tack by quoting artist Andy Razaf, “the behavior pattern of our people, when traveling, is vital to the interest of the whole race... cleanliness, good manners, sobriety, dignity, respect for other people's property, etc. are the things which will open doors and keep them opened—it's a 365 day-a-year job for all concerned.”<sup>30</sup> For Butler, consistently presenting one's self in a clean and sober manner was key in the road to integration.

Though Butler probably intended his piece to empower black Americans wary of traveling within their own country, at least one reader thought that his article pandered

too much to whites. M. Madison Beale, a white resident of Brooklyn, New York, claimed, “Mr. Butler seems over-kindly in straddling the fence as to which side bears most blame for this un-American treatment of the most-American traveler!”<sup>31</sup> Aside from this criticism, Beale voiced his agreement regarding the relative power blacks derived from their consumption patterns:

I have seen my own relatives and friends drive into roadside places just as tired, just as unkempt and on edge, as any other weary traveler, and cause ten times the scene, and spend ten times less than an equal number of Negro customers...only to have to eat outside. Later I'd make friends with these rejected travelers and find that they were really citizens of achievement, and that they'd be sure to tell as many of their friends as possible to avoid such-‘n’-such a diner, or motel, etc.<sup>32</sup>

Beale asserted that some of those diners and motels that once discriminated against black consumers were now closed because their proprietors were “such prejudiced and poor businessmen that they were rejecting pure gold from a market laden with it, and a market willing to spend it wherever welcomed!”<sup>33</sup> Though Beale disagreed with Butler’s primary assertion: that racism was perpetuated by inconsiderate black travelers, he *did* agree that increasing black purchasing power and consumption was complicating white efforts at maintaining segregation. “Thank God the time has come,” exclaimed Beale, “when many white managers and proprietors are almost crawling on their knees to get the fabulous Negro dollar, if there is such a thing.”<sup>34</sup> Within the nascent black travel industry one finds a strong discourse on the state of civil rights. Not simply a critique or commentary of ongoing struggles, the columns themselves were intended as guides in the creation of new

spaces for African Americans. Like the larger movement itself, the columns hinged on long-held national ideals such as a Christian faith, the power of consumption, and enlightened reason.

By 1955 the Montgomery bus boycott had been organized by a young southern Baptist in Alabama; a move that would help spur years of non-violent protest. By early 1956 the boycott ended with a Supreme Court Ruling establishing the unconstitutionality of Alabama's statute requiring segregated busing. Shortly after this court decision, however, *The Chicago Defender* ran a front-page article reporting that some Southern state officials continued to justify their laws despite an Interstate Commerce Commission order barring *de jure* segregation. While the order banned segregation on busses, trains, and their respective loading stations, *The Defender* article reported that in major Southern cities such as Atlanta, Birmingham, and Columbia, black Americans were still using "black" facilities.<sup>35</sup> Within this context emerged another, more permanent travel columnist, by the name of Fred Avendorph.

Perhaps *The Chicago Defender* had taken note of the popularity of Butler's column in the *Afro-American*. After all, Butler's readership extended from New Jersey, to New York, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1956 the *Chicago Defender* introduced its readers to Fred Avendorph. Fred was the son of Julius Avendorph—himself a *Defender* columnist. Julius, considered by his peers at *The Defender* to be "a prominent figure in Negro society," was a sports writer, a society columnist, and an assistant to John S. Reynolds, president of the Pullman Company.<sup>36</sup> Like his father, Fred seemed to be ubiquitous in Chicago's South Side. Prior to joining *The Defender*, Avendorph was both secretary to and road manager for Duke Ellington. In addition,

Avendorph owned his own travel agency. Tucked neatly within the aging walls of Chicago's Sutherland Hotel was Avendorph's Welcome Tours and Travel Service.

The *Defender's* intent in creating Avendorph's column was twofold. On the one hand its purpose was to "tap the vast travel market among Negroes."<sup>37</sup> On the other, *The Defender* was aware of the problems African Americans faced when they traveled, and so positioned the column as a guide for potential black travelers. Avendorph was probably the perfect choice for *The Defender*. He was clearly experienced in handling large group tours, planning routes, and managing money. His work as road manager to Ellington probably formed him into a proficient navigator of his country's massive web of roads and highways. In the introductory piece the paper claimed, "[Avendorph] has done considerable traveling, and is well aware of the problems for Negro travelers. For example, he is prepared to offer suggestions as to what resorts are open to Negro clientele in the US and can arrange reservations for hotels abroad."<sup>38</sup> *The Defender* was no doubt aware of the novelty of a travel column, written by a black contributor and appearing in a black newspaper, for the article continued, "much of the work must necessarily be *missionary* and *educational*, for until recently such a service as [Avendorph] provides was not available to the South Side."<sup>39</sup>

The column's creation came as a response to the increasing movement of black Americans across borders, both domestically and internationally, and the difficulties accompanying such movement. The introductory piece stated, "one of the chief reasons for the slow growth of Negro travel agencies has been fear of Negro travelers that arrangements for reservations and accommodations would develop into racial discriminations and cause unnecessary embarrassment."<sup>40</sup> *The Defender* added, "but

lately carriers have become aware of the number of Negroes traveling, and have improved their policies.”<sup>41</sup> Avendorph’s column, like Butler’s, was conceived as both the product of civil rights struggles and as a new arena in that struggle. Further, the rise in black leisure travel, and black travel agencies, *The Defender* claimed, was aiding in the creation of a black demographic for the travel industry—something the nation’s businesses were slowly coming to realize. The article closed with the assertion that because of Avendorph’s missionary work, “indirectly, the air, bus, rail, and steamship lines are saying that the welcome mat is out to Negro travelers.”<sup>42</sup> Similar to the work of Butler, Avendorph’s column validated the appropriation of liberal concepts—specifically the notion that money and consumption could erode segregation. Such confidence, we will see, was not without reason.

Indeed, sectors of American commerce were becoming aware of the consumptive power of black Americans, as well as the potential revenue they represented. In 1956, only a few months after *The Defender* launched Fred Avendorph’s column, *The Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page article reporting on the Exposition of Progress, a consumer products show, in New York. The *Journal* began, “a reliable old merchandising scheme, the giveaway, is being used in some new ways by half a hundred manufacturers seeking to boost their sales among this city’s 1.2 million Negroes...travel and vacation guide books, cookie recipes, pamphlets on carpet care and raffles with prizes ranging from a vacation in Haiti...are among the devices employed to gain good will in a sales market some experts figure is worth 1.5 million a year in New York and 16 billion nationally.”<sup>43</sup> Standard Oil Company took the opportunity to distribute “thousands of copies” of “The Negro Traveler’s Guide Book,” an 80-page guide listing hotels,

motels, restaurants, and clubs welcoming Negroes.”<sup>44</sup> While on the ground racial discrimination still played a major role in deciding whether or not a black tourist would stay at a particular hotel, but in general the nation’s business sector began the slow process of recognizing the demographic laid out before it.

The slow recognition of black buying power was not limited to New York, of course, and Avendorph often took pleasure in reporting to his readers on the letters received from various (mostly Caribbean) tourism commissioners beckoning the black American to vacation on their island. As General Paul E. Magloire became President of Haiti in 1956, Adrien Malebranche, director of Haiti’s tourist bureau, began marketing Haiti to black Americans as a source of revenue desperately needed to stimulate the island’s faltering economy. In an April 1956 piece Avendorph informed readers of a letter sent him from Malebranche. Avendorph reported, “evidence of the Negro tourist in Haiti is extremely low, according to Mr. Malebranche, and the natives are puzzled as to why this condition exists...hospitality to all is the Haitian’s motto, however, extreme care is given to make certain that every Negro tourist is accorded the warmth and admiration which prevails throughout the Republic.”<sup>45</sup> In early 1957, Avendorph reported on another letter he received; this time from Charles Burgess, assistant trade commissioner for the British West Indies. In the letter Burgess claimed “our tourist market in the British West Indies has not employed any system of differentiation...and, generally speaking, all are welcome. At the same time, however...the British Caribbean islands receive very few tourist visits from North Americans of color; but nothing has been done about it.”<sup>46</sup>

While Burgess did not promise any efforts that specifically targeted African Americans,

he did claim that Bermuda had laid the welcome mat out for all. This was no small gesture in an industry that still catered mainly to whites.

Avendorph's position as black travel agent went beyond merely describing hotels and tourist attractions. Quite the contrary, his occupation included forging transnational linkages with those tourist commissioners willing to place the acquisition of revenue before racial considerations. Or perhaps it was the opposite. Perhaps, just as the Progress Expo in New York evinced of domestic businesses, Caribbean tourism officials were coming to *notice* blackness in a new way. In commerce generally, and tourism specifically, blackness was seen not simply as a signifier of backwardness or inferiority (as traditional norms of racism dictated), but as a semi-independent racial category wielding its own considerable consumptive power. Thus, the notion of "race," or blackness, was not being destroyed, but simply recast.

Avendorph used his column to construct useful networks domestically as well. In doing so, Avendorph gave the notion of travel agent new meaning for black travelers. Beyond Avendorph's urging potential travelers to tap the services of a travel agent to plan smoother vacations, he also cast the black travel agent as the main source of information and assistance regarding the successful navigation of racial discrimination. A passage from a March 1957 piece exemplifies the dual use of a black travel agent. Avendorph began the article by reporting that *The Defender* was expanding his travel section due to the reader response it received during the previous summer season.<sup>47</sup> Avendorph then went on to argue the importance of using a travel agent to plan one's vacations, claiming, "the world is a pretty big place in which to travel. It presents its problems, too, unless your trip to Peoria or Hong Kong is properly planned and arranged

before you start your journey.”<sup>48</sup> From this, Avendorph confronted the seemingly widespread notion that black travelers would not receive fair treatment from the hotel operators they were sure to encounter, stating, “some of our clients leave the airport or rail terminal and go directly to a parent or friend’s home. Others are of the opinion that the major chain hotels will not accept them.”<sup>49</sup> This is, especially, where Avendorph came in. “This impression is a natural one,” Avendorph agreed, “it is also a message we want to impress upon the traveler concerning hotels. We represent every major hotel chain in the world. Our contacts with various local representatives... enable us to confirm a hotel room with one telephone call...if that fails we call on one of our very good friends, George Cullington or Jack Penneger.”<sup>50</sup> Cullington was regarded by Avendorph to be “one of the top hotel representatives in the country.”<sup>51</sup> Penneger was a Hilton Hotel representative. A later piece from 1958 outlined a detailed network of hotels and amusements available to blacks during their summer travel. For more information, Avendorph pointed readers in the direction of the June, 1958 edition of *Ebony* (the magazine’s summer vacation edition), which presented potential travelers with a chart outlining the best available hotels and resorts in the US.

Avendorph’s columns were replete with this sort of travel advice. After discussing the difficulty for blacks in finding accommodations in Florida, Avendorph promoted the Sir John Hotel as the “country’s leading resort hotel for the accommodation of Negro tourists.”<sup>52</sup> In a later piece, Avendorph used a discussion on the differences between hotels and motels to advise readers to “stop at the first clean motel you come to and ask for a reservation the same as any other American.”<sup>53</sup> Avendorph added caution, “however, we advise skipping Tuscon and Phoenix...where die-hards are still fighting the



Civil War.”<sup>54</sup> In an article appearing a few weeks later Avendorph relayed to his readers the “pleasant experience” the *Defender’s* advertising manager, Alton Davis, had while staying at the Lorraine Hotel and Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. “Alton,” Avendorph mused, “has traveled extensively by plane, train, and car. When he stops for the night he looks for the nearest thing to the comforts of home.”<sup>55</sup> For Avendorph, as with Butler, these trip reports were vital to mapping the country’s friendly places for black travelers.

“Tips for Travelers” was part road map and part manifesto. Through the forging of contacts both national and international, Avendorph created a network of establishments ranging from diners and restaurants to hotels and resorts that accepted the dollars spent by black Americans. In addition, though, the column was intended as a sort of booster. Every weekend the eyes of black Americans scanned the lines of Avendorph’s column, meeting with sentences urging them to continue traveling, to ask for reservations at hotels regardless of their fear of rejection (or worse), and, perhaps most importantly, to *report* on their experiences for the benefit of other readers.

Avendorph’s travel column emerged at a unique time in the overall civil rights movement. Scholars such as Kevin Gaines and Beth Tompkins Bates have previously shown the rich and varying forms of civil rights action playing itself out in Chicago (Avendorph’s home) around this time. Bates shows that by the mid-1930s, the old-guard NAACP organizers such as Walter White and Roy Wilkins were being challenged by new-comers such as Clement MacNeal, John Davis, and Abram Harris, who favored a more direct engagement with racism.<sup>56</sup> This more direct approach to racism, including increased attentiveness to the tension between race and class, and the daily needs of black Chicagoans, clashed with the incumbent leadership’s dedication to the culture of civility

and the legitimacy of the legislative process. Avendorph's column served as a link between the two seemingly exclusive theories. On the one hand, Avendorph praised the NAACP's work in Chicago, and his own arguments regarding black travel fit largely within the framework of "working within the system." On the other hand, Avendorph's column should be seen as addressing some of what Bates called the "bread and butter issues" facing black Americans at this time. Paying attention to bread and butter issues, such as matters of housing and labor, was something the NAACP was failing to accomplish—opting instead to focus on an anti-lynching campaign. Avendorph's direct, and regular, conversations with blacks in Chicago's South Side largely precluded the necessity for elite-driven leadership in the area of leisure travel. In short, Avendorph's discourse was similar to the newly developed tactics used by Martin Luther King, the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). These manifestations were themselves the targets of critique by NAACP leaders such as Roy Wilkins.

Part of the reason for Avendorph's ability to focus on areas that directly challenged white racism was that his enterprise was not constrained by monetary contributions by white liberal benefactors. As Bates shows, in the 1930s and 1940s, the NAACP was plagued by the dual problems of sagging membership (which meant sagging contributions) and an increasingly outmoded civil rights program. This presented NAACP leaders with a conundrum: in order to shore up contributions (again, mainly from white business owners) the organization found itself forced to work within the culture of civility. This only addressed part of the problem, however, as newer organizations such as the National Negro Congress (NNC) began outpacing the NAACP

as the guarantor of black rights. The NNC, which was itself far less dependent upon white donors, was therefore free to issue more militant pronouncements rallying blacks together. Similar to the NNC, Avendorph could speak directly to readers, foregoing the traditional white intermediaries constraining the work of the NAACP.

Avendorph frequently cited the spending power of black Americans as having the ability to chip away at segregation. In one article Avendorph asserted, “[T]oday the Negro’s spending power has gained the recognition of all industry. Advertising agencies are paid fabulous fees to write copy and design ads with special appeal to the Negro.”<sup>57</sup> Avendorph continued, “the financial section of every major newspaper in the country has at some time or other devoted a feature article concerning the spending power of the Negro man and woman.”<sup>58</sup> Just as Butler believed, Avendorph was convinced that increasing black affluence, and the increased travel that such a development allowed for, was forcing proprietors to consider a powerful question: are the principals regarding racism worth sacrificing the potential revenue from an entire demographic? The question was profound, and not all business owners and white travel agents were prepared to make such a sacrifice. In the midst of the battle between Eisenhower’s 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus’ National Guards in Little Rock in late 1957, Avendorph exclaimed that over 40% of the mail he received regarding his column was from white travel agents requesting information to pass on to black tourists requesting information. “Why did the white agents ask for a supply of our folders? Why should any competitor approve of our agency operation to the extent of welcoming the opportunity to send us business? The most direct answer is the inability of the white agent to advertise and operate integrated group tours.”<sup>59</sup> Avendorph went further, questioning the

usefulness, even the desirability of integrated tours if it meant traveling in a constant state of worry or fear. Avendorph promoted the fact that his travel agency, Welcome Tours and Travel, regularly ran all-black vacation packages for the benefit of its clients. Almost as if he anticipated the challenge from his readership, Avendorph defended his promotion of all-black tours, claiming “race haters have no place in our social and economic structure, yet class and color distinction is a *part* of the Negro’s way of life.”<sup>60</sup>

Avendorph then spoke directly to the ongoing struggle for integration, arguing that “upholding the federal laws of our country is one thing, but forced integration in group travel means social equality in every aspect. Why ruin a pleasant vacation when it can mean compulsory association with someone far below your own standards and morals?”<sup>61</sup> This was a clear challenge to the provisions in *Brown* and the Court’s later decision regarding the Little Rock crisis. It was only a rhetorical question, but for all those African Americans reading Avendorph’s column, it flipped the notion of integration on its head and forced readers to consider the worth of the cause itself. The implications of such a suggestion were profound in a period in which integration was the *zeitgeist* of the civil rights movement. This is not to claim that Avendorph was merely being cynical. To the contrary, he was urging blacks to realize that with the coming of black travel agents and all-black group tours, African Americans could now choose *not* to be included in a vacation in which an encounter with racism was all but guaranteed. The idea behind all of this, of course, was that if large numbers of black Americans were to forego white travel outfits and use all-black services, the rise of the black travel industry would catch the eye of mainstream agencies and force them to consider the potential revenue they were missing by maintaining their discriminatory practices. Whether or not

this tactic was viable is not important. The significance of this rhetoric, running throughout the discourses of both Butler and Avendorph, is that black consumptive patterns, in conjunction with reasonable white proprietors, would eventually destroy the edifice of segregation. Avendorph's entrepreneurial spirit had more immediate concerns as well. After all, what could be better for business than to inform an entire market demographic that *you* were one of their only sources for a vacation without racial discrimination? Avendorph's challenge to the notion of integration had two levels of import. First, he probably believed that by outwardly claiming his intention (and by extension, the intentions of all African Americans) to boycott the ostensibly integrated tours, he was warning white proprietors of the potential revenue they were losing. Second, we must remember that Avendorph himself owned a travel agency, and probably saw the all-black vacation package as a lucrative venture.

The tendency for Avendorph to call on black travelers to deny certain locations their patronage was a recurrent feature of *Tips for Travelers* and had its roots in the larger civil rights movement. In a 1957 piece on Bermuda, Avendorph urged travelers not to visit the island due to its extreme discriminatory practices. He finished the piece by stating, "we are not convinced of any satisfactory reason to suddenly start beating our drums for tourist trade to Bermuda."<sup>62</sup> One reason that Avendorph published such critiques was to warn travelers to stay away from locations where discrimination was especially frequent or violent. However, inherent in this tactic was the belief, perhaps unconscious, that by denying patronage to specific locations, black Americans were impacting the travel industry as a whole. The byproduct of such a faith, of course, was the construction of a network of hotels, motels, resorts, and other facilities that catered to

black tourists. Critiques such as the one above appeared regularly in Tips for Travelers. Indeed, just as equal rights could be realized through spending and travel, power could also be exerted by *not* spending, *not* traveling, and stating the reasons for not doing so. Thus, Avendorph spoke for an entire sector of middle-class Americans when he criticized or applauded the actions or policies of a particular establishment.

Black American discourse on travel combined an eye toward civility with an emergent attentiveness to blacks' daily needs. In addition to Butler and Avendorph's critique of North American race relations were literal and figurative road maps instructing middle class blacks on how to travel, where to travel, and how to conceive of travel itself. This section was intended to show that black travel advice columns existed not simply as an arena in the battle for integration, but also as tracts positioning travel as a tactic in the movement. As the next section details, the desire for vacations free of racism often converged with a preoccupation with the exotic. This fascination with the exotic, characterized by notions of sensuality, backwardness, and a devotion to North American pleasure, was increasingly evident as the Caribbean Islands came into the focus of writers like Avendorph.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SIMULTANEOUS SEARCH FOR THE EXOTIC

As the Second World War began its slow drift into the American memory, the post-War period crept into place. Middle-class Americans were presented with greater financial opportunities. Spending on jewelry, women's clothing, department store wares, and watches more than doubled.<sup>63</sup> In addition, Americans began to travel again. As the historian Rosalie Schwartz asserts, Americans' consumptive desires during the war were only "deterred, not interred."<sup>64</sup> However, due to the post-War chaos reigning in Europe, the North American gaze largely shifted toward its own hemisphere.<sup>65</sup> Latin America and the Caribbean stood poised to receive increasing numbers of eager American tourists. The regions, standing as exotic refuges for tired North Americans hoping for much-needed pampering, caught the eye of black American tourists. Black newspapers advertising vacations to places like the Caribbean positioned the region as different, sensual, and dedicated to the pleasure of North Americans. To be sure, the exoticism communicated by articles and advertisements was not limited to African American newspapers. On the whole, North Americans became aware of the Caribbean by way of such mainstream materials as travel ads in *The New York Times* and tourist guides—materials that graphically and repeatedly transmitted the exotic beauty and hedonistic pleasures of Latin American and Caribbean tourism.

That North Americans began to view Latin America and the Caribbean as viable tourist destinations was not due solely to the inability of visiting war-ravaged Europe.<sup>66</sup> By the early 1950s, Latin America and the Caribbean had been insinuating themselves in the US imagination more and more. As Schwartz shows in *Treasure Island*, Hollywood

films such as *That Night in Rio*, *They Met in Rio*, *Luxury Liner*, and *Week-end in Havana* took their place alongside State Department films such as *Viva Mexico* and *Cuba: Land of Romance*.<sup>67</sup> One cannot forget to add the wholesome, if spastic and often absurd, comedy of *I Love Lucy*—in which Lucy’s Cuban-born husband looms so large. Secondly, air travel was made more affordable in the post-War period. A 1950 article promoting Cuba as a prime tourist destination in the *New York Amsterdam News* claimed that the island “can be reached so easily and in such a short time that it is rapidly becoming recognized as the ideal spot for that ‘quickie vacation.’ The advent of general air travel has brought the ‘quickie vacation’ into its own.”<sup>68</sup> Caribbean governments began capitalizing on the trend, and presented their islands as the perfect vacation zones. The Cuban government, under Fulgencio Batista, serves as but one example. After it was reported that North American tourists spent 27 million dollars in the first seven months of 1950, Batista pledged to expend an additional 5 million dollars to promote tourism to the region. Likewise, increased travel to Latin America and the Caribbean received a considerable boost from the Eisenhower Administration. By 1955, the White House acknowledged the importance of North American dollars spent abroad by expanding the duty-free exemption from \$500 to \$1,000 for travelers spending at least twelve days outside of the United States.<sup>69</sup> Reporting on the administration’s decision to raise the exemption, *The New York Times* claimed that “the American traveler who spends his holidays and his money in foreign lands is helping his host countries to close their dollar gaps and balance their foreign exchange positions vis-à-vis the United States.”<sup>70</sup> North Americans were not only positioned as representatives of an increasingly affluent society, but were also seen as instruments of foreign policy.



Despite the availability of cheaper flights, southbound travel was not for everyone. In comparison with those tourists headed north to ski resorts, the “patron of the palms is, more often than not, a man of ample means and a hysterical sport shirt, who can afford to go farther, stay longer and take life easier.”<sup>71</sup> The answer to the question of whether to vacation North or South depended on “the character, personality, and economic position of the vacationist.”<sup>72</sup> The vacationist, however, had access to a wealth of information to help resolve the question of where to relax. A January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1950 article from *The New York Times* offered a comparative analysis of varying vacation destinations and their cost. According to this article, one could spend 10 days in Nassau and Cuba, with all expenses paid, for \$230.00. Alternately, one could spend 11 days in Florida with meals excluded, for \$114.00. Fourteen days in Hawaii, however, with all expenses included, set the traveler back \$922.00. In addition to price break-downs such as the one above, the potential traveler could choose from a wide variety of package deals that significantly lowered the price of travel. The appearance, even proliferation of package deals was itself indicative of the rise of Latin American and Caribbean locations as prime tourist destinations. One *New York Times* article asserts, “the thing the is making the summer tourist season in the southern resorts such a success is the businesslike approach the resort operators have taken to arranging the kind of holidays their customers want, and merchandising them.”<sup>73</sup> In addition to saving on merchandised holidays, potential tourists saved on off-season travel. Off-season travel allowed tourists to enjoy “a holiday in a completely foreign atmosphere that is not too far from home and at rates considerably below those prevailing in the States.”<sup>74</sup> The same *Times* article states, “the summer holidayer who pays \$13 a day or more for a room, with or without breakfast and

dinner, in a plush hotel, or \$3 and \$4 a day in a modest guest house, sometimes with a full set of meals, can be sure that his wealthier friends who vacationed there in January and February paid nearly twice as much for the same room and food, the same beach and the same scenery.”<sup>75</sup> While cost posed a clear restraint on the *type* of vacation they experienced, package deals and off-season travel made tourism available to a wide spectrum of potential vacationists—including African Americans.

As some of the more recent histories of tourism have shown, the North American desire to vacation abroad, especially in the Caribbean, was concomitant with the desire for sensuality, foreignness, and frivolity.<sup>76</sup> Because regions like the Caribbean rarely, if ever, entered into the American imagination for reasons other than vacationing, they were seldom perceived as anything other than as playgrounds for Americans. Such tropes were not simply descriptors, then, but the very values that comprised the type of vacation that Americans wanted. The perceived backwardness of countries such as Haiti, Jamaica, and Cuba provided the perfect settings for Americans wishing to escape the doldrums of everyday life in the US. Caribbean vacation destinations were everything that North America was not—almost. For example, backwardness could be both a draw and a source of criticism. Backwardness was acceptable when it implied vistas of colonial architecture and panoramas of unadulterated wildlife. It was acceptable when it meant throbbing voodoo drums and carefree, even ignorant natives. It was unacceptable when it meant limited tourism infrastructure (i.e. food, drink, entertainment, guided tours) that discriminating Americans were coming to expect from their playgrounds. Thus, leisure travel of any kind involved a sort of simultaneous gaze—a gaze that focused on the features of the destination, but always relied on home as a point of reference.

Thus when *The New York Amsterdam News*' Sherwood Kendall, an African American travel columnist and owner of King Tours and Travel, stated, "I found Havana changed... It is becoming more Americanized, but not enough to destroy its distinctive charm,"<sup>77</sup> he meant that the closer Havana came to resembling an American city (that is, modern), the further it became from fulfilling his desires as a tourist. Fred Avendorph described the opposite scenario in his discussion of the virtues of consulting a travel agent. He related a story in which two young women had had a bad experience during their unguided tour of Cuba. Describing one of the "seedy bars" visited by the two girls, Avendorph likened it to a similar establishment on the riverfront of Hong Kong. With his help, Avendorph promised, the girls never had to see that side of Cuba.<sup>78</sup> Thus the American construction of backwardness, in all its multivalent iterations, held contradictory meanings. It was the signifier of the perfect vacation: indeed, just the right amount of dirt roads, the right level of roaming peasants, and equal portions of sand and sun was exactly what those Americans looking to "escape" searched for. When efforts at modernization impinged on these features, they earned criticism for not seeming foreign enough. Inherent in the desire for a tropical vacation was the search for adventure, exoticism, and sex. It was the job of the travel agent, working in conjunction with other agents, tourist bureaus, and governments to form the international landscape to fit the contours of such a search. The promotion of foreign countries such as those in the Caribbean thus involved erasing or emphasizing those elements thought to be either disagreeable or attractive to the consumer. In their descriptions of the Caribbean, black travel columnists like Fred Avendorph often oscillated between praise for racial progress and a search for the exotic.

For black American tourists the simultaneous gaze combined the search for the exotic and the search for anti-discriminatory establishments. The various islands composing the Caribbean often held both in equal measure. Thus for writers like Fred Avendorph and Sherwood Kendall, the Caribbean offered the black American that perfect retreat from modernity in conjunction with a progressive, perhaps even ultra-modern approach to the concept of race. For these two reasons, Avendorph often wrote of the perks of a Caribbean vacation. Specifically, he highlighted the destinations' primitivism (typified by their peoples and culture) and lush surroundings in addition to their hospitality toward blacks.

In early May of 1956 *The Chicago Defender* was dedicating the majority of its page space to coverage of the struggle for integration. On the front page of the May 5<sup>th</sup> edition *The Defender* criticized the Methodist General conference for its decision to abstain from any "concrete action" against segregation before 1960.<sup>79</sup> Another headline reported Eleanor Roosevelt's resignation from the board of the NAACP, citing rumors that her resignation came as a result of NAACP-leader Roy Wilkins' speech in Chicago warning black Americans that they may have to leave the Democratic Party in favor of the Republicans. On page four of this edition of *The Defender*, where Avendorph's travel column resided, more articles appeared documenting the international struggle for civil rights. Just above "Tips for Travelers" was an article documenting the two-year old Algerian war for independence. The article publicized Algerian National Liberation chairman Mohammed Khaider's call for Algerians to engage in civil disobedience against the French.<sup>80</sup> This call would come mere months before the Battle for Algiers.

Thus, embedded within the various transnational iterations, reflections, and impressions of the civil rights movement was Avendorph's "Tips for Travelers." In this particular article, Avendorph began a two week run promoting Haiti as a viable vacation destination for the average (middle class) black American. Avendorph's series on Haiti focused on the ease and affordability of a Haitian vacation, "from Miami to Port-au-Prince there are approximately fourteen first class flights; the round trip fare is as low as \$105.00;" the necessity of using a travel agent, "our 'Haiti holiday' series should start with the proper atmosphere, so we will select as our subjects, Mr. and Mrs. Average Worker who contemplate a vacation in Haiti and who seek the services of the local travel agent;" to brief descriptions of the amenities available on the island, "Port-au-Prince has deluxe hotels, restaurants, theaters, sidewalk cafes, a gallery, museum, famed cathedrals, business and shopping centers."<sup>81</sup>

Avendorph's discourse on Haiti exemplifies much of how African Americans talked about the Caribbean in the 1950s. In "Tips for Travelers," Haiti is constructed as exotic, familiar, *and* racially progressive. In the second article in the series Avendorph shifted his attention to the Haitian towns of Cap Haitien and Milot, claiming visits to these locales were essential "before leaving the exotic land of Haiti."<sup>82</sup> Of primary concern in Avendorph's description of Cap Haitien and Milot was highlighting those towns' colonial architecture. Here, Haiti's exoticism stems precisely from its familiarity to the West. Avendorph claimed, "Cap Haitien is considered the most historical city of the Republic because its colonial architecture and its narrow streets never fail to please the tourists."<sup>83</sup> On Milot, Avendorph pointed to the "official residence of King Christophe during the building of the Citadel...its massive walls and bastions rising

dizzily from the top of a 3,000-foot mountain.”<sup>84</sup> Avendorph felt that he had digressed enough, stating, “it would require many more columns of space to adequately describe the achievements and many offerings of the mighty Republic of Haiti but we must continue on to other lands.”<sup>85</sup> To Avendorph, the achievements of Haitian culture were reflected in the stonework of colonial power. Its familiarity rests in its connection to the West—a historical connection forged and maintained through force and cooptation. The exoticism of Haiti is implied here, too. Though, the emphasis is not physical, but temporal. The colonial architecture stood as a viewing glass through which the tourist could glimpse achievements long since erased by time. There is no discussion of current Haitian culture or modernity as reasons for Americans to visit, only the construction of Haiti as a living museum—a testament to a civilization overrun by the speed of progress. Its existence, according to Avendorph, was as a relic to be studied, critiqued, and enjoyed by North Americans.

The earlier assertion that there was no analysis of Haitian current events or culture was slightly inaccurate. In fact, such analysis, albeit brief, was probably, to potential black travelers, the most glaring characteristic of Avendorph’s piece. In the article, Avendorph published another letter from the Haitian government—this time from President Magloire himself. The letter positioned Haiti much in the same way Avendorph did, as a playground for Americans, but added one crucial element: that of race. Magloire claimed, “in this troubled world of today, Haiti is a choice land, where without prejudice of color, creed, and race, one can find an atmosphere of peace and quiet, a restful climate and agreeable vacation, which is so necessary for those who lead an active life.”<sup>86</sup> Embedded in this claim were two important codes for black leisure travelers. The first

was that Haiti was dedicated to the destruction of segregation. The second was the notion that Haiti was specifically “designed” for American tourists looking for “peace and quiet.” Surely, peace and quiet held extra meaning for blacks who found a direct connection between the phrase and anti-discriminatory racial policies. Thus, according to Magloire, and by extension Avendorph, Haiti was existent not just for Americans, but for black Americans specifically.

The oscillation between exoticism and a race-based modernity occurred frequently in Avendorph’s work. Often, discussions of a location’s exoticism or modernity were symbolized by its physical or imaginary proximity to the West. Such a duality was part of African Americans’ search for the perfect vacation. In an article on Puerto Rico, Avendorph claimed, “you are ‘at home abroad’ in Puerto Rico, for it is part of the United States, yet truly foreign in atmosphere.”<sup>87</sup> Avendorph continued: “it has been called the most European of the Caribbean countries and with justice. The beaches are wonderful, the hotels among the most luxurious, the food comparable to the best in Spain and Paris. Yet you have a wonderful feeling of being at home in Puerto Rico despite the fact that chaperons are still the fashion and that coffee and banana trees flourish before your eyes.”<sup>88</sup> In an analysis of the Jamaican city of Spanish Town, Avendorph claimed, “the village square boasts the remnants of the Governor’s residence, the old Court House and the Assembly, all examples of 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture.”<sup>89</sup> In the same article Avendorph previewed the topic for the next edition: Havana, Cuba. On Cuba, Avendorph cited “its famed night life,” claiming it to be both “naughty and exciting.”<sup>90</sup> Avendorph again commented on Havana’s architecture, writing, “a good bit of its architecture in the oldest part of the city resembles that of Paris.”<sup>91</sup>

In a 1957 article on Haiti, Avendorph again centered on its architecture, stating, “one of the most notable traits of this picturesque Caribbean vacationland is its individuality. And nowhere is it expressed more delightfully than in its architecture.”<sup>92</sup> Avendorph drew more connections to the West while simultaneously emphasizing the island’s exotic allure, stating, “as constant as the throbbing of the country’s voodoo drums is the undefined lure that keeps visitors coming back to Haiti. It includes the weather, the mountains, French reverence for food, superlative service in luxurious accommodations, nightclubs and dances, and the surging renaissance of art among its people.”<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the current surging renaissance of art among the Haitian people barely stood out among the island’s throbbing rhythmic patterns, its French-inspired food, and its pleasant weather. Thus, the authenticity of a vacation destination hinged on its ability to evince Western standards while simultaneously adhering to American constructions of what it meant to be exotic. To claim that Caribbean town resembled Paris would be considered a draw for many tourists. To claim that a location resembled a riverfront bar in Hong Kong, for example, would be to degrade the location as a viable tourist destination. Likening locations in the Caribbean to Western cities was one way of promoting that location as an authentic vacation spot.

It was important for travel columnists like Avendorph to promote a country’s “ultra-modern establishments with air-conditioned rooms, cocktail lounges, swimming pools, smart night clubs, and other fun features,” just as it was important to note throbbing voodoo drums and a hospitable attitude toward black Americans. In a 1960 article on the Caribbean, Avendorph asserted, “on most of the islands Negroes comprise better than 90 percent of the population, colorfully running through all the shades from



ebony to white.”<sup>94</sup> While the abundance of black natives in the Caribbean was an added draw for Avendorph, it seemed that the blacks in these locations did not have their own culture or identities, but were instead empty reflections of their colonizers. Avendorph continued, “an interesting thing for the island-hopper is to note how the African has taken on the habits and attitudes of the mother country of his particular island. The Barbadian is very English; Martinique and Guadeloupe swarm with dark Frenchmen and Parisian coquettes; the Dutch Negroes are sober and solid citizens; the Negro of the American Virgin islands is already enveloped in the influences of Greenwich Village, and the American small town.”<sup>95</sup> Positioned in this way, the black Caribbean natives were to seem familiar to blacks in America; making the prospect of tourism to that region more agreeable. Readers of Avendorph’s “Tips for Travelers,” thus came to imagine places like Haiti as lands in which Otherness and chaos clashed with familiarity and order. This is how the Caribbean was constructed: as uneasily and eternally tottering uneasily between two periods of time, the past and the present, and awaiting the arrival of American tourists to absorb such a hopelessly dichotomous existence. The very meanings of terms like vacation, relaxation, and enjoyment, when referencing regions such as the Caribbean, promised such an experience. When one wanted to relax, to escape the pressures of daily life in the US, they envisioned backward peoples living leisurely lives that were at least partly devoted to the pleasure of Americans. In a May, 1960 article on the Caribbean, Avendorph claimed, “you cannot understand a Haitian, you can only enjoy him.”<sup>96</sup>

Travel columnists were at the forefront in forming American images of regions like the Caribbean. Publishing a review of a potential destination was a lot like a contemporary movie review. The columnist visits the attraction, takes notes on what they

see, and composes an assessment of their findings—listing the pros and cons for the reader. Thus, it is not *that* the columnist reviews a location that is most important, but the notion of *how* the location is reviewed. As Avendorph and Kendall showed, whether a location received a decent rating was based largely on how well it played into North American standards—just the right amount of exoticism and just the right amount of familiarity. That certain locations promised vacations free of racial discrimination certainly sweetened the pot. And while text itself creates imagery in the reader's mind, actual visual aids often accompanied travel columns. These aids took the form of travel ads and provided consumers with their own method of presenting the Caribbean as simultaneously foreign and domestic—exotic and Western. Throughout the period immediately following World War II travel ads filled the pages of both mainstream and African American newspapers. Often, the ads presented the locations as feminine, beckoning the reader to come to them with promises of relaxation and days filled with gaiety and frivolity.

By 1961, black travel to the Caribbean had been developing steadily and Cuba's year-old revolution was gaining much attention from sectors of the United States' black community. Attempting to cash in on this trend, ex-boxer Joe Louis Barrow and his associates at Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart (LRL) began working with the Cuban Tourist Commission (INIT) to promote African American tourism to Fidel Castro's Cuba. As part of their campaign, the LRL produced travel advertisements that positioned Cuba very much in the same way Fred Avendorph promoted the various islands of the Caribbean: as both racially tolerant and poised to pleasure North Americans. The advertisements placed by the Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart agency in 1960 capitalized upon

the increased popularity of black leisure travel. While promoting the type of anti-discriminatory vacations that African Americans were pushing for, they simultaneously insisted upon notions of sensuality and a dual insistence upon the Caribbean's foreignness and domesticity. The LRL ads, like their counterparts in the African American and mainstream newspapers, were bound up in a dichotomous search for exoticism and racial tolerance.

One of the LRL ads, placed in the May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960 edition of *The Pittsburgh Courier* claimed a “special low, low cost—whatever way you travel—wherever you stay.”<sup>97</sup> Two other LRL ads, appearing in two separate editions of *The Chicago Defender*, used the same copy to advertise the affordability of the trip. References to the trip's affordability were augmented by the ads' insistence that Cuba had entered a “new era in vacation fun.”<sup>98</sup> Advertising Cuba's Independence Day celebrations, a separate LRL ad characterized the party as representative of “a new era in fabulous festival.”<sup>99</sup> The “new era” that the ads refer to is ambiguous; though this ambiguity was probably intended. It is possible that the language refers to Cuba's newfound independence from its informal North American colonizer. On the other hand, the “new era” could conceivably refer to an era in which African Americans might vacation in locations free of racial discrimination. Two more lines of copy that all three of the LRL ads share reinforce this second possibility. The first line beseeches the ad's viewer to “come to Cuba—the tourist paradise, were you get *first class treatment—as a first class citizen.*”<sup>100</sup> This line is far less ambiguous. Meeting the challenges posed in Kendall's 1950 article on Bermuda, this copy assured African Americans of a form of dignified travel not readily available at home. The second line states simply, “Cuba—where there is friendliness from the cop on

the beat to the people on the streets.”<sup>101</sup> The copy suggests an implied understanding of the police brutality and frequent lynchings occurring in regions across the United States.<sup>102</sup>

Paralleling the LRL’s advertisement of non-discriminatory vacationing was the notion of Cuba as both sensual and exotic; constructions that appeared not only in historically black newspaper ads, but also in the ads of mainstream periodicals such as *The New York Times*. In these constructions, Cuba was imagined not *only* as exotic, but also as interchangeable with other locations of the Caribbean. The importance of comparing these ads with those found in more mainstream news publications, such as *The New York Times* is twofold. First, the comparison offers evidence that African Americans did not exist in a political, social, or cultural vacuum vis-à-vis white Americans. That is, black American conceptions of the Caribbean did not exist *apart* from white Americans, but indeed borrowed imagery and pop culture references from larger social and cultural milieus that were constructed (albeit unevenly) as constituent parts of the longer history of American empire.<sup>103</sup> Second, such comparison gives further evidence that this borrowed imagery centered on notions of overt sensuality as well as a delicate balance between foreign otherness and proximate domesticity—exoticism and modernity.

A majority of the images in the LRL’s ads depict scantily clad women smiling back at the viewer. In one of the ads a woman in her bathing suit poses next to a set of stairs leading into a large pool. In a second ad, published in the May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960 edition of *The Pittsburgh Courier*, the only image is of a female. The woman, appearing only in her bathing suit, sits seductively next to the advertisement’s text. “Come to Cuba: the tourist paradise,” the ad exclaims. In a third ad, this time appearing in the *Baltimore Afro-*

*American*, images of women in their bathing suits dominate the page. In the top left a woman, walking away from the camera and tossing her hair back, shoots the viewer a quick smile. At the bottom right of the ad stands another woman, shot from the waist up, sporting a large smile filled with white teeth. Such sensual imagery was not confined to the ads produced by the LRL. Indeed, anyone who flipped to page twenty-three of the January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1958 edition of the *Times* would be greeted by two dark-skinned Cuban dancers, the female scantily clad, complete with ruffled shirts.<sup>104</sup> Were they dancing the rumba? That small bit of Latin American exoticism was accompanied by ads promoting Cuba's modern hotels, such as the Hotel Nacional. "You'll cherish every magic moment of your stay at the Hotel Nacional—famed around the globe for genial hospitality, wonderful food, and excitement."<sup>105</sup> The ad also mentioned the Hotel Nacional's owner, Wilbur Clark, owner of Las Vegas' Desert Inn; no doubt a tactic intended to assure potential guests of its prestige. Like *The New York Times* ad, the images in the LRL's ads not only speak for Cuba, but also operate in the viewer's imaginations *as* Cuba. In the LRL's ads, Cuba is represented by a feminine image.

That women represented the locations plays into a larger history of North American images of the Caribbean. As the historian Kristin Hoganson argues in *Fighting for American Manhood*, lawmakers debating America's intervention in Cuba's war with Spain often positioned Cuba as a distressed female. Notions of chivalry, heroism, and masculine empowerment pervaded arguments in favor of intervention and thus helped shift Congress toward a declaration of war against the Spanish. Just as lawmakers and newspapers constructed Cuba as a distressed female in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, travel ads used the image of the female; this time to portray the Caribbean as carefree, sensual, and

devoted to the pleasure of the North American. It is not only the women in the bathing suits, relaxing poolside, that urge African Americans to “come to Cuba.”<sup>106</sup> It is precisely that Cuba itself, presented in the feminine form, beckons to the potential tourist, beseeching them to experience the “tropical paradise.” It is Cuba itself, taking on the role of the woman, that smiles to the viewer and offers herself as a prime destination for a “new era in vacation fun.”<sup>107</sup>

That the LRL ads feature dark-skinned models matters, too. On the one hand, they take their place amidst *The New York Times* advertisements analyzed above. They help stress the exotic nature of the destinations being referenced. Indeed, they function as *symbols of exoticism*-- as enduring metaphors for difference vis-à-vis North Americans. Unlike the ads in *The Times*, however, the dark-skinned models in the LRL ads made it possible for African Americans to envision themselves as the tourists. Their darker hues were themselves indicative of the “new era” in “vacation fun.” The darker-skinned models played a dual role, then, for the viewer. While referencing a longer history of American imperial visions of the Other as feminine, the images simultaneously implied the rather recent development of black leisure travel. In addition to the symbolism perhaps intended by the scantily clad women, are more obvious, even stock, images of palm trees, beaches, and men playing golf. Race plays a part here also, as even the image of the golfer depicts a black caddy assisting a black competitor.

Display Ad 2 -- No Title  
 Afro-American (1893-1988); May 7, 1960;  
 FirstQuest Historical Newspapers Baltimore Afro-American (1893-1988)  
 pg. 6

**CHURCHES, CLUB,  
 ORGANIZATIONS  
 FOR YOUR ANNUAL OUTING  
 CONTACT  
 MARK-HAVEN BEACH  
 TAPPANNOCK, VA.  
 HI 3423**

**New FOREST VIEW LOUNGE  
 and MOTEL**  
 Twelve - Rooms with Showers &  
 TV, Club, Pool, and Bar. A. J. Jones, Prop.  
 1000 N. W. 10th St., Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.  
 33305

**HOTEL ALEXANDER**  
 A Home away from Home  
 FREE PARKING LOT  
 1000 N. W. 10th St., Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.  
 33305

**MAPLE INN**  
 Spend your vacation at Maple Inn on Long Lake & Selma Lake. 48  
 miles of lake, with drive to the White Mountains in New Hampshire.  
 Breakfasts and dinners. For reservations call South Drift, Drift, Drift,  
 Highway 200, White Star St., New James Beach, N.C.



**FOR A NEW ERA IN TROPICAL PARADISE**

visit *Cuba's*  
**INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS**  
**MAY 20th -- MAY 30th**

COME TO *Cuba*—THE TOURIST PARADISE  
**WHERE YOU GET:**

FIRST CLASS TREATMENT — AS A FIRST CLASS CITIZEN

**WHERE THERE ARE:**

FABULOUS —HOTELS—RESTAURANTS—NIGHT CLUBS—THEATRES!

EXCITING —GAMES—SPORTS—TOURS—CARNIVALS!

COLORFUL —BEACHES—MARINAS—SPAS—MOUNTAIN RESORTS!

**CUBA** —Where there is friendliness from the cop on the beat to the people  
 on the streets.

**VISIT** —With us for this gigantic May 20th thru May 30th long-week-end  
 celebration.

**SPECIAL** —low, low cost—whatever way you travel—wherever you stay.

COME AND DISCOVER THE REAL **CUBA** FOR YOURSELF

*You'll Love The Difference*

**ASK YOUR TRAVEL AGENT OR WRITE**

CUBAN TOURIST COMMISSION

Promenade, Rockefeller Center, New York City

336 East Flagler St., Miami — Linea Y A, Vedado, La Habana, Cuba



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Sensuality was indeed at the heart of the LRL's advertisements, as it was for most destinations exoticized by the American imagination.<sup>108</sup> For example, Cuban exoticism appears in its barest form in *Your Holiday in Cuba*, a travel guide produced by Lyman Judson and Ellen Judson in 1952. The guide was published as part of a larger effort to cast the varying Latin American countries as distinct and unique from each other. Punctuating their commentary on the island's many natural and man-made sites, the authors stress its overt sensuality and informal nature. Early on the writers designate Cuba as "the original land of romance. Under a tropical moon, trade winds rustling the

palms, Caribbean and Gulf Stream waters sparkling along the shores, and the rhythmic jungle-inspired music in your ears—well, the rest is up to you.”<sup>109</sup> One can see instantly that Cuba’s exoticism often merged into a blurred relationship with overt eroticism creating an allure that many North Americans could not resist. Following this logic, an LRL ad, appearing in *The Chicago Defender* in February of 1960, informs readers of the African American periodical that “something big, something gay, and something beautiful” will be occurring in Cuba between February 19<sup>th</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Included in the celebration is a golf exhibition involving Joe Louis. In addition, the ad implores potential vacationers to “come see beautiful Cuban and American girls.” It goes on to state that “this is the week that prize winning Cuban and American beauties will match charm as part of the gigantic and colorful carnival parade through the streets of old and new Havana.” The ad describes Havana as “bubbling in frivolous fun, festive and gay...it is the city with ‘everything, fabulous hotels, glamorous night clubs, exciting casinos, sun drenched swimming pools, cabanas, and beaches with the welcome sign out for *all people*.” The final line in the ad urges travelers to “come now because its carnival time in Cuba.” Sensuality not only functioned as a lure in its own right, but also lent itself to creating an overall environment of recreation and excitement—an environment that, unlike home, was intended to endure indefinitely.

Alongside the images of overt sensuality are textual references to Cuba’s dual existence as both foreign and domestic-- both exotic and modern. In the February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1960 edition of the *Philadelphia Tribune* an advertisement placed by the LRL calls for viewers to spend “three glorious days and two enchanting nights in the land Columbus called the most beautiful the human eyes have ever seen.” In the LRL ads, the island is



characterized as a “tropical paradise” with “cabanas and beaches.” They stressed that Havana, the island’s capital, “will be bubbling in frivolous fun, festive and gay.” The *Tribune* advertisement is sure to point out Cuba’s exoticism and its proximate relationship to the United States. Its proximity, in this case, is measured by its closeness to North American standards. It claims that Havana is “the city with everything, fabulous hotels, glamorous night clubs, exciting casinos, sun drenched swimming pools...” Such amenities existed not just for entertainment purposes, but as the markers of modernity and North American standards.

The development of black leisure travel at home was both product and portent of important inroads produced by the ongoing, and increasingly multi-faceted civil rights movement. The travel advice columns of Avendorph and Butler reflected the older approach: a deference for the culture of civility; as well as a newer approach: direct advocacy of black rights and needs. They existed as important links between the civil rights work of the 1930s and the 1950s. As the Caribbean came into focus, writers such as Avendorph began combining their rhetorical struggle against segregation with a fascination for the Caribbean. This fascination combined an admiration for the islands’ almost revolutionary approach to race as well as a desire to experience the exotic nature of these locations in its barest form possible. This gaze seems contradictory, given the improbability of forging an admiration for anti-racism alongside a racist infatuation with Otherness, but this was not so. For men like Avendorph, the notion that a place could be both racially progressive and otherwise backward was *precisely* the locations’ draw. The supposedly anti-racist nature of the Caribbean Island’s was not seen just an important transnational development for black Americans, it was

also a feature—an amenity. And with the increasing popularity of black American leisure travel, it was something that could be consumed, and thus, something that could be sold. As the ex-boxer Joe Louis moved to capitalize on this trend, he earned the ire of lawmakers as well as the mainstream press for his supposedly subversive contract with Cuba's Fidel Castro. As the Louis scandal developed, we see how institutions such as Congress and periodicals like *The New York Times* reacted to the informal union between a black American and a (supposedly socialist) revolutionary leader. The scandal threw into stark relief what it meant to be American, what it meant to be political, and how race and international political connections affected the US in the Cold War.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**JOE LOUIS, REVOLUTIONARY CUBA, AND THE APEX OF**  
**APOLITICAL BLACK LEISURE TRAVEL**

While LRL claimed its work was an apolitical enterprise aimed solely at generating revenue, US lawmakers and the mainstream press feared that Cuba was trying to subvert the African American against the US government. This fear was due partially to growing US weariness with Castro's revolution as well as Congress' recognition of the increased frequency of black activists such as Robert Williams and LeRoi Jones engaging in revolutionary pilgrimages to the island. The avowedly political tourism of Williams and Jones led members of the Senate Internal Security Committee to publish a report entitled "Cuba and the American Negro." The clampdown resulted in a backlash from African Americans who argued that the Senate's decision to investigate Louis' company, which ultimately dropped their account with the INIT, was racially motivated. The narrative focuses on how a largely apolitical development such as black leisure travel could be thrust into the political spotlight, and how those on both sides of the scandal constructed Joe Louis' Cuban connection.

Perhaps the three representatives of LRL were sweating. Their testimony, given on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1961, was part of a long series of Senate hearings regarding the impending Communist threat to the United States. Since taking power Fidel Castro had ratcheted up his anti-US rhetoric while simultaneously attempting to reach out to various liberal sectors within the country. One of Castro's most infamous moves came during a UN General Assembly meeting in New York in September of 1960. On September 21<sup>st</sup>, one day after the opening of the UN meeting, Castro and Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev

met at the Theresa Hotel, located in the predominantly black neighborhood of Harlem. After spending precisely 22 minutes with each other, the two leaders walked down 125<sup>th</sup> Street while “thousands of spectators lined the sidewalks and cheered as Dr. Castro and Mr. Khrushchev walked to the curb, their arms around each others’ shoulders.”<sup>110</sup> The moment was indicative of curbed US power vis-à-vis its Russian counterpart. Amidst the glad-handing between Russia and Cuba were numerous other displays of respect imparted by African and Asian delegates to the Russian Prime Minister. Some New Yorkers even came to see the influx of government representatives critical to the US (mainly Yugoslavia’s Tito, Khrushchev, and Castro) as a sort of invasion. One letter writer to *The New York Times* suggested that the world community move the UN out of New York so as to limit the potential influence of men like Castro Khrushchev. The author concluded his letter stating, “Manhattan is clearly not suitable to serve for a United Nations City.”<sup>111</sup> Democratic House member Adam Clayton Powell Jr., himself no stranger to confrontations with his own government, was reported by *The New York Times* as having “deplored the use of Harlem by Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba ‘a battleground for his own political ends’.”<sup>112</sup> Having himself visited Cuba on numerous occasions; Powell usually offered laudatory appraisals of Castro’s policies. This time, however, Powell warned, “we Negro people have enough problems of our own without the additional burden of Dr. Castro’s confusion.”<sup>113</sup> Powell’s words seemed apposite given a political climate largely dominated by Cold War politics and the ongoing civil rights struggle.

By the time Louis and his associate William Rowe, a former New York police commissioner, testified in 1961, Castro’s connection to African Americans had been well

documented in the press. A year prior, Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) leader Robert Gibson embarked on a political pilgrimage to the island, bringing with him North Carolina activist Robert Williams and beat poet LeRoi Jones. The trip, in conjunction with Castro's appearance at Theresa Hotel a few months later, was enough to force lawmakers to consider the power of a Castro/African American connection. Thus, while the series of hearings proceeded under the title "Communist Threat to the United States Through the Caribbean," the testimonies of Louis and Rowe were considered especially pertinent because it was hoped they would shed light on the worrisome connection between Castro and the US civil rights movement.

The Senate subcommittee presiding over the hearings wasted no time in getting to the heart of the matter. Chief counsel J.G. Sourwine questioned Louis on his second visit to Cuba in January of 1960, "what was the purpose of this trip?" Louis replied, "down there with Al Lockhart [a fellow associate of Louis' at the LRL] to negotiate a contract with the Tourist Commission." Sourwine continued his tack, "what was the nature of the contract, Mr. Louis?" "Well," Louis replied, "the Tourist Commission of Cuba wanted to enter into an agreement with our firm to develop tourists to come to Cuba." After Sourwine pressed Louis on the matter, Louis explained, "no, we weren't arranging package deals—just would put ads in the Negro publications, radio, and so forth."<sup>114</sup> Sourwine's attempt at understanding the nature of the LRL's contract with the INIT seems extraneous at first, but makes sense when considered in light of the increasingly politicized excursions to the island, first by liberal white Americans and later by black civil rights activists. Sourwine believed he understood the dual threat posed by young black activists, representative of a progressively more organized movement, and their

relationship with an equally virile Caribbean leader with socialist tendencies preaching, among other things, the abolition of international racism.

Sourwine was not the only lawmaker curious as to the potential political motivations behind the LRL's contract. Later in the hearing New York Senator Kenneth B. Keating later asked Louis whether he had been in contact with the FPCC, the organization under which Gibson brought Williams and Jones to Cuba. Louis replied in the negative. Keating reformulated his question, asking, "have they entered into any communications with you at all?" Louis wavered in his answer, replying simply with "I don't think so."<sup>115</sup> Louis' associate William Rowe chimed in, using a more affirmative tone than Louis, "they haven't called our office at all. In fact, we don't even know who they are. We didn't know it until we saw the ads in the newspapers."<sup>116</sup> Senator Keating eventually made his point more clearly, stating, "there was some evidence taken here, and I don't know if it was anything that came to your knowledge about Mr. Robert Taber taking tourists to Cuba and having taken \$19,000 from a bank account of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee to pay the expenses of these tourists. Is that operation anything that you knew about?" After both Louis and Rowe replied in the negative, Keating thanked them for their time and ceased his questioning. It is clear that the ranking congressmen in the room were conscious of what seemed like a developing trend of tourism to Cuba. Chief counsel Sourwine seemed relieved when told by Louis that the LRL's contract with the INIT was purely for *individual* vacation packages and not group tours. While the hearing took place after Joe McCarthy's reign, the tendency toward hysteria was still deeply entrenched in the habits of lawmakers at this time. To the minds of Senators Keating and Sourwine, the planning of group tours would have been indicative of *organizing* on the

part of the LRL. At this time, to be *organized* connoted notions of conspiracy or collusion. The notion of conspiracy was especially fearful when the conspirators consisted of African Americans organizing under the umbrella of the supposedly Communist Cuban leader.

Indeed, that the notion of black Americans uniting under the leadership of Castro was frightening to lawmakers cannot be overstated. Attached to the transcript of the hearing was a “preliminary study” entitled “Cuba and the American Negro,” submitted by Connecticut Senator Thomas Dodd. The piece, which reads less like a study and more like a polemic, outlines previous attempts of Communists to subvert African Americans against their government and warns of such an attempt by Cuba. The FPCC, it argued, was cooperating in this subversion program. The study emphasized the Communist desire in the late 1920’s to help African Americans transform the South into a “Negro Soviet Republic.” The contours of the study were shaped by two other rhetorical moves. One, there contained in it multiple iterations of the propagandistic assertion that black Americans were not fooled the Communist bloc’s latest attempts. Two, the study used the connection of civil rights activists like Robert Williams to men like Castro to smear the increasingly assertive tactics of civil rights leaders as Communist-inspired. The piece stated “Robert Williams, NAACP chairman in Monroe, N.C., who was suspended for 6 months in 1959 by the NAACP for urging Negroes to ‘fight violence with violence’...remarked ‘I don’t know what kind of ‘ism’ they have in Cuba today, but whatever it is, we could use a little of it in the United States.’”<sup>117</sup> The piece goes on, smearing black civil rights and FPCC activists as instruments of Communism, while lauding those black Americans critical of Cuba. The piece finishes with a somber, but

hopeful, statement: “thus far it is evident Fidel Castro and his Communist henchmen have been unsuccessful in entangling American Negroes in their nefarious designs.”<sup>118</sup> For a moment, the Cold War and the race question in the United States converged to form a dual concern of Communist invasion and the subversion of an entire “race” of people against their government.

While US lawmakers no doubt believed they had caught on to some sinister conspiracy hinging on race and ideology, the backlash from the country’s blacks focused on the potential racial motivations behind the hearings. The *New York Times* broke the story on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960 with a long article titled “Joe Louis Agency Engaged by Cuba” appearing on page four. The piece began by claiming “a public relations concern of which Joe Louis is vice president has signed a \$287,000 contract to promote tourist travel in Cuba among US Negroes.”<sup>119</sup> The article meticulously outlined the manner in which the \$287,000 was broken down and made sure to point out “all [LRL representatives] are Negroes.”<sup>120</sup> LRL associate William Rowe denied allegations that Louis had filed as a foreign agent. Rowe likewise denied that the LRL attached any political goals to their promotional campaign, stating “certainly there is nothing political about it. Any implication that there is is completely erroneous. We have no feelings about Cuba’s political connection with Premier Fidel Castro.”<sup>121</sup> The *Times* continued to cover the story despite Rowe’s assertions, forcing Louis to give a press conference on June 2<sup>nd</sup> in which he claimed he was falsely “accused of working for Castro...I have been accused of selling out my country.”<sup>122</sup> Louis soon dissociated himself from the LRL, claiming he had no intentions of subverting his government. The *Times* reported that Louis “stressed that the reaction of the press and the public to his association with the deal had so



‘depressed and confused me’ that ‘there is only one decision I can make’.”<sup>123</sup> By July of 1960 the LRL completely resigned its account with the Cuban Tourist Commission.

In 1961, a few months after Louis and Rowe’s testimony at the New Senate Office Building, the *Times* reported that Castro had attempted to “subvert the American Negro against his own government,” but had failed.<sup>124</sup> Despite repeated attempts by Louis and his associates to deny any political connection to Castro’s 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement, *The Times* reports and the subcommittee hearing continued to present the LRL and Castro as having entered into a political union. All of this unfolded as so-called mainstream travel agencies continued to advertise and book vacations to Cuba.<sup>125</sup>

There are two ways of explaining why such an innocent business venture could be cast in such a sinister light. For one, Castro’s conspicuous gesture to African Americans, symbolized by his stay at the Theresa Hotel during his UN visit in September of 1960 first created the possibility for whites to think a sustained political union between the Cuban leader and African Americans could be forged. The *Times* probably considered Castro’s visit to Harlem and the LRL’s promotional campaign for Cuba as part of an ongoing development. Thus, the reports transformed what was clearly an apolitical business venture into a political conspiracy with vague social implications—except of course for the very specific possible assault on the US government by Cubanized African Americans. Another explanation involves simple bad timing on the part of the LRL. The LRL’s attempt to promote Cuba as a black American playground came at a time in which the nation had begun its slow descent out of love with Castro. Concomitant with this development were the connections drawn between black activists in the US and Cuba’s revolution. Such connections, for example, involved an increasingly defensive stance on

the part of men like Robert Williams, who probably learned of the usefulness of armed self-defense in Monroe, North Carolina, but whose ideas regarding that tactic were validated while in Cuba. Black newspapers during the time immediately following Castro's rise to power published letters to the editor declaring racial affinities between African Americans and the Castro government. A 1960 letter to the editor stated "I believe one reason most papers here are attacking the Cuban government of Dr. Castro is that this is the only government in the world, outside of Ethiopia where a Negro leads the entire Air Force and another Negro commands the Army in the largest area of Cuba."<sup>126</sup> Both the US government and the mainstream press were well aware of these events and probably tended to view any subsequent connections between African Americans and Castro's Cuba as potentially subversive. Thus, Louis probably felt the need to emphasize the apolitical nature of his enterprise because to be *political* in the environment that Louis found himself in was to be Communist, or the dupe of a Communist regime.

Whether the Joe Louis affair was the product of sensational reporting, or simply bad timing is beside the point. The African American population reacted to the reports with fury. The *Baltimore Afro-American* argued that it was hypocritical for Mississippi Senator James Eastland to become alarmed by the potential subversion inherent in the LRL's campaign while continually ignoring the subversive activities of the Ku Klux Klan or the White Citizens Councils.<sup>127</sup> In the same editorial, the *Afro-American* implied further racial motivations behind the crackdown when it stated "while the Louis firm is dragged in for accepting a paltry \$6,000 for its services, the Mississippi senator never bothered to subpoena the Miami firm of Harris and Co., which had a \$6 million contract to accomplish the same purpose."<sup>128</sup> Indeed the subcommittee members merely

acknowledged that Harris and Company held a contract with Cuba that was similar to the LRL's—though with substantially larger sums of money at stake. To many in the US government Castro's Cuba was sliding ever closer to Communism. With segments of the country's black population providing a racialized defense of the Castro government's right to exist, even an endorsement of Castro's Cuba on the part of a black American worried lawmakers; let alone the idea of promoting all-black tours to the revolutionary island.

That the government was acting hypocritically regarding the Louis case was not lost on those African Americans following the story. C. Washington, writing to the *New York Amsterdam News*, pointed to the fact that while the US was surely critical of Cuba, it still maintained a sugar quota with the island. To Washington, Louis was simply a businessman working in the tourism industry. Washington concluded that critics of Louis were simply “brainwashed” and were falsely accusing the ex-boxer of “selling out his country.”<sup>129</sup> In June 1960 Jackie Robinson wrote a piece for the *Chicago Defender* in support of Louis. Similar to other letters defending Louis, Robinson pointed to the hypocrisy in pressuring Louis to resign from the LRL or, at the very least, cancel the firm's contract with the INIT. Robinson's language was straightforward—arguing that Louis was “forced to throw in the towel last week...I felt it little short of shameful that Joe—whose position as an outstanding American is unquestioned.”<sup>130</sup> Robinson continued, wondering why Louis' company had to shut down its business with the INIT while other, mainly white, businesses continued their operations. “Why should Joe's company be singled out for such harsh criticism when other firms which are doing exactly the same thing remain free from any public attention whatsoever?” Robinson

wondered. As Louis and his associates had done repeatedly since their story first broke, Robinson stressed Louis' business intentions and emphasized that the LRL's contract with the INIT was not politically motivated. Robinson then went on to make what was probably the most important statement in the letter: that black tourism to Cuba should be cast as African American collusion with communism, but as a mass response to the claustrophobic restraints of North American racism. It is worth quoting Robinson at length here:

Senator Mitchell directed his criticism to the fact that Joe's firm would be placing ads in Negro newspapers to invite Negro tourists with means to come to Cuba on their vacations, asking if this wasn't Jim Crow. Joe hit the nail squarely on the head by replying that since Mitchell is not a Negro, he has never been in the position of being turned away from a hotel or restaurant because of his race. Joe said he could testify that this would not happen in Cuba, although he has himself experience discrimination in Miami, USA<sup>131</sup>

In his defense of Louis, Robinson flipped Mitchell's criticism on its head, stating that "white agencies place ads every day advertising glorious vacations at Southern resorts. It goes without saying that these ads are the discriminatory ones, since everybody knows Negro vacationists would be hastily turned away if they applied."<sup>132</sup> Robinson hammered on the notion that hypocrisy and hysteria were guiding the actions of the government and press—even going so far as to produce his own statistics regarding current American enterprise in Cuba. Robinson claimed, "I was told that—in addition to US government aid—private American investments in Cuban business total over a billion

dollars.”<sup>133</sup> Robinson concluded his statement by publicly urging Louis not to withstand the criticism targeting him “as long as our government has not itself pulled down the curtain on Cuba.”<sup>134</sup> Thus, what lawmakers treated as a legitimate threat of communist infiltration looming from the Caribbean, became a case-in-point for racially conscious blacks such as Robinson. Ultimately, the LRL and mainstream America were, as the historian Piero Gleijeses noted of Washington’s bungled planning of the Bay of Pigs invasion, speaking different languages. The LRL viewed their work as an apolitical business venture. Lawmakers and *The New York Times* viewed the LRL’s work as politically subversive. Both perspectives were legitimate and they both matter. This is because, for a brief moment, the reaction to the LRL’s connection with the INIT revealed to the rest of the world the ways in which the country’s highest authorities viewed blackness and its relationship to communism in the early part of the Cold War. As we have seen, both the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security as well as *The Times* viewed blackness at this time as both indicative of subversive tendencies and vulnerable to communist manipulation. Black social critics like Jackie Robinson viewed the development as a scandal perpetuated by a racist US government targeting a black American whose crime was only in trying to capitalize on the growing popularity of black leisure travel.

## CONCLUSION

By early 1961 the United States *had* drawn the curtain on Cuba.<sup>135</sup> The political aspect of the story has been covered from numerous historical perspectives. Morris Morley has documented the United States' relationship with Cuba from a political-economic approach. Owing much to the Wisconsin School, Morley argues that early on the relationship assumed asymmetrical proportions as the Washington/business nexus dominated the (under)development of the island's economic infrastructure. The historian Louis Perez has covered the US-Cuba relationship extensively. His *On Becoming Cuban* analyzes the profound and reciprocal political, economic, and cultural connections between the two countries that date back to the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lars Schoultz provides probably the best recent political history of the two countries. Schoultz's *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic* offers a new understanding of Washington's attempts at protecting its interests in the island republic, arguing as well that the bungled Bay of Pigs operation in 1961 came at least partially as the result of the various agencies and organizations involved in the campaign inadvertently keeping each other unaware of many key elements.

There have been various attempts to capture the cultural impact of the final years (and beyond) of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba. Much of this work has grappled with the multiple, and transnational, political and cultural connections drawn between the peoples of Cuba and the US. Kepa Arteraz's *Cuba and Western Intellectuals Since 1959* shows how the various political movements developing in Europe (specifically France and the UK), the US, and Cuba shaped each other.<sup>136</sup> Arteraz's intellectual history focuses mainly on academic and political publications such

as *Les Tempes Modernes*, *The Crisis*, and *The New Left Review*. Arteraz shows that two salient elements of the discourse were the importance of intellectuals and the need for strong leadership to social movement theory. Van Gosse's *Where the Boys Are* analyzes the ways in which the New Left's development in the US was connected to Fidel Castro's 26<sup>th</sup> July Movement. Gosse argues that a waning culture of masculinity in the US was revitalized by frequent mainstream coverage of ragged men with guns and chomping cigars while making their way through thick jungle foliage.

There has also been the tendency to speak to the North American civil rights movement and its Cuban connection. In identifying the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) as the origins of the American New Left, Gosse points out the sympathy received by the FPCC, and by extension Cuba, from black activists such as Robert Williams and LeRoi Jones. Thomas Borstelmann focuses a section of *The Cold War and the Color Line* to the cultural and political capital gained by Castro's stay at the Hotel Theresa in 1960. Borstelmann ties the event to the larger international context by situating the story within a larger narrative on the transnational anti-colonial/anti-racism movement existent at UN meeting in September of the same year. In her article, titled "Havana Up in Harlem," Cynthia Young shows how Castro's use of cultural production in the Cuban Revolution influenced the social movement theories of LeRoi Jones and Harold Cruse.

Influenced by such a rich historiographical context, this paper attempted to draw equally important connections between those two nations so intertwined. I have argued in this paper that the Joe Louis scandal should be seen as one of many strands involved in the interwoven narrative of the international Cold War/civil rights movement. By the early 1950s, black Americans began engaging in increased leisure travel—both

domestically and internationally. This new development was largely apolitical, meaning that the notion of travel itself was not connected to any specific political program, but was certainly socially conscious. Indeed, black travel columnists construed leisure travel as both arena and tactic in the larger civil rights movement. Their didactic approach to the usefulness of money and consumptive patterns, both of which were concepts increasingly, if not slowly and disparately, applied to black Americans, as well as their insistence upon a more assertive stance on the part of African American travelers, positioned them as links in the blurry relationship between a politics of civility and a politics of direct confrontation. Attached to this development was the eventual African American gaze toward the Caribbean. The small collection of islands provided black American travelers with a vacation free of racial discrimination that simultaneously indulged their lust for the exotic. The discourse, both textual and graphic, thus constructed places like Cuba and Haiti as both racially progressive and culturally backward.

By the time Joe Louis and the rest of the LRL began working with Fidel Castro's INIT in 1960, their very character as Americans was called into question. In this part of the narrative we saw how lawmakers and the mainstream press constructed what it meant to be *black, political*, and potentially *organized*. Washington was no doubt aware of the increasing unity between Castro and black American activists. Robert Williams, LeRoi Jones, and black members of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, had all been surveilled by at one time or another by either the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Central Intelligence Agency. Thus, black American connections to Cuba at this time, even in their most apolitical iterations, were seen as a potential threat to the national security of



the United States. The backlash, as we have seen, centered not international politics, but rather on the overt racism seemingly guiding the social persecution of Joe Louis.

Celebrities such as Jackie Robinson felt compelled to defend Louis' character as an American citizen and even to remind Americans that Louis was to be regarded as a national hero. Tying the two seemingly disparate strands together is the trend upon which Louis was attempting to capitalize: the rise of international black leisure travel. Louis, like Avendorph and Butler before him, understood the social and economic implications of such a development wanted in on it. And like Avendorph and Butler, Louis felt that as an American citizen, he and other fellow black Americans, armed with dollars and consumptive desire, should be able to relax freely and wherever they choose without the threat of racial discrimination—just like any other American.

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 ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Caribbean Islands Offer Year Round All-Expense Vacations," in *The New York Times*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 44.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> For analysis of Otherness see Edward Said, *Orientalism* and Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*. For Otherness and tourism see Dennis Merrill's *Negotiating Paradise*.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of liberal thought and black politics see Gaines, Kevin. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Dennis Merrill, *Negotiating Paradise: US Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin American*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> John Dower, *A War Without Mercy* and Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. And Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006. And Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> James Paterson, *Brown vs. the Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. And William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Equality*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

<sup>12</sup> John F. Martin, *Civil Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism, 1945-1976*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1979, 67.

<sup>13</sup> Sherwood Kendall, "American Negroes Like Equality Abroad," in *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1950, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Multiple authors, "An Appeal for Human Rights," in *Ebony*, June, 1960, 123.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> *Ebony* Photo-Editorial, "Now They Know," in *Ebony*, June, 1960, 122.

<sup>19</sup> Billy Butler, "Travel Versus Discrimination," in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1954, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Beth Tompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agendas of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933-1941," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2, April, 1997, 340-377.

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- <sup>23</sup> Billy Butler, "Travel Versus Discrimination," in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1954, 29.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Francis Broderick and August Meier, *Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966.
- <sup>27</sup> Billy Butler, "Travel Versus Discrimination," in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1954, 31.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Beth Tompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933-1941," in *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 102, No. 2, April, 1997, 340-377.
- <sup>30</sup> Billy Butler, "Travel Versus Discrimination," in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1954, 31.
- <sup>31</sup> Madison Beale, "Billy Butler's Good, but was Over-Kindly," in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1954, 29.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Unknown author, "South Obeys, Balks Travel Bias Ban," in *The Chicago Defender*," January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1956, 1.
- <sup>36</sup> Roi Ottley, "Roi Ottley Says," in *The Chicago Defender*, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1956, 8.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid. Italics mine.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup> Dan Cordtz, "Giveaways and Raffles Help Probe, Promote in the Negro Market," in *Wall Street Journal*, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1956, 1.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Tips for Travelers," in *The Chicago Defender*, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1956, 12.
- <sup>46</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Tips for Travelers," in *The Chicago Defender*, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1957, 5.
- <sup>47</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Tips for Travelers," in *The Chicago Defender*, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1957, 2.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Tips for Travelers," in *The Chicago Defender*, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1957, 12.
- <sup>53</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Tips for Travelers," in *The Chicago Defender*, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1957, 12.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> Kevin Gaines, "Rethinking Race and Class in African-American Struggles for Equality, 1885-1941," In *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2, April, 1997, 378-387. And Beth Tompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agendas of the Old Guard in

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the NAACP, 1933-1941,” In *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 2, April, 1997, 340-377.

<sup>57</sup> Fred Avendorph, “Tips for Travelers,” in *The Chicago Defender*, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1957, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Fred Avendorph, “Tips for Travelers,” in *The Chicago Defender*, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1957, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Fred Avendorph, “Tips for Travelers,” in *The Chicago Defender*, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1957, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence Critiques of American Culture, 1939-1979*, Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004, 35.

<sup>64</sup> Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>66</sup> In fact, as Christopher Endy shows in *Cold War Holidays*, American tourism to France resumed almost immediately after the end of WWII.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>68</sup> Sherwood Kendall, “It’s Cuba for Jai Alai, Rumba Music, and Fun,” in *New York Amsterdam News*, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1950, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Friedlander, “The Importance of Souvenirs,” in *The New York Times*, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1955, XXI.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Horace Sutton, “Whether to go North or South,” in *The New York Times*, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1950, 21.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Paul J. C. Friedlander, “Going South for the Summer,” in *The New York Times*, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1951, 253.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> See Rosalie Schwartz; *Pleasure Island*, Christopher Endy; *Cold War Holidays*, and Dennis Merrill; *Negotiating Paradise*.

<sup>77</sup> Sherwood Kendall, “US Leaves Mark on the Caribbean,” in *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1950, 32.

<sup>78</sup> Fred Avendorph, “Tips for Travelers,” in *The Chicago Defender*, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1958, 12.

<sup>79</sup> Unknown author, “Methodists Dodge Race Issue,” in *The Chicago Defender*, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1956, 1.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Fred Avendorph, “Tips for Travelers,” in *The Chicago Defender*, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1956, 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Fred Avendorph, “Tips for Travelers,” in *The Chicago Defender*, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1956, 10.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Tips for Travelers," in *The Chicago Defender*, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1956, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Tips for Travelers," in *The Chicago Defender*, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1957, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Fred Avendorph, "Caribbean Islands Offer Year Round All-Expense Vacations," in *The Chicago Defender*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 44.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart advertisement, in *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, A26.

<sup>98</sup> Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart advertisement, in *Chicago Defender*, May 7<sup>th</sup> and May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 45, 5.

<sup>99</sup> Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart advertisement, in *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, A26.

<sup>100</sup> Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart advertisements, in *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, A26. *Chicago Defender*, May 7<sup>th</sup> and May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 45, 5.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Though there are myriad secondary sources describing white on black violence, some notable recent works are Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999, and Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006.

<sup>103</sup> For more on tourism and American empire see Dennis Merrill, *Negotiating Paradise: US Tourism and Empire in Twentieth Century Latin America*, Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2009.

<sup>104</sup> *New York Times*, ad, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1958, 23.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, 56. Using popular magazines and newspapers, Hoganson argues that "to generate a sense of responsibility for Cuban affairs, jingoes claimed that the United States resembled a man who encountered a brute pounding a helpless woman." Allegorically, Cuba itself became a sort of damsel in distress.

<sup>107</sup> Louis, Rowe, and Lockhart advertisements, in *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960, A26. *Chicago Defender*, May 7<sup>th</sup> and May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 45, 5.

<sup>108</sup> Here I use "American imagination" to refer to the vast array of tourist ads, reports, and guides that report on Cuba and the Caribbean. These documents, as well as others, comprised the arena in which such cultural constructions were elaborated.

<sup>109</sup> Lyman Judson and Judson, Ellen. *Your Holiday in Cuba*. New York: Harpers, 1952, xii.

<sup>110</sup> "Russian Goes to Harlem; then Hugs Cuban at UN," *The New York Times*, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1960

<sup>111</sup> "Letter to Editor," *The New York Times*, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1960.

<sup>112</sup> *The New York Times*, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960.

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<sup>113</sup> Unknown author, “Castro Stay in Harlem Denounced by Powell,” in *The New York Times*, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 16.

<sup>114</sup> US Senate Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, *Communist Threat to the United States Through the Caribbean*, Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1961, 772. Cited hereafter as “Hearing.”

<sup>115</sup> Hearing, 787.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> “Cuba and the American Negro,” in US Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, *Communist Threat to the United States Through the Caribbean*, Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1961, 791.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 792.

<sup>119</sup> Unknown author, “Joe Louis Engaged By Cuba,” in *The New York Times*, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 1.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Unknown author, “Joe Louis Denies Tie With Castro,” in *The New York Times* June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1960, 14.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Lloyd Garrison, “Cuba Said to Fail to Lure US Negro,” in *The New York Times*, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1961, 4.

<sup>125</sup> In *Pleasure Island* the historian Rosalie Schwartz shows that the heyday of mainstream tourism to Cuba had occurred in 1960. Much like Merrill, though, Schwartz largely ignores the degree to which black leisure travel contributed to Washington’s increasing dismay vis-à-vis Cuba.

<sup>126</sup> Letter to Editor, in *The New York Amsterdam News*, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 8.

<sup>127</sup> Unknown author, “Eastland and Worthy,” in *The Baltimore Afro-American*, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1961, 4.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> C. Washington, “Stand Up Joe!,” in *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1960, 10.

<sup>130</sup> Jackie Robinson, “Untitled,” in *The Chicago Defender*, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 11.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

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