

**From Haiti to Cuba and Back: Haitians' Experiences of Migration, Labor, and Return,  
1900-1940**

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MIGRATION, LABOR, AND RETURN, 1900-1940**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2012

This dissertation is a social history of the approximately 200,000 individuals who migrated seasonally between their homes in rural Haiti and the eastern regions of Cuba during the height of the United States' military and economic presence in both countries. Existing scholarship explains Haitians' movements in terms of the United States' military presence in Haiti (1915-1934), the country's rural poverty, and the massive growth of U.S.- and Cuban-owned sugar plantations in Cuba. However, the migrants themselves have not been studied. Instead, previous scholarship puts forth an image of Haitian migrants that is heavily influenced by false, long-standing assumptions about Haiti and the anti-immigrant stereotypes of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Cuban press. They are portrayed as a homogenous group of unskilled laborers who remained at the bottom of labor hierarchies, were isolated from other groups in Cuban society and were dominated by Cuban sugar companies and state officials in both countries.

Due to their high rates of illiteracy, the life stories of the migrants are difficult to reconstruct using traditional sources such as letters or diaries. Drawing on research conducted in multiple archives and libraries in Cuba, Haiti, and the United States, my dissertation details migrants' experiences in both Haiti and Cuba. It joins a rapidly growing body of scholarship on labor, migration, and trans-nationalism in Latin America and the Caribbean that seeks a fuller understanding of workers' lives by emphasizing economic activities and coping strategies that

occurred outside of formal wage activities and union mobilization. I show the ways that Haitian men and women navigated the harsh working and living conditions in both Haiti and Cuba by creating and maintaining kinship, commercial, religious, and social networks in sugar plantations, coffee farms, and urban spaces. These links cut across national lines and decisively shaped the conditions under which they moved, labored, and lived in both countries. Reconstructing Haitians' interactions with other workers outside the gazes of company and state illustrates how those institutions functioned on the ground, questions the extent to which national-level racial ideologies determined local social relationships, and demonstrates how workers' actions shaped the implementation of migration and trade policies.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In September 1931, African-American writer Langston Hughes and his companion Zell Ingram boarded a steamship in Cap-Haitien, Haiti. The boat traveled along the Haitian coast, picking up passengers in the cities of Port-au-Prince, Leogane, and Jeremie before finally heading to Santiago de Cuba. The two men had previously run out of money from their extensive travels and could only afford passage on the upper deck of the ship. Traveling in this manner was inexpensive for a reason. During the day, its surface became “so hot” that it “seemed like a griddle.” At any time, the passengers could face rains and storms. “Crossing the Windward Passage, in the middle of the night while we were asleep on the deck,” Hughes explains, “the ship ran headlong into a sudden September squall...With dozens of other deck passengers, we were rain-soaked, wind-tossed, and in danger of being washed off the open deck into the sea by the mounting waves.” Eventually, all were permitted to enter “a crowded shelter between decks where the ship’s supplies, ropes and chains, were stored.” The passengers’ entrance into the safety of the cargo hold attenuated the threat of falling overboard but turned out to be quite uncomfortable. “There, with some fifty seasick peasants squatting in the dark waiting for day, the heat and stench were almost unbearable.”<sup>1</sup>

As the reference to the “fifty seasick peasants” indicates, the uncomfortable experience of traveling between Haiti and Cuba on top of a steamship was not unique to Hughes and Ingram. As Cuban officials would tell them a few days later, normally “only sugar cane workers traveled in that fashion.” Indeed, their shipmates represented one of the final contingents of seasonal

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<sup>1</sup> Langston Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 30, 34.

laborers to migrate legally between rural Haiti and eastern Cuba during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Between Cuba's 1913 sugar harvest, when Haitian and other Caribbean migrant workers were first permitted to enter the country, and 1931, the final year they could legally arrive, Cuban statistics recorded the arrival of 189,020 seasonal Haitian migrants in eastern Cuba.<sup>2</sup> The actual number is much higher, as Haitians made the trip clandestinely before 1913, throughout the heyday of the movement, and even as late as the 1940s.

These Haitian seasonal migrants represented the second-largest immigrant group in Republican Cuba (behind Spaniards) and the largest among the Caribbean migrants hailing from the British, French, and Dutch West Indies as well as Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. The influx of people to Cuba was part of larger regional and global migration trends. In the Caribbean, laborers migrated to Canal construction projects in Panama and to large-scale sugar and fruit plantations in Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba.<sup>3</sup>

In 1931, the Cuban government closed its borders off from Caribbean laborers and subsequently began deporting many of those already in the country. During the 1930s, tens of thousands of Haitian migrant laborers were forcefully repatriated from Cuban soil in a context of economic stagnation, low sugar prices and growing nationalist xenophobia. Nevertheless, not all Haitians were expelled. As late as 1970, there were still 22,579 Haitians living in Cuba.<sup>4</sup>

If Hughes' experience on the ship was not unique, the fact that he recorded it is quite remarkable. Although thousands of individuals moved between Haiti and Cuba on the decks of steamships, Hughes' is the only known firsthand account of a journey. In many ways this is not

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<sup>2</sup> Compiled from Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," table vii; Cuba. Secretaria de Hacienda. Sección de Estadística.

<sup>3</sup> Petras, *Jamaican Labor Migration*; Richardson, "Caribbean Migrations"; McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846-1940"; Cervantes-Rodríguez, *International Migration in Cuba*.

<sup>4</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers," 2-3; Espronceda Amor, *Parentesco, inmigración y comunidad*, 20-1.

surprising, given that, according to Cuban statistics, almost 90% of the Haitians entering Cuba were illiterate.<sup>5</sup> This has been one of the primary problems for understanding this significant episode in Caribbean migration history. In contrast to the letters, diaries, and memoirs that are a staple of source materials for historical research in general and for the study of migrants in particular, there are very few documents left by Haitian agricultural workers in Cuba or even outsiders like Hughes who shared their experiences momentarily.

The dearth of first person accounts about this migratory movement is compounded by limitations of the historiography on labor and migration in Latin America, the Caribbean, and other regions. This historiography focuses heavily on wage labor in strategic industries and locates resistance primarily in labor unions, formally constituted organizations, and open rebellion.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, ubiquitous anti-Haitianism in the Atlantic, which associates Haitians with race war, disease, and primitivism has shaped scholars' assumption that Haitians were isolated and marginalized in the societies where they migrated.<sup>7</sup>

Although Haitian agricultural laborers performed a variety of economic activities in Cuba, they are most often described in the context of the sugar industry. Since their presence appears to have been minimal in formal unions or other organizations, they fall outside of the analytical lenses used to study migration and labor in eastern Cuba and buttress claims about the strength of anti-Haitian racism. As a result, Haitian migrants become shadowy figures in both Cuban and Haitian historiography. Along with Cuban newspapers and literary works from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars depict Haitian migrants as a homogenous group of sugar cane cutters, giving them the "aura of apartness, definiteness, and collective self-consistency such as to wipe

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<sup>5</sup> Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," table vii.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, see O. Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean*.

<sup>7</sup> Belton, "Dry Land Drowning or Rip Current Survival?," 955-60; Tavernier, "The Stigma of Blackness," 96.

out any traces of individual[s]...with narratable life histories.”<sup>8</sup> By focusing on the migratory movement and the development of the agricultural economies of Haiti and Cuba, rather than the migrants themselves, scholars reproduce the image of Haitians as faceless workers. Though previous historians have detailed the poor rural conditions of Haiti, the labor and production demands of sugar companies, anti-immigrant racism in Cuba, and the state policies of Cuba and Haiti, which were under the direct and indirect control of the United States imperial state, Haitian migrants’ experiences, aspirations, and efforts to exert control over their lives within this context remain unknown.

This study draws on recent scholarship on labor, migration, and race to explore Haitian migrants’ individual and collective efforts to assert a modicum of control over their movements, lives, and labor in Haiti and Cuba. It utilizes the few existing firsthand accounts of the migratory experience, along with judicial records, Cuban citizenship petitions, U.S. military intelligence reports, newspapers, sugar company records, and census materials to explore the experiences of Haitian migrants in the sugar plantations, coffee farms, and major cities of eastern Cuba as well as the rural and urban areas of Haiti. It also analyzes Haitians’ religious practices and communities in the rural areas of Cuba. Haitians were not a homogenous group of unskilled cane cutters subject to the whims of company and state. In Haiti, rural households combined migration with a number of strategies in order to exert autonomy over their members' lives and labor in the face of a rapidly changing countryside. In Cuba, similar goals led them to engage in a number of economic activities in addition to sugar work. Through leisure, commerce, and religion Haitian workers also created informal networks of cooperation and spaces of sociability with individuals of other nationalities. Some moved out of the sugar industry entirely. These

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<sup>8</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 229.

actions met with varying degrees of tolerance and opposition from company and state officials. Although the majority of migrants were young, single men, a close analysis of Haitian communities in Cuba reveals women and children as well. Paradoxically, reconstructing Haitians' activities and the networks they formed outside the direct gaze of companies and states sheds new light on how these institutions functioned on the ground and the ways in which individuals, not just Haitian migrants, navigated them in both countries.

## 1.1 RACE, LABOR, MIGRATION AND THE NATION-STATE IN THE CARIBBEAN

In some ways, the lack of attention to Haitian migrants' experiences in Cuba is puzzling, given the emphasis that social historians have placed on recovering the experiences and aspirations of workers and humble individuals from what E.P. Thompson famously called the "enormous condescension of posterity."<sup>9</sup> Haitians' labor was behind the massive growth of sugar production in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba, as planters attested: "Sustaining Haitian immigration is necessary on all levels and more than necessary, urgent, not only for the proper development of the sugar industry, but for the economic stability of the nation itself."<sup>10</sup> But while the 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuban sugar economy has been carefully studied, the experiences of Haitian migrant workers have not.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 12-3.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from the Asociación Nacional de Colonos to the Governors and Mayors of the Provinces of Oriente and Camaguey. July 5, 1928. Archivo Provincial de Santiago de Cuba: Gobierno Provincial (hereafter APSGP) 2416/4/24.

<sup>11</sup> Dye, *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production*; McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*; Funes Monzote, *De bosque a sabana*; Santamaría García, *Sin azúcar no hay país*.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Caribbean historiography was largely dominated by an imperial perspective that interpreted historical processes in the region as the result of events occurring in imperial centers in Europe and the United States.<sup>12</sup> Early pathbreaking books like Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) and C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins* (1938) challenged these assumptions by giving proper attention to groups and events in the Caribbean. These books linked the development of global capitalism, the formation of racial ideologies, the emergence of abolitionist thought, and the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution to the social, economic, and political conditions in the Caribbean---not the metropolises.<sup>13</sup>

Taking the mantle from Williams, James, and others, Caribbean historians since the 1950s have focused on the development of creole societies and the consolidation of nation-states in the face of formal and informal colonialism. Scholars have analyzed the way that local actors shaped processes of capitalist development in the Caribbean, negotiated their political relationship with imperial powers, and developed racial ideologies and national identities that encompassed heterogeneous populations. They also study workers' revolts and unions and their impact on national politics or their working conditions.<sup>14</sup>

Despite its important contributions, the Caribbean historiography produced since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has produced its own blind spots. First, the emphasis on national histories privileged relatively powerful and well-organized sectors of the population. Economic histories focused on strategic industries that were responsible for maintaining national budgets.

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<sup>12</sup> Higman, "The Development of Historical Disciplines in the Caribbean," 10-5.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*; James, *The Black Jacobins*.

<sup>14</sup> Bolland, *The Politics of Labour*; Alexander, *A History of Organized Labor*; Cross and Heuman, *Labour in the Caribbean*; Mars and Young, *Caribbean Labor and Politics*; Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal*, 54-62; García Muñiz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean*, 394-452. This trend occurred throughout Latin America as well. John D. French, "The Latin American Labor Studies Boom," 285-6; Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*.



Workers and individuals from the lower classes became historical subjects when they joined labor unions, organized formally, or engaged in rebellions that had larger political and economic ramifications.<sup>15</sup> Second, the emphasis on the development of Caribbean nation-states produced scholarship that was often fragmented along linguistic and national lines because it often treated countries separately.<sup>16</sup>

The national historiographies of Haiti and Cuba, as well as the scholarship on the migratory movement between both countries, have reflected these scholarly trends, rendering many aspects of Haitian migrants' experiences invisible. During the peak years of migration, Haiti was occupied militarily by the United States (1915-1934). Scholars of the occupation period have debated the scope and effects of U.S. capital investment in Haiti, the degree of Haitians' political sovereignty under foreign rule, the nature and effects of U.S. fiscal policies, the occupation's role in preserving or destroying democratic structures, and Haitians' responses to the violence and racism of U.S. troops.<sup>17</sup>

In the scholarship on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Haiti, the country's lower classes appear most prominently when they participated in rural rebellions, strikes, or other movements that produced political instability. For instance, scholars have analyzed the Caco Rebellion (1918-1920) in great detail. The peasant revolt began in the Northern and Western regions of the country and

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<sup>15</sup> See for instance, Conniff, *Black Labor on a White Canal*, 54-62; García Muñiz, *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean*, 394-452. Such blindspots are not limited to the Caribbean, they have been addressed by labor historians in Latin America and the wider Atlantic as well. Leon Fink, "The Great Escape," 110; Womack, "Doing Labor History: Feelings, Work, Material Power," 259; Baer and Pineo, "Introduction," 1.

<sup>16</sup> Higman, "The Development of Historical Disciplines in the Caribbean," 16.

<sup>17</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*; Castor, *L'occupation américaine d'Haiti*; Renda, *Taking Haiti*, part 1; Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, chapter 6; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 100-8; Millet, *Les paysans haitiens*; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, chapter 6.

threatened the U.S. presence there.<sup>18</sup> Outside of this brief, albeit important, moment, however, peasants' living conditions in rural Haiti during the occupation are largely unknown. Although scholars have debated the causes of migration to Cuba and the policies regulating this movement, the lack of systematic studies about the migrant sending areas or the ways that rural dwellers experienced the military occupation render many of these debates necessarily speculative. The actions that migrants took upon returning to urban and rural Haiti, both during and after the occupation, are also unknown.<sup>19</sup>

Haitian migrants' aspirations and experiences have been invisible in Cuban historiography as well. As in Haiti, the United States exerted significant political and economic control over Cuba during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Platt Amendment limited Cuban sovereignty and gave the United States profound influence over Cuban presidential elections, fiscal policies and foreign relations. Scholarship on this period has traced the way U.S. imperial policies and foreign capitalists caused the Cuban sugar industry to grow dramatically in the eastern part of the island.<sup>20</sup> The extensive body of literature on the Cuban sugar industry details the nature of technological change, transformations in the organization of production, the

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<sup>18</sup> On the Caco Rebellion, see Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 102-3; Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 148-9; Millet, *Les paysans haitiens*, 12, 39; Bellegarde-Smith, *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*, 96-112; Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 48-9. For other treatments of Haitian history that focus on lower-class Haitians when they mobilized politically or formed rebellions, see Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, chapter 9; Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 108; Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 3; Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery*, chapter 5; Fatton, *The Roots of Haitian Despotism*, 131; Gaillard, *Les blancs débarquent II*, 41-8.

<sup>19</sup> Plummer, "Haitian Migrants and Backyard Imperialism," 37-8; Castor, *L'occupation américaine d'Haiti*, 114-8; Mats Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy*, 94-111; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba, 64-71; Gerlus, "The Political Economy of Haitian Migration," 71-80; Samuel Martínez' study of contemporary Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic provides a corrective to this by looking at their regions of origin and experiences upon return. Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, x, 91-9.

<sup>20</sup> Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 67-76; Ibarra Cuesta, *Prologue to Revolution*, chapter 1.

mechanics of rural proletarianization, the imperial actions of foreign capitalists and governments, and the way that sugar tariff policies were implemented.<sup>21</sup> There has been a great deal of scholarship on labor in the Cuban sugar industry as well. However, these studies tend to focus on workers when they participated in rebellions, strikes, formal organizations, and labor unions.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.2 DEPICTIONS OF HAITIAN MIGRANTS: PAST AND PRESENT

The lack of first person accounts and the blind spots in previous historiographies have created a situation in which Haitian migrants, their actions, experiences, and economic activities in Haiti and Cuba have been overlooked. The Haitians who traveled to Cuba in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are often represented as a homogenous group of sugar cane cutters who were victims of the poverty and violence prevalent in rural Haiti, of the power of sugar companies, of strong anti-Haitian racism, and of the discriminatory policies of the Cuban, Haitian, and United States governments. As one historian declares: “Haitian immigrants were forced to work as unskilled agricultural laborers, mostly as cane cutters in the sugar fields of eastern Cuba. They also proved particularly susceptible to exploitation at the hands of plantation managers and local merchants.” As a result,

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<sup>21</sup> Funes Monzote, *De bosque a sabana*; Santamaría Garcia, *Sin azúcar no hay país*; Dye, *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production*; McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*.

<sup>22</sup> Dumoulin, *Azúcar y lucha de clases*; Zanetti Lecuona, *Economía azucarera cubana*, 52-6; Morciego, *El crimen de cortaderas*; Giovannetti, "The Elusive Organization Of "Identity," 2; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," chapter 4; Carr, "Identity, Class, and Nation," 85, 89-93.

they “quickly earned a reputation as the most efficient and most exploitable segment of the sugar labor force.”<sup>23</sup>

In *La Guardarraya*, a short story written in the 1930s, Cuban author Luis Felipe Rodriguez describes Haitian sugar workers in Cuba as “extinguished coals from the burning oven of the Haitian countryside.”<sup>24</sup> The analogy equates migrants to famished black peasants who must save themselves from rural Haiti by leaving the country. The image is a poetic rendering of Haiti as perennially beset by crises and a constant source of migrants. Echoing this belief, one migration scholar has called the country “a classic push case” because “changes in labor demand in the receiving countries” have “little effect in reducing [migrant] flows” from Haiti once they begin.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, many scholars point to the poor rural conditions of Haiti and/or the violence and racism of the U.S. occupation (1915-1934) as the salient conditions that induced Haitians to migrate.<sup>26</sup>

Whether Haitians are said to be fleeing poor natural and environmental conditions or the violence of the United States occupying forces, there is a latent assumption that state policies in Haiti and the sugar companies in Cuba represent the primary factors that explain migrant flows. They allowed people to migrate at some moments and closed borders at others. In Haitian historiography, the occupation government is often credited with giving Haitians the opportunity to migrate and sometimes, but not always, the motivation.<sup>27</sup> In Cuban historiography, scholars

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<sup>23</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism," 607-8. Quotes are on 607 and 608 respectively.

<sup>24</sup> Felipe Rodriguez, "La guardarraya," 28.

<sup>25</sup> Perusek, "Haitian Emigration," 6.

<sup>26</sup> Plummer, "Haitian Migrants and Backyard Imperialism," 36-8; Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy*, 9-13, 94; Gerlus, "The Political Economy of Haitian Migration," 71-80; Castor, *L'occupation américaine d'Haiti*, 114-8.

<sup>27</sup> Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy*, 97-9; Gerlus, "The Political Economy of Haitian Migration," 71-80; Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, 187.

trace the ways that U.S.- and Cuban-owned sugar companies pressured the government to legalize Caribbean migration, even though many sectors of Cuban society opposed it.<sup>28</sup> The United States' control of Cuban immigration policies is interpreted as part of a larger pattern in which imperial policies and the labor needs of U.S. companies dictated what crossed national borders in the Caribbean and Central America. As César Ayala writes, "Mills and farms in areas with a scarce supply of labor power in Cuba and the Dominican Republic imported migrant workers from Haiti, Jamaica, and the eastern Caribbean and initiated an inter-Caribbean flow of migrants that is without precedent in the region." These workers came "from regions of the Caribbean where land was less abundant or less available and where there existed, therefore, a landless rural proletariat."<sup>29</sup> Francisco López Segrera writes that in Haiti:

[Land] Expropriations were instrumental in releasing a considerable labour force which worked for American capital, and in triggering off mass emigration abroad. Thus, United States imperial expansion in the Caribbean shaped the regional labour market to suit the interests and needs of American capital.<sup>30</sup>

The emphasis on company and state power extends to discussions of Haitians' experiences in Cuba as well. Scholars argue that Haitians' illiteracy, religious practices, and lack of education subjected them to racist policies by plantation officials, especially compared to the English-speaking, Protestant, more literate British West Indians who also arrived to work in the Cuban sugar industry.<sup>31</sup> This anti-Haitian racism allegedly shaped the organization of labor on sugar plantations. Cuban sugar companies, like other agricultural and industrial firms throughout

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<sup>28</sup> Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba," 56; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 18; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 47-8, 102.

<sup>29</sup> Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom*, 21, 171.

<sup>30</sup> López Segrera, "Slavery and Society in the Caribbean," 148.

<sup>31</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 613.

the Atlantic, sought to manage their laborers through racially stratified hierarchies. The goal was to increase productivity by having workers perform duties for which they were “naturally” suited and to prevent them from organizing labor strikes across different areas of plantations or factories. Since Haitians were widely considered the lowest sector of the Cuban population, it is argued, they were placed at the bottom of labor hierarchies and wage scales as cane cutters.<sup>32</sup>

The alleged helplessness of Caribbean migrant workers in Cuba, particularly of Haitians, is exemplified in *Vista del amanecer en el trópico*, Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s 1974 series of fictional vignettes of Cuban history, which details a moment when migrant sugar workers strike over wages. At the moment when “all seemed to be going well” and a solution between labor and management had been reached, “the *hacendado* [landowner] proposed to take a picture of the group to commemorate the agreement.” What initially appeared to be a camera was in fact a machine gun. The striking workers were “tranquilly shot” by the *mayoral* [manager]. “There were no more complaints from the cane cutters in that *zafra* [harvest] and in many more to come.” The account ends with a brief editorial remark from Cabrera Infante. “The story could be real or false. But the times made it credible.”<sup>33</sup>

Since the publication of Cabrera Infante’s text, historians of “the times” have both reinforced and challenged the “credibility” of different aspects of the story. The rumor that a massacre of field workers was carried out under the pretext of taking a photograph circulated widely throughout Oriente province during Cuba’s republican period.<sup>34</sup> However, Cabrera Infante’s implication that an act of cold-blooded violence prevented workers from making

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<sup>32</sup> McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism,” 613; McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 104-7; Esch and Roediger, “One Symptom of Originality,” 4; Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, xi.

<sup>33</sup> Cabrera Infante, *Vista del amanecer en el trópico*, 85.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the rumor and its possible origins, see Morciego, *El crimen de Cortaderas*, 156.

“complaints” has been challenged, especially for British West Indians. Scholarship on labor and migration in the Cuban sugar industry has demonstrated that British West Indians pursued a number of different strategies to improve their working and living conditions. First, they took advantage of their status as subjects of the British crown by calling on consular officials when they were victims of abuse or poor treatment. Second, they participated in Cuban labor unions and even organized their own, such as the *Union de Obreros Antillanos* (UOA). Finally, they were active in other types of organizations, such as Marcus Garvey’s U.N.I.A. and in Protestant churches.<sup>35</sup> Haitians, according to previous scholarship, rarely engaged in these activities. They allegedly could not call on Haitian consular officials, who are unanimously viewed as corrupt and negligent. Haitians seem to have participated only minimally in labor unions or other formal labor organizations. Although they were invited into the ranks of the UOA, few, if any actually joined. In sum, those who explore official channels of redress and resistance show that Haitians were largely absent.<sup>36</sup>

Haitians’ alleged position at the lowest end of wage hierarchies and lack of mobilization are interpreted as a symptom of their alienation from Cuban society. In *De muerte natural*, a 1976 short story, Cuban writer Mirta Yáñez portrays the Haitians living in rural Cuba as ageless men who are permanently anchored in a foreign land where they are destined to lead a repetitive and insulated existence. They represent

this species of human that is and is not attached to one place. They belong to their small plot of land and at the same time surround themselves with an air of uprootedness...For

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<sup>35</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," chapter 4; Giovannetti, "The Elusive Organization Of "Identity," 4-18; Carr, "Identity, Class, and Nation," 85, 89-93; Sánchez Guerra, *Los anglo-caribeños*, 23-39; Chailloux Laffita and Whitney, "British subjects y pichones en Cuba," 59, 64, 68-77.

<sup>36</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism," 605, 608, 611-2; Carr, "Identity, Class, and Nation," 93; Gómez Navia, "Lo haitiano en lo cubano," 17, 20.

many years they have lived in narrow barracones, groups of men only, so old that the age of each one has been forgotten, with life passing between cooking concoctions, muttering litanies of which an attentive listener could recognize one or another word caught on the fly, leaving at dawn with the bags over their shoulders, picking coffee in silence and returning to the *barracón*, until the next day.<sup>37</sup>

Such beliefs about Haitian isolation have deep roots in the wider history of the Atlantic. During the past decade, scholars have studied how negative perceptions of Haitians began to circulate after the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) ended slavery and colonialism in what had previously been one of the world's most lucrative colonies. The revolution's radicalism struck fear into slaveholders and colonial officials elsewhere, who portrayed it as a race war against white Europeans. This association between Haitians and fears of race war outlasted the institution of slavery. Building on the power of this association, scholars of the Haitian Diaspora have described how migrants had to contend with longstanding anti-Haitian ideologies in various receiving societies.<sup>38</sup> In early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba, the intense anti-Haitian racism harbored by different sectors of Cuban society and U.S. officials is used to explain the isolation of Haitian workers in Cuban society. As one scholar recently argued: "Haitians were segregated in social relations. To the Haitian immigrant, marginalization was applied with the most crudeness, not just by white components of society, but even by Cuban mestizos and blacks who rejected them."<sup>39</sup> This social marginalization was so extreme that Haitians were frequently associated with slaves. In a 1975 address, Fidel Castro called the importation of Haitian and British West Indian workers "one of the saddest and most embarrassing pages of Cuban capitalism" because

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<sup>37</sup> Yáñez, *Todos los negros tomamos café*, 13-4.

<sup>38</sup> Zacaïre and Reinhardt, "Introduction," 6; Mooney, *Faith Makes Us Live*; Stepick III, "The Refugees Nobody Wants."

<sup>39</sup> Gómez Navia, "Lo haitiano en lo cubano," 15.



Cuban leaders “reissued, under new and even worse forms, the slavery that had just been abolished in 1886.”<sup>40</sup> These sentiments have been reiterated by numerous scholars who have made problematic comparisons between the movement of Haitians to Cuba and the trans-Atlantic slave trade that brought millions of people from Africa to the Americas.<sup>41</sup>

Haitians’ isolation in Cuba is considered so extreme that their integration (or lack thereof) in Cuban society has been narrated only through the actions of the Cuban state. The fact that almost 40,000 Haitians were repatriated from Cuban soil between 1928 and 1940 has prevented many scholars from exploring their possible integration into different economic and social spaces in Cuban society. Others, mostly in the Cuban academy, argue that when Haitians’ inclusion into Cuban society was achieved, it was a result of social security laws and other class-based policies implemented by the revolutionary government in 1959, thus consolidating the notion that Haitians’ lives were dictated by state policies.<sup>42</sup>

The belief that all Haitians were illiterate cane cutters is so entrenched that the small group of lettered, upwardly mobile Haitians who lived in the urban spaces of eastern Cuba (including consuls) has received little attention. Some consider them too atypical to study closely.<sup>43</sup> Others have argued that widespread associations of Haitians with Vodou and fears of race war closed off all options for these individuals to organize or to integrate into local

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Guanche and Moreno, *Caidije*, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 216; Alvarez Estévez, *Azúcar e inmigración*, 40; Sevillano Andrés, *Trascendencia de una cultura marginada*, 16.

<sup>42</sup> Berenguer Cala, *El Gagá de Barrancas*, 12-3; Gómez Navia, "Lo haitiano en lo cubano," 38; Guanche and Moreno, *Caidije*, 5. The top-down vision of Haitians’ integration into Cuban society after 1959 is also challenged by the forthcoming dissertation of Grete T. Viddal.

<sup>43</sup> Sklodowska, *Espectros y espejismos*, 107. For a notable exception to this, see Corbea Calzado, "Historia de una familia haitiano-cubana," 63.

society.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, scholars have not studied how class differences among Haitians in Cuba created tensions within the community, affected the way they participated in Cuban society, or shaped interactions between agricultural laborers and consuls.

### 1.3 NEW DIRECTIONS IN STUDIES OF MIGRATION, LABOR, AND RACE

Recent scholarship on migration, labor, and race raises questions about the extent to which sugar companies, state institutions, and racial ideologies determined the actions and experiences of the migrants who circulated between Haiti and Cuba during the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. My work builds on recent research that has re-conceptualized migration as a fundamental aspect of human behavior that is instrumental for spreading ideas and innovations between communities, not just an automatic response to crisis. This observation is especially accurate for Caribbean societies, which have been marked by constant flows of peoples, especially since the abolition of slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> The assumption that state migration policies or company demands dictated human movements, so prevalent in previous studies about Haitian migrants in Cuba, needs to be revised. As recent scholars have argued, failing to recognize the population movements that pre-dated regulations on migration produces problematic images of certain groups as sedentary, isolated, and backwards.<sup>46</sup> Even when borders are enforced and migration is strictly controlled, migrants act on their own aspirations and exert some degree of

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<sup>44</sup> Chomsky, "The Aftermath of Repression, 10-13; Gaillard, *Les blancs débarquent II*, 20; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 46-7.

<sup>45</sup> Manning, *Migration in World History*, 2, 11-2; Lucassen and Lucassen, "The Mobility Transition Revisited," 348, 76; Richardson, "Caribbean Migrations," 205.

<sup>46</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 44.

control over their movements. Scholars have shown that migration is influenced by kin and social networks, individual creativity, evaluations of personal risks, available alternatives to migration, and migrants' aspirations, not just state policies, capital flows, or the false hopes offered by recruiters.<sup>47</sup> By analyzing the trans-national networks by which migratory movements operated, scholars have questioned simplistic dichotomies of sending and receiving societies to understand phenomena like return migration and the relationship between migrating and non-migrating members of a society.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, recent studies of global migration history have identified significant transformations in migration legislation and regulation that occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. First, the indentured labor systems that served as a means for moving millions of Chinese and East Indians into the Americas were abolished as the United States refused to accept indentured laborers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the British Empire abolished the system in 1917. As the system of indenture was waning, temporary contract labor schemes were on the rise, allowing employers to import contracted workers for fixed periods of time before deporting them.<sup>49</sup> The fact that both of these overlapped temporally with the movement of Haitians to Cuba suggests that indentured migration and temporary guestworker programs, not slavery, should form the bases of a larger comparison.

This project also takes cues from recent developments in the historiography of labor. In a recent appraisal of labor history in Latin America and the Caribbean, John French has argued that the field needs to move beyond "twentieth century wage earning populations, especially

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<sup>47</sup> Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 4; Richardson, *Panama Money in Barbados*, 8; de Haan, "Migration on the Border of Free and Unfree Labour," 197-8; Moya, "A Continent of Immigrants," 3; Eltis, "Free and Coerced Migrations," 48.

<sup>48</sup> Fog-Olwig, *Caribbean Journeys*, 194, 215; McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 11-2, 67; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 13-4.

factory workers, and their political and trade union mobilizations.”<sup>50</sup> French’s admonition is part of a larger trend in Atlantic and Global labor history that seeks to widen definitions of work and the working class away from Eurocentric conceptions. This entails analyzing unpaid and wage labor, self-employment, and other “hard-to-classify subsistence strategies” that fall outside the formal sector and constitute a significant area of labor expenditure for men, and especially women. New definitions of work, these scholars demonstrate, require new analytical lenses and research questions to understand the vast array of laborers’ individual and collective coping strategies, which are not limited to trade union mobilization and may not even “presume protest at all.”<sup>51</sup>

New approaches to global labor history have influenced Caribbean historiography in several ways. All these approaches question what Barry Carr, in the context of Cuban sugar plantations, identifies as the myth of the “omnipotent and omnipresent” company.<sup>52</sup> First, scholars have begun to analyze industries and workforces that do not constitute the strategic backbone of a country’s national economy. In Cuba, this has entailed a new focus on the production of tobacco, coffee, copper, and other products that pre-dated, competed with, or co-existed with the island’s sugar industry. It also includes work in service industries.<sup>53</sup> A second thread recognizes that working men and women of different ages engaged in a host of informal economic practices within strategic industries. For instance, in a recent, in-depth study of Cuban sugar plantations Gillian McGillivray argues that informal, petty commerce, though “not well

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<sup>50</sup> French, “The Laboring and Middle-Class Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean,” 323, 26.

<sup>51</sup> Linden, *Workers of the World*, 10, 12 [quotes]; Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble*, 9; Rediker, “The Revenge of Crispus Attucks,” 39-40; Walter Johnson, “On Agency,” 117. Rogers, *The Deepest Wounds*, 90-3; Juarez-Dappe, *When Sugar Ruled*, 104-18.

<sup>52</sup> Carr, “‘Omnipotent and Omnipresent’?”

<sup>53</sup> Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery*; Santamaría Garcia and Naranjo Orovio, *Más allá del azúcar*; Lipman, *Guantánamo*; Fernández Prieto, *Cuba agrícola*.

documented,” was an “extremely important” aspect of life on a plantation.<sup>54</sup> Finally, scholars have started to identify the individual and collective strategies that individuals used to assert their autonomy, increase their wages, and change their working conditions that may have challenged managerial and other visions of their lives, productivity, and behavior. These strategies included moving between plantations, igniting sugar cane fields, changing economic sectors, or engaging in local trade with subsistence products.<sup>55</sup>

Scholarship on race and racism in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the wider Atlantic raises questions that allow us to transcend the idea that anti-Haitian ideologies determined migrants’ relationships with other groups. First, scholars have challenged the notion that racial or national groups are homogenous entities. They may be divided by class, gender, religion, or a host of other identities.<sup>56</sup> They also note that individuals may have complex relationships with dominant racial ideologies that do not entail passive acceptance.<sup>57</sup> Second, scholars have begun to show that anti-Haitianism in the Atlantic did not go uncontested. Since the Haitian Revolution, Haiti’s historical connections, commonalities, and parallels with other places led Haitians and other individuals to conceptualize the country, its residents, and members of the Diaspora in ways that transcended primitivism or racial fear. These alternative interpretations of

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<sup>54</sup> McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 142-3; Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 7; Martínez, *Decency and Excess*, 3-6.

<sup>55</sup> Carr, "'Omnipotent and Omnipresent'?", 265-6, 271; Mahase, "'Plenty a Dem Run Away'"; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 101-4; McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 138-40.

<sup>56</sup> Hewitt, "Compounding Differences," 314-5. Munasinghe, "Culture Creators and Culture Bearers," 72.

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, *The Island Race*, 2-3; Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 6; Putnam, "To Study the Fragments/ Whole," 617; Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba*, 1, 136-7; Dubow, *Scientific Racism*, 9, 286-7.

Haiti and Haitians have empowered individuals to challenge imperialism, slavery, racism, and the political disfranchisement of black populations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present.<sup>58</sup>

This dissertation seeks to contribute to recent developments in the historiographies of migration, labor, and race by tracing Haitian migrants' efforts to assert control over their lives in Haiti before and after migrating and in the sugar plantations, coffee farms, and urban spaces of Cuba, and after returning to Haiti. The study analyzes the wage labor performed by Haitian men, women and children in both countries, but it also looks at their leisure activities, alternative economic strategies, and religious practices. Reconstructing Haitians' lives in all of these areas includes treatment of Haitian agricultural workers' relationships to non-migrating populations in Haiti and to individuals of other nationalities in Cuba, thus rejecting the idea that they were isolated in Cuban society as a result of company policies and racist ideologies.

#### 1.4 OUTLINE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Migration, trans-national, and global labor historians have stressed the importance of using comparative frameworks when studying human population movements.<sup>59</sup> Scholar Nancy L. Green identifies three comparative models and the prospects and limitations of each. Linear studies focus on a single group and its experiences in both sending and receiving societies.

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<sup>58</sup> Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 593; Sklodowska, *Espectors y espejismos*, 12-3; Zacaïre, "The Trial of Ibo Simon," 43; Ferly, "'The Mirror That We Don't Want'," 58; Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint*, 7-8; Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 4-6; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 14-5; Fischer, "Keynote Address: Missing Links: A History of Universal Rights"; Karem, *The Purloined Islands*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Diner, "History and the Study of Immigration," 37; Hanagan, "An Agenda for Transnational Labor History," 466-8; Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*, 3; Moya, "A Continent of Immigrants."

Divergent studies compare individuals from a single point of origin as they migrate to different destinations. Convergent studies evaluate the experiences of individuals from different regions who arrive in a single host country. While each of these models has some explanatory power, they assume that factors such as the point of arrival, departure, or the groups themselves define the migration experience. Green suggests that these weaknesses may be overcome if scholars analyze a sector of the economy or society and the array of individuals who live and work in it, not just immigrant groups themselves.<sup>60</sup>

Borrowing from Green, this dissertation combines a linear approach to studying Haitian migrants with a focus on the spaces they inhabited in Cuban and Haitian societies. For Green, the strength of a linear comparison is that it challenges scholars to avoid treating a migratory group in homogenous terms.<sup>61</sup> This is especially useful in discussions of the Haitian peasantry “whose diversity has barely been studied” and whose historically circular migratory movements require analysis of the significant number of return migrants.<sup>62</sup> In addition to showing the heterogeneity of Haitian migrants, focusing on different sectors of Cuban and Haitian society allows us to analyze their experiences alongside the non-Haitian and non-migrating populations with whom they formed personal, political, economic, religious, and working relationships. By widening our definitions of labor, showing the heterogeneity of Haitian migrants, uncovering their actions outside of sugar cane cutting, and reconstructing the networks they formed with individuals of other nationalities in Cuba and non-migrating people in Haiti, this dissertation seeks to challenge standard depictions of Haitian migrants and to write them firmly into the social history of both Haiti and Cuba.

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<sup>60</sup> Green, "The Comparative Method and Poststructural Structuralism, 67-70.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>62</sup> Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 229. Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 18, 89-99.

This dissertation traces the experience of Haitian migrants as they circulated between the rural and urban spaces of Haiti and Cuba during the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I argue that the Haitians who arrived in Cuba were a heterogeneous group of men and women who brought with them previous experiences and specialized knowledge in harvesting coffee and sugar. Agricultural workers were joined by a smaller group of literate, urban-dwelling Haitians who worked as consuls, lawyers, low-level office clerks, and skilled craftsmen in the cities of eastern Cuba. Rather than portraying Haitian migrants as an exceptional group of inert and isolated people in Cuba or Haiti, this dissertation shows how they engaged in a host of actions alongside migrants of other nationalities in Cuba and non-migrants in Haiti. Whether working formally, engaging in informal economic activities, or simply enjoying leisure time, Haitians experienced most aspects of life on sugar plantations alongside individuals of other nationalities.

Chapter two details the flows of goods, people, and ideas between Haiti and Cuba from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the legalization of Caribbean labor migration to Cuba in 1913. I argue that Haitians took advantage of Cuba's porous eastern border and the maritime links between both countries before the U.S. occupied Haiti militarily (1915) or Cuban sugar companies began to recruit workers (1913). As the Cuban government militarized its eastern border in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Haitian agricultural workers were arrested on immigration charges, even though they were merely doing what they had done for decades. The efforts of Haitian consuls, incarcerated migrants, and Cuban local authorities to address the fiscal and administrative problems provoked by new restrictions on this flow of people put pressure on Cuban government officials to allow Haitians to work in exchange for their return passage. These localized, previously unstudied efforts coincided with the better-known attempts by Cuban sugar companies to overturn migration restrictions. If the petitions from sugar companies were



responsible for the legalization of migration, the political pressure from migrants and local officials emanating from eastern Cuba shaped the content of migration legislation.

Chapter three traces the conditions in the sending areas of Haiti and the alternatives to migration available to rural families. It argues that labor migration to Cuba originated in the coastal areas of Haiti's southern peninsula as a grassroots movement carried out in small ships, through informal labor recruitment, and with minimal state intervention. Most migrants did not come from regions that experienced rural rebellions or mass land expulsions. Their areas of origin were marked by poor internal roads and by easy access to Cuba via small ships. These areas also experienced a number of subtle, but still highly disruptive changes under the U.S. occupation (1915-1934), especially the elimination of a host of customary practices upon which peasants relied. Peasant households combined migration to Cuba with other strategies that included traveling to other locations within the island, joining the military, enrolling in agricultural schools, or staying on family land. Over the course of the occupation, the migratory movement to Cuba came under the jurisdiction of the state and spread geographically to the Northern peninsula, eventually becoming a highly regulated system of contract labor.

Chapters four and five attempt to reconstruct the lives of Haitian men, women, and children in the agricultural industries of eastern Cuba. The fact that Haitians were mostly illiterate and left no written records of their own makes this a very difficult task. These chapters rely heavily on Cuban judicial records to shed light on Haitians' experiences of labor and leisure on Cuban sugar plantations and coffee farms. Detailed labor hierarchies and wage information for sugar plantations are sketched using work accident reports. These indicate that Haitians arrived with different degrees of experience harvesting coffee and sugar and worked a variety of jobs in both industries. Even Haitian cane cutters were divided by formal and informal

hierarchies. At the same time, judicial records highlight laborers' conflicts with management as well as the social worlds of leisure and informal commerce that Haitians and other workers created outside of work hours.

Haitians' significant participation in the Cuban coffee industry is another manifestation of their attempt to exercise control over their lives and earn the maximum amount of money in Cuba. Although they were recruited to work in the sugar industry, Haitian laborers were widely recognized as significant contributors to the resurgence of Cuban coffee in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. On Cuban coffee farms, Haitian men, women, and children found autonomy from the regimented life of the sugar plantation, though frequently at the expense of unpaid labor from the entire family. During the repatriation drives, when Cuba's xenophobic nationalism reached its highest point, some Haitian coffee workers were spared deportation because they sustained an industry that was widely perceived as being authentically Cuban, as opposed to sugar, an industry frequently associated with the United States.

Chapter six traces religious practices among Haitians and Cubans. While scholars have previously interpreted these practices along national lines, this chapter argues that differences between Haitians and Cubans blurred at the local level. As in the areas of sugar and coffee production, Haitians created religious communities with Cubans that challenge notions of their cultural isolation. Haitians' and Cubans' religious collaborations resulted from the former's reputation as spiritually powerful individuals as well as the existence of symbols common to both Haitian and Cuban African-based religious traditions. Such spiritual practices, however, were not always tolerated by authorities. In early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba, Haitians and Afro-Cubans were often charged with kidnapping children for the purposes of *brujería* (witchcraft) in cases that were highly sensationalized by the Cuban press. This chapter seeks to contextualize these

cases of religious persecution, which have been previously interpreted by scholars as a vehicle for anti-black racism in Cuba, by analyzing them alongside denunciations that received little attention from the press. In these lesser-known cases, Haitians and Afro-Cubans accused numerous individuals, including people from the United States, of what they considered malicious magical or religious practices. These denunciations show that religious persecution was shaped by local actors, including Haitians, who were motivated by religious fears more than concerns about nation-building and anti-black racism.

Chapter seven analyzes the actions of the small group of literate, urban, and professional Haitians who lived and worked in the cities of eastern Cuba. This group took advantage of steamship connections between the two countries to circulate news, mail and periodicals. Their contributions to Haitian newspapers kept Haitian readers abreast of the political situation, racial debates and other conditions in Cuba. Their relationships to Haitian agricultural workers residing in Cuba were more ambivalent, however. On the one hand, these individuals claimed to speak on behalf of all Haitians when addressing Cuban and Haitian audiences. On the other hand, these lettered Haitians sought to accentuate their culture and civilization by distancing themselves from agricultural workers. In contrast to traditional depictions of Haitian consuls as corrupt, opportunistic officials who made no efforts to help agricultural workers, the chapter demonstrates that some consuls earnestly sought to protect Haitians from illegalities in Cuba. Others, however, ignored agricultural workers to help better off Haitians. Despite fears in the Cuban press that any political organization of Haitians or Afro-Cubans could start a race war, the urban, literate community of Haitians had sufficient clout to mobilize and shape Haitian politics from Cuban soil. Like Afro-Cubans and other middle-class black activists in the United States and Caribbean, they avoided potential accusations that they would upset the established racial or

national order by drawing upon the dominant discourse of Cuban racial fraternity, emphasizing the shared histories of Cuba and Haiti, and employing the language of pan-Americanism.

Chapter eight follows Haitian agricultural laborers as they returned to Haiti during and after the U.S. occupation of Haiti (1915-1934). Between the 1920s and 1940s, political divisions within Haiti were becoming increasingly acute at the same time that the country's ruling classes sought to modernize the export economy. These political and economic transformations tempered perceptions of return migrants, who were frequently written about by Haitian journalists, state officials, and literary figures. Rather than using their experiences of wage labor in Cuba to produce exports in Haiti, as most lettered Haitians hoped, many return migrants used their earnings to avoid agricultural wage labor and to engage in other activities in rural and urban Haiti. Return migrants acquired land and material goods in order to set themselves off from other Haitians and increase their social and economic status. Their actions were met with elite disdain and state policies geared toward maintaining their productivity in the countryside.

## 1.5 A NOTE ON SOURCES

In her 1991 short story, *Children of the Sea*, renowned Haitian author Edwidge Danticat narrates the story of a group of Haitians traveling to Miami in a crowded wooden boat. The journey is described through the voice of an unnamed young man who is recording these harsh experiences in a diary that he initially plans to give to his girlfriend back home. In the middle of the sea, the boat begins taking on water. The notebook and everything else must be thrown overboard. His voice is silenced as the diary is thrown overboard. "I know you will probably never see this, but

it was nice imagining that I had you here to talk to...I must throw my book out now.”<sup>63</sup> The fate of the young man in Danticat’s story, and even his name, remain unknown, a problem that affects all the anonymous Haitian boat people whose experiences, beliefs, hopes, and dreams are largely unrecoverable.

This image resonates strongly with the challenges faced by this study. One of the main difficulties of this dissertation has been to reconstruct the lives and experiences of Haitian migrants whose very existence gets lost in the waters of the Caribbean Sea or in the rural areas of Haiti and Cuba. The chapter about consular officials and other literate Haitians who lived in the cities of eastern Cuba draws upon their published tracts, letters to newspapers, and the records of their formally constituted organizations. When it comes to the mostly-illiterate agricultural workers who constituted the majority of Haitian migrants in Cuba, however, such sources do not exist. Like other social histories “from below,” this one grapples with the perennial problem of “how...to recover the lives of illiterate people who left no more than a faint trace on the historical record.”<sup>64</sup> In addition to a small number of first-person accounts, this study employs censuses, Haitian and Cuban newspapers, sugar company records, U.S. military intelligence, Cuban citizenship petitions, and especially judicial and police records from fifteen archives and libraries in Haiti, Cuba, and the United States in an effort to get closer to the lives of Haitian migrants. Unlike the fictional journal in Danticat’s story, which recorded the inner thoughts of the Haitian migrant, these documents were produced by companies and states that sought to govern, regulate the movements of, employ, count, and otherwise control the Haitian agricultural workers who circulated between Haiti and Cuba during the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite their very real limitations, these documents are very revealing. When the goals of states

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<sup>63</sup> Danticat, *Krik? Krak!*, 27.

<sup>64</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, xix.

and companies were breached, officials responded by offering specific information about daily routines as well as the events that disturbed them. These moments provide glimpses into the experiences of individuals who were expected to live and work a certain way and often asserted themselves in an effort to do otherwise.

Modelo núm. 43.

## Presidio de la República de Cuba

Brigada 8<sup>a</sup> Núm. de orden 11443

Hoja histórico-penal del penado negro  
*Armando Gutierrez Salazar*

hijo de Manuel y de Maria  
 natural de Pta. Príncipe  
 provincia de Haiti vecino de Sancti Spiritus  
 estado soltero edad 26 años, oficio jornalero  
 instrucción tiene nacionalidad haitiana  
no Es reincidente familia sin hijos

Núm. del retrato 11250 Está vacunado.



Figure 1 Cuban Prison Record for Haitian-Born Armando Gutierrez Salazar

Source: “Armando Guitierrez Salazar,” Archivo Nacional de Cuba: Presidios y Carceles (hereafter ANCP), 336/15.

First-person accounts by migrants or individuals who shared their experiences are quite rare. Langston Hughes' autobiography recounts the steamship journey between the two countries and the conditions of Cuba's quarantine station at Santiago. While his writings have been published and translated in multiple editions throughout the world, other first person accounts of migrant experience are less known. For instance, in 1933, Haitian writer L elio Laville published a brief text after an extended trip to Cuba during the previous decade. It focused on agricultural laborers as they entered and left the port of Santiago de Cuba, the actions of Haitian consuls, and some specific moments of worker abuse. Antoine Bervin's *Mission   la Havane* tells of his experiences as a Haitian diplomat in 1940s Cuba, as well as his interactions with the Haitian community there. More recently, Dalia Timitoc Borrero, the Cuban-born daughter of a Cuban woman and a Haitian man, published a brief memoir about growing up on a coffee farm near Guant namo, Cuba in the 1930s. These texts are complemented by numerous accounts of Haitians' lives in Cuba based on fieldwork conducted among Haitians and (more often) their descendants in Cuba from the 1960s to the present.<sup>65</sup> Though closer to the migrants themselves, these texts were mostly written by non-migrating populations and necessarily contain the ideological biases of their authors. However, they also offer details and pieces of information that are unavailable in other types of sources, thus providing a starting point for further explorations into Haitians' experiences. First, they show the way that company and state policies affected migrants. More importantly, they show that migrants engaged in non-sugar

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<sup>65</sup> Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*; Laville, *La traite des n gres*; Bervin, *Mission   La Havane*; Timitoc Borrero, *Montecaf *; Guancho and Moreno, *Caidije*; Pedro D az, "Guanamacaca"; Corbea Calzado, "Historia de una familia haitiano-cubana"; Fahoome, "The Transition from Slave Labor to Wage Labor"; Sevillano Andr s, *Trascendencia de una cultura marginada*; Berenguer Cala, *El Gag  De Barrancas*.

producing activities, such as the planting, harvesting, and processing of coffee and working in urban areas.

One of the most illuminating archival sources I have found is a collection of citizenship petitions from eastern Cuba between 1902 and 1970. These records contain the name, birth date, birthplace, arrival location, arrival date, occupation, address, and other data for each individual who sought to acquire Cuban citizenship. Although the Haitians in these petitions represent a small proportion of the total number of migrants, the source allows us to reconstruct the profiles and life stories of individual migrants. While urban, literate residents are overrepresented in this collection, significant numbers of illiterate agricultural workers appear as well, providing details about individuals who have remained elusive to historians. It was this collection that provided the bulk of data about which regions of Haiti sent migrants at different times.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, this project employs judicial records that contain the voices and experiences, however mediated, of Haitian migrants. One significant sub-category of judicial records are work accident reports that sugar companies were required to file with Cuban authorities. These contain the name, age, nationality, worksite, specific activity, wage information, and sometimes co-workers of individuals who were injured while cutting, hauling, and processing sugar. They offer clues about labor hierarchies that often belied generalizations made by company administrators. Other judicial records are concerned with criminal cases such as fires, thefts, murders, and other physical conflicts. Since these events ruptured the routines of workers and managers, witness testimonies are often full of details about rural Cuba during and after work hours, giving us a fuller picture of Haitians, one not limited to their laboring lives. In some parts

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<sup>66</sup> These petitions are located in the Archivo Provincial de Santiago de Cuba: Registro del Estado Civil: Tomos de Ciudadanías (hereafter APSRECTC). Special thanks to Robert Whitney for bringing this collection to my attention.



of this study, I leave out the events that prompted the judicial presence and focus only on the quotidian world that emerges from these reports. At other moments, the event in question is included because it involves episodes of individual or collective worker abuse, action, or resistance. Often, these cases present a problem for historians because testimonies of participants vary widely as they sought to portray themselves to authorities in a sympathetic light. Rather than privileging one side of the story, I try to reconstruct the testimonies with all their contradictions. Although we can never know what happened in these particular cases, they allow us to identify contentious issues, the actors involved in these conflicts, and the rural Cuban context in a richer way.

## 1.6 A NOTE ON NAMES

In 1930, an individual from the British West Indies was incarcerated in Cuba. According to penal records, his name was “What You Name.”<sup>67</sup> This extreme example highlights a significant problem for those who study immigrant laborers in Cuba. As the following chapters will show, many Haitians entered the country without identification or with false passports. Many were given or adopted a Cuban name upon arrival. These could range from the highly traditional José Caridad Menendez to less common monikers like Ignacio Cuba. A significant number of Haitian migrants, especially those whose names did not appear on legal documents, have some derivation of the surname Fis, Pol, or Pie. Surprisingly, these names do not appear with regularity in Haiti. My speculation is that Fis is a Cuban rendering of the French word *fiis*, which is added to an individual’s name to mean junior. Pol and Pie are presumably Paul and

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<sup>67</sup> “What You Name,” ANCP, 193/9.

Pierre. Regardless of their etymologies, these names are particularly Cuban phenomena and it is unknown whether they were chosen by migrants themselves or bestowed upon them by observers. This means that readers should not assume that every Fis, Pol, or Pie was a relative of another. For those who research and write about the Haitian presence in Cuba, it largely closes off the possibility of looking for a single individual in different archival sources. Finally, many documents written by Spanish-speaking state and company officials bear phonetic versions of the Haitian names they heard. Names like Toussaint appear as Taussain. Cities like Aux Cayes and Port Salut became Ocayo and Ponsali. Throughout this study, I have chosen to write these names in their standardized Haitian spellings unless I am quoting directly from a document. Although technically less true to the original source, they are more in the spirit of their Haitian-born bearers.

## 2.0 HAITI, CUBA, AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD BEFORE LEGAL MIGRATION, 1804-1912

On August 18, 1910, Haitian-born rural worker Occiano Guincio and Cornelia Videau were married in Guantánamo, Cuba. Videau had been born free into an enslaved family there in 1885 as a result of the 1870 Ley Moret, or free-womb law. At the time of Cornelia's birth, her mother, Rosa Videaux was identified in documents as "la morena Roseta, *patrocinada* de Vidaud."<sup>68</sup> Like other Cuban slaves in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Rosa was undergoing an experience called *patronato*, a legal mechanism of gradual emancipation, in which her master maintained control over her labor and mobility. The two women's legal statuses resulted from a Spanish colonial strategy to abolish slavery gradually and avoid the upheavals of violent, rapid abolition associated with the neighboring Republic of Haiti.<sup>69</sup>

Occiano Guincio was a few years older than Videau and was born a free man in Port Salut, Haiti, the first republic to abolish slavery in the Americas.<sup>70</sup> A rural worker, he settled in

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<sup>68</sup> Marriage Record of Occiano Guincio and Cornelia Videau. August 18, 1910. Archivo Provincial de Guantánamo: Registro del Estado Civil (hereafter APGREC), 423/11869/1-7. The surname is spelled variously as Videau, Videaux, and Vidaud throughout the marriage record.

<sup>69</sup> Scott, *Slave Emancipation*, 46-7, 64-6.

<sup>70</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, chapters 2 -3; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*; James, *The Black Jacobins*; Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution*. On constructing freedom in Haiti see Blancpain, *La condition des paysans haitiens*, 14-6; Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, Chapters 9-13; Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery*, chapters 3-4. On constructing freedom in other parts of the Americas see: Cooper, Scott, and Holt, *Beyond Slavery*; Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, xxiii-xxiv.

Cuba at some point between his birth in 1882 and his marriage in 1910, well before Haitian immigration was legalized in Cuba. In fact, evidence shows that the connection between Guincio and Videau may have gone back even further. At his baptism in Haiti, Occiano Guincio's godfather was Nicefort Vidaud, an individual with the same surname as the woman he would marry a few decades later. The French origin of Cornelia Videau's name suggests that her master, and perhaps Cornelia herself, may have been descendants of the tens of thousands of masters and slaves who left Saint Domingue for eastern Cuba during and after the Haitian Revolution.<sup>71</sup> The fact that Cornelia Videau married someone whose Haitian godfather shared her own last name raises the possibility of trans-national family connections that reached deep into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Guincio-Videau marriage illustrates the inter-connected histories of the two extremes of abolition in the Americas: the early, rapid, and violent process of emancipation in Haiti and its late, gradual, and legalistic counterpart in Cuba.<sup>72</sup> It also highlights two problems with previous scholarship about the relationships between Haiti, Cuba, and the Atlantic world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. First, it challenges scholarship that downplays the human connections of 19<sup>th</sup> century Haiti by depicting the country as isolated from the larger Atlantic world. Second, it opposes the related idea that 20<sup>th</sup> century Haitian migration to Cuba was a phenomenon caused exclusively by United States imperialism and Cuban sugar companies, both of which pressured to legalize Caribbean contract immigration in Cuba.

From 1791 to 1804 the Haitian Revolution raged in the French colony of Saint Domingue. The destructive conflict involved the colony's population of slaves, free people of

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<sup>71</sup> Cruz Ríos, *Flujos Inmigratorios*, 40; Pichardo Viñals, *Temas históricos*, 97-9, 108-9; Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," 17.

<sup>72</sup> For a comparative analysis of abolition in different parts of the Caribbean see Stinchcombe, *Sugar Island Slavery*, chapter 7.

color, and planters as well as the armies of England, France, and Spain. The former slaves who led the Revolution created the independent Republic of Haiti, the first country in the Atlantic to permanently abolish African slavery.<sup>73</sup> Scholars have demonstrated that the Haitian Revolution's radicalism produced fear among the world's slaveholders and colonial officials while it inspired enslaved populations. In the decades immediately following the Revolution, many world powers refused to recognize the country diplomatically. France did not recognize Haiti until 1825, after Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer agreed to indemnify former planters for the loss of their plantations. Proponents of slavery in the United States successfully blocked recognition of Haiti for almost six decades. The United States did not recognize the republic until 1861, after Southern slaveholding states had seceded in the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865).<sup>74</sup>

In Haitian historiography, the period between 1804, when the Revolution ended, and 1915, when U.S. troops occupied the country militarily, is understudied. Scholarly works on the Revolution (1791-1804) and the Occupation (1915-1934) often vaguely refer to the intervening period as one marked by isolation.<sup>75</sup> As a result, academic and popular perceptions of 19<sup>th</sup> century Haitian history depict the country as being "poor and isolated."<sup>76</sup> For some, the Haitian peasantry was even further removed from the world system. In his influential 1941 work, *The Haitian People*, James Leyburn described the Haitian peasantry as "effectively isolated" from the world even after the U.S. occupation (1915-1934).<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 87; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; James, *The Black Jacobins*; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*.

<sup>74</sup> Stinchcombe, "Class Conflict and Diplomacy," 18, 21.

<sup>75</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 24; Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 105; Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, 28; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 2.

<sup>76</sup> Moya, "A Continent of Immigrants," 9.

<sup>77</sup> Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 11.

The idea that Haiti was isolated before the United States occupied the country in 1915 reinforces the notion that Haitian migration to Cuba was a top-down creation of the U.S. imperial state and Cuban sugar companies. Studies of Caribbean economic history often explain migration in terms of labor needs in the receiving countries and labor abundance in sites of outmigration. César Ayala exemplifies this approach: “Mills and farms in areas with a scarce supply of labor power in Cuba and the Dominican Republic imported migrant workers from Haiti, Jamaica, and the eastern Caribbean and initiated an inter-Caribbean flow of migrants that is without precedent in the region.”<sup>78</sup> These discussions of macroeconomic factors necessarily take the United States’ growing regional presence into account as well. The U.S. military occupation of Haiti (1915-1934), one of numerous armed interventions in the region, coincided with the peak years of migration between Haiti and Cuba. Some even date the beginning of Haitian migration to Cuba and the Dominican Republic to 1915, the moment when the United States was believed to have integrated Haiti into the world economy.<sup>79</sup> According to Francisco López Segrera, “United States imperial expansion in the Caribbean shaped the regional labour market to suit the interests and needs of American capital.”<sup>80</sup>

Cuban historiography, in turn, has shown that foreign-controlled sugar companies successfully defied Cuban popular opinion and the wishes of some state officials to legalize Afro-Caribbean immigration in 1913.<sup>81</sup> Although the presence of Haitians in Cuba is acknowledged before legalization, there is little analysis of those who entered before sugar

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<sup>78</sup> Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom*, 21. See also Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy*, 96-9, 117-9; Perusek, "Haitian Emigration in the Early Twentieth Century," 8-9.

<sup>79</sup> Gerlus, "The Political Economy of Haitian Migration," 56.

<sup>80</sup> López Segrera, "Slavery and Society in the Caribbean," 148.

<sup>81</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 18-20; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 46-7.

companies were permitted to recruit Afro-Caribbean labor (1913) or the United States occupied Haiti militarily (1915).<sup>82</sup>

Such arguments are not unique to intra-Caribbean migration. Scholarship on other guestworker and temporary migration programs around the globe describe them as “state-brokered compromises designed to placate employers’ demands for labor and nativists’ demands for restriction.”<sup>83</sup> This chapter seeks to explore migrants’ roles within the formation of policies that emerged from these compromises.

Recent trends in global migration historiography and the growing body of scholarship on 19<sup>th</sup> Century Haiti illustrate the need to explore the implications of the Guincio-Videau marriage further. World historians have challenged scholars to recognize the pervasiveness of population movements throughout human history and the role that migration plays in the development of human societies, especially by disseminating ideas between different communities. More specifically, scholars recognize the period between 1846 and 1940 as a high point in both long- and short-distance migration at the global level. Between 149 and 161 million people traveled long-distances to destinations ranging from the Americas to Siberia and Manchuria.<sup>84</sup> Migration has been so central to the development of societies, that failing to recognize the population movements of certain groups may lead to assumptions that certain populations are isolated, sedentary, static, and “outside of historical globalization.”<sup>85</sup>

This concern has been especially relevant to the study of 19<sup>th</sup> century Haiti, where recent scholarship argues that the country’s lack of diplomatic recognition did not prevent the message

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<sup>82</sup> For an exception, see Cernicharo, "Oriente: Fuerza de trabajo nativa."

<sup>83</sup> Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 14; Mapes, *Sweet Tyranny*, 126-7.

<sup>84</sup> McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846-1940," 156-7, 61; Manning, *Migration in World History*, 149.

<sup>85</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 44; Lucassen and Lucassen, "The Mobility Transition Revisited," 348.

of the revolution from influencing individuals elsewhere. During the past decade, there has been a resurgence of multi-disciplinary projects that have traced the effects of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World. In addition to the interest generated by the bi-centennial anniversary of Haitian independence in 2004, scholars are heavily influenced by Michel-Rolph Trouillot's groundbreaking essay about the way the Revolution was "silenced" by slave owners, colonial officials, and others who could not comprehend and sought to reject the radical egalitarianism its leaders espoused.<sup>86</sup> This has led many scholars to identify the revolution's influence in new and subtle ways. Rather than looking for the event's "causal impact on surrounding areas and its direct effect on slave insurgency in other places," many have conceptualized the Haitian Revolution as "phantasma and nightmare" in order to understand how it affected Latin American independence struggles, notions of the meaning of modernity, literary production, and a host of other social, political, and cultural processes throughout the Atlantic.<sup>87</sup>

Others argue that the links between post-revolutionary Haiti and other parts of the Atlantic were more than just symbolic or "spectral." There were numerous moments when Haitian heads of state and political exiles formed political and economic relationships abroad even when diplomatic recognition was absent. In the first decades after Haitian independence, Haitian leaders formed political alliances with other leaders in the Americas and the larger Atlantic. For instance, Haitian emperor Henry Christophe corresponded with British

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<sup>86</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 96.

<sup>87</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 5; Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution*, 139-44; Munro and Walcott-Hackshaw, *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution*; Munro and Walcott-Hackshaw, *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution*; Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*; Geggus and Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution*; Hoffman, Gewecke, and Fleischmann, *Haiti 1804*; Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*; García Moreno and Eduardo Vázquez, *La revolución de Haití*.



abolitionists despite a lack of recognition from England.<sup>88</sup> In 1816, Haitian president Alexander Pétion offered weapons and asylum to Simón Bolívar, the South American independence leader.<sup>89</sup> Haitian individuals were politically active outside of their home country during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well. For example, in the 1820s, Haitian opposition journalist Dumai Lespinasse was exiled in Jamaica.<sup>90</sup> In the same period, a group of Haitian sailors influenced non-white soldiers to press for their rights in the newly independent country of Colombia.<sup>91</sup>

Trade linked Haiti to other countries. During the 1825 Pan-American conference in Panama, an event from which Haiti was excluded, a Colombian official declared that his government “would not...make any objection to continuing to admit the Haitian flag in Colombian ports for purely mercantile purposes” despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations between the countries.<sup>92</sup> Colombia was not alone in this regard. As early as 1812, merchants from the United States traveled to Haiti to sell agricultural foodstuffs and purchase coffee, though political recognition was not forthcoming until the 1860s. Haitian coffee was also exported to France and other parts of Europe in increasingly large quantities throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>93</sup>

The political and commercial ties between Haiti and other parts of the Atlantic occurred alongside steady flows of people. In the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, planters and their slaves fled Saint Domingue and settled in the United States and neighboring countries in the

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<sup>88</sup> Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 23.

<sup>89</sup> Guerra Vilaboy, "La revolución haitiana," 50-1.

<sup>90</sup> Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery*, 79.

<sup>91</sup> Lasso, *Myths of Harmony*, 135-6.

<sup>92</sup> José Rafael Revenga, letter of September 24, 1825, quoted in Stinchcombe, "Class Conflict and Diplomacy," 12.

<sup>93</sup> Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 23-4; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 55,61.

Caribbean.<sup>94</sup> Such flows did not stop after the Revolution. There was a “constant movement of individuals and small groups” to and from Haiti in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>95</sup> In this period, it was common for Haitian elites to be educated in France. Individuals also moved between Haiti and the early communities of Haitian-Americans in United States cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, New Orleans, Charleston, Savannah, and others. These may have entailed the return of second- and third-generation Haitian-Americans to the land of their parents and grandparents. For instance, in 1840, Alexander Battiste was born in Savannah, Georgia. His “father was the son of Haitian parents but born in the United States.” At the age of 4, Battiste moved to Philadelphia to live with his uncle and aunt, two other second-generation Haitians. In 1861, this trio of second and third generation migrants returned to Haiti permanently.<sup>96</sup> Battiste and his family were part of “a multinational community of refugees with threads and tentacles in Cuba, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Thomas, Jamaica, France” and the United States.<sup>97</sup> In the latter part of the century, rural laborers began moving between Haiti and the Dominican Republic in earnest.<sup>98</sup>

Contrary to popular stereotypes, Haiti was also a migration destination from Europe and the Americas. In the early decades of Haitian independence, Haitian leaders Henry Christophe and Jean-Pierre Boyer supported attempts to bring African-Americans from the United States to Haiti. Despite many failed colonization projects, approximately “13,000 African Americans

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<sup>94</sup> Davies, "Saint-Dominguan Refugees; Brereton, "Haiti and the Haitian Revolution."

<sup>95</sup> Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, 186; Burnham, "Immigration and Marriage," 2-9; Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 5-6; Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 49-50; Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 1-2, chapter 2.

<sup>96</sup> Alexander Battiste to, John S. Durham, Minister Resident and Consul General of the United States, Port-au-Prince, 25-jan-1892. Despatches from United States Consuls in Port-au-Prince, 1835-1906, microcopy T. 364, (hereafter DUSCPP) Reel 9.

<sup>97</sup> Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 51.

<sup>98</sup> Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 594; Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 1-2.

made the journey to Haiti between 1824 and 1827” though most eventually returned.<sup>99</sup> Movements also occurred independently of these well-known colonization projects. Before slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico, runaway slaves sought to reach Haiti by “stealing small boats or fishing vessels or hiring themselves out as sailors.”<sup>100</sup> Individuals from Europe, the Middle East, and other parts of the Americas arrived in Haiti as well.

Frenchmen soon joined the tiny British group in the port cities. French Antilleans figured prominently among the newcomers, and by 1910, constituted a colony of fifteen hundred. Corsican immigrants were also strongly represented, especially in Cape Haitian. In the 1860s, Germans from the Hanseatic cities entered the country as employees of French mercantile houses. Syrio-Lebanese and Italians arrived in Haiti thirty years later. The Syrio-Lebanese community peaked at six thousand in 1903; the Italian group numbered three hundred in 1914.<sup>101</sup>

This chapter argues that Haiti’s participation in Atlantic-wide flows of goods, people, and ideas created especially strong linkages with the neighboring island of Cuba, especially in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While the Haitian Revolution held immense symbolism for both planters and slaves in Cuba, the two countries were also linked by exchanges of people and goods. Individuals in both countries took advantage of these exchanges and of the porous borders of each country to circulate between them, though they often did not appear in official migration statistics. In the decade preceding legalization, the Cuban government militarized its border and strengthened immigration controls. Haitians were incarcerated in increasing numbers for something they had previously done with impunity. This raised questions among Cuban and

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<sup>99</sup> Pamphile, *Haitians and African Americans*, Chapter 2, quote on p. 44.

<sup>100</sup> Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*, 74.

<sup>101</sup> Plummer, “The Metropolitan Connection,” 124-5. See also Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 55-6; Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 95-6.

Haitian state officials as to who was legally and financially responsible for deporting these individuals. The efforts of jailed migrants, Haitian consuls, and Cuban state officials to resolve these fiscal and administrative problems created a form of low- and mid-level political pressure on the Cuban government to alter its immigration policies. Although political pressure on the Cuban government by sugar companies was largely responsible for the legalization of Caribbean migration to Cuba, the content of legislation was also influenced by Haitians' previous movements to Cuba and by local-level negotiations to preserve it. By detailing the way these early migrants shaped emerging migration policies, this chapter seeks to raise questions about how migrants' actions, as well as pre-existing flows of goods, people, and ideas, shaped migration policies, even for those movements that appear to have been engendered by a collusion between companies and states.

## **2.1 THE FLOW OF PEOPLE, GOODS, AND IDEAS BETWEEN HAITI AND CUBA, 1804 TO 1913**

The Haitian Revolution's message of radical anti-slavery struck fear into supporters of the institution and inspired those seeking its destruction throughout the Atlantic. Its ideological imprint was especially prevalent in Cuba, a close neighbor under colonial control and where slavery expanded dramatically into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, longer than most parts of the Americas.<sup>102</sup> After the Haitian Revolution, reprisals against real and imagined Haitian-style

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<sup>102</sup> Ibarra Cuesta, *Patria, etnia y nación*, 28-30; Ferrer, "La société esclavagiste cubaine"; Sklodowska, *Espectors y espejismos*, 44-61; Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, Part 1; Hall, *Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies*, 54; Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*, 37-8; Lasso, *Myths of Harmony*, 64, 133; Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery*, 77.

slave revolts increased in Cuba. In 1812, a slave rebellion in Cuba associated with José Antonio Aponte drew direct imagery from the Haitian Revolution.<sup>103</sup> The revolution had profound effects on slaves' and their masters' worldviews in ways that did not always manifest themselves as slave revolts. Ada Ferrer argues that for Cuban slaves and their masters, ideas about Haiti and the Haitian Revolution "loomed large" creating a situation in which "local slave rebellion became part of the daily fabric of possibility."<sup>104</sup>

News and information about the Haitian Revolution were brought to Cuba by people who witnessed the event firsthand. During and after the conflict, more than 27,000 free and enslaved people fled Saint Domingue and settled into the eastern part of Cuba, where they were responsible for the growth of coffee production.<sup>105</sup> Although many of the Saint Domingue exiles were expelled from Cuba in 1809, a large number returned only a few decades later. Besides bringing the knowledge of coffee-production, refugees were responsible for the prevalence of Franco-Haitian culture in 19<sup>th</sup> century Oriente.<sup>106</sup> On an 1855 visit to Cuba, French traveler Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne portrayed Santiago de Cuba as "almost as much a French town as it is a Spanish one. Our language is understood by everyone, except a few new Spanish colonists, determined to not learn it."<sup>107</sup> By the time of Cuba's independence wars in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Franco-Haitian culture was still highly visible in eastern Cuba. In an 1874 diary entry, Cuban independence leader, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes described a dance in which freed

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<sup>103</sup> Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, chapter 5.

<sup>104</sup> Ferrer, "Speaking of Haiti," 233.

<sup>105</sup> Cruz Ríos, *Flujos inmigratorios*, 40; Pichardo Viñals, *Temas históricos*, 97-9, 108-9; Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," 17.

<sup>106</sup> Portuondo Zuñiga, *Cuba: Constitución y liberalismo*, 52-5; Scott, "Public Rights and Private Commerce," 239-40; Cruz Ríos, *Flujos inmigratorios*, 78.

<sup>107</sup> Duvergier de Hauranne, "Cuba et les Antilles," 861 cited and translated in Joseph, *Four French Travelers*, 21-2.

slaves sang many “songs, in French Creole, that refer to our revolution.”<sup>108</sup> These songs were only a small part of the larger musical influence of Franco-Haitian culture in eastern Cuba. The Cuban musical form *contradanza* had its roots in Haiti, as did the dance known as the *Tumba Francesa*. During Cuba’s independence wars, *danzon* was also associated with Haitians, Afro-Cubans, and independence from Spain.<sup>109</sup> In the 1890s, almost a century after the initial wave of refugees, Cuban independence leaders José Martí and Máximo Gómez noted the strong presence of Franco-Haitian individuals on the coffee plantations of Oriente.<sup>110</sup>

The Haitian influence on eastern Cuba was maintained not just by the cultural practices of post-revolutionary refugees but also by the sustained communications between both countries. Their participation within larger Atlantic flows created commercial, maritime, military, and human linkages between Haiti and Cuba, especially in the second-half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, in the spring of 1866 the *Sacramento* sailed out of New York before landing in Port-au-Prince on May 14. From there, it traveled directly to Cuba.<sup>111</sup> The ship was one of thirty-six vessels that entered Port-au-Prince from April to June 1866. Two of them subsequently traveled to Cuba.<sup>112</sup> These commercial and shipping links continued and probably expanded after 1900, when multiple parts of Haiti and Cuba were linked by trading networks. On May 5, 1900, the *Tres Hermanas*, a ship registered in Key West, Florida, arrived in Port-au-Prince, Haiti from Baracoa, Cuba. Four days later, the boat traversed the Haitian coast for 27 miles before landing in Archahaie “to take on a cargo of bananas and starch.” It then left Archahaie on May 16,

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<sup>108</sup> Céspedes, *El diario perdido*, 268-70 cited in Ibarra Cuesta, *Encrucijadas de la guerra prolongada*, 32.

<sup>109</sup> Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 23,25; Viddal, “Cuba’s Tumba Francesa,” 49.

<sup>110</sup> Pichardo Viñals, *Temas históricos*, 98.

<sup>111</sup> Henry Conrad, “Arrivals and Departures of American Vessels at the United States Consulate in Port-au-Prince.” June 30, 1866. DUSCPP, Roll 4.

<sup>112</sup> Henry Conrad, “Navigation and Commerce of the United States at the Port of Port-au-Prince,” June 30, 1866. DUSCPP, Roll 4.

“destined for Santiago de Cuba.” Bad weather prevented that particular ship from reaching Santiago and it was grounded in Port-au-Prince. However, the Cuban crew waited only nine days for the next ship heading to Santiago de Cuba.<sup>113</sup> The back and forth movements of these ships were part of the commercial networks that linked Haiti and Cuba. In 1903, two Cubans in Santiago, Francisco Bassas y Columbié and Juan Arango y Villasana had business dealings with the commercial house of Sres. C. Lyon Hall y Ca, based in Port-au-Prince.<sup>114</sup> Not all such commerce was carried out by legally-sanctioned trading companies. In 1911, one Cuban observer complained of “the existence of a certain number of Haitian and Jamaican ships that dedicate themselves to piracy in the coast of the eastern region.”<sup>115</sup>

Haitians and Cubans used each other’s territories in military struggles for state power as well. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Spanish authorities in Cuba feared attacks from an alliance between the Haitian government and continental independence leaders like Simón Bolívar, who had received aid from Haitian President Alexander Pétiion (1806-1818).<sup>116</sup> Decades later, after Cuba’s wars for independence began, leaders used Haiti as a point of organization. During the Ten Years War in Cuba (1868-1878), Manuel R. Fernandez served as “confidential agent of Cuba in [Port-au-Prince,] Haiti,” where he accumulated arms and supplies

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<sup>113</sup> Alexander Battiste, Consulate General of the United States in Port-au-Prince to David J. Hill, Assistant Secretary of State, Washington DC, May 26, 1900. DUSCPP, Reel 10.

<sup>114</sup> Copy of letter to Secretario de Estado, Habana from Juzgado Municipal y Registro Civil, Santiago de Cuba. March 11, 1903 [Original March 4, 1903]. Archivo Nacional de Cuba: Secretaria de Estado y Justicia (hereafter ANCSEJ) 38/2020/2.

<sup>115</sup> Report to Consejo de Secretarios From Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficio. August 23, 1911. Archivo Nacional de Cuba: Secretaria de la Presidencia (hereafter ANCSP 121/12.

<sup>116</sup> José L. Franco draws from the extensive documentation related to Haiti in the National Archives of Cuba:Asuntos Políticos to argue that Jean-Pierre Boyer was actually planning to overthrow Cuba, with the aid of Mexico, but was thwarted by European powers. Franco, “Un esfuerzo de Haiti.”

with the surreptitious aid of Haitian president Nissage Saget.<sup>117</sup> Other Cubans organized from within Cap-Haitien, Haiti.<sup>118</sup> These Cuban exile communities in Haiti were large and strategically important enough to host Cuba's most high-profile independence leaders. Cuban general Antonio Maceo visited the country in 1879 and returned in 1895 with José Martí.<sup>119</sup>

Haitian political figures also used Cuban territory for their own strategic ends. The years between Cuba's formal independence (1902) and the United States' occupation of Haiti (1915) coincided with a period of acute political instability in Haiti. During conflicts, Haitian political and military leaders traveled to Cuba and other countries for organizational purposes and to escape repression. For instance, in January 1908, Haitian political leader Antenor Firmin, himself a previous acquaintance of José Martí, sought to seize power from Haitian president Nord Alexis by using foreign territories for logistical purposes.<sup>120</sup> During the conflict, twenty-six of Firmin's followers left "the island of Saint Thomas" and headed "in the direction of a Cuban port" to continue organizing.<sup>121</sup> In 1914, Cuban officials awaited the arrival "from Curacao, of the Haitian general Defly, [an] agitator who has been expelled by all the governments of the neighboring Republics."<sup>122</sup> Finally, in 1915, Haitian Dr. Rosalvo Bobo (whose experiences in Cuba are detailed in chapter seven) fled Haiti after being thwarted from seizing executive power by the occupying forces of the United States. During his exile from

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<sup>117</sup> José Morales Lemus, "Borrador Manuscrito del Nombramiento de Manuel B. Fernandez como Agente Confidencial de Cuba en Haiti," February 2, 1870. Archivo Nacional de Cuba: Donativos y Remisiones (hereafter ANCDR) 629/10. Letter from Manuel R. Fernandez to Miguel de Aldama, Presidente de la Junta Central Republicana de Cuba y Puerto Rico, August 23, 1870. ANCDR 156/40-19.

<sup>118</sup> Luis Lamarque, "Claudio Brindis de Salas no era un mal patriota" *Diario de Cuba* February 13, 1930.

<sup>119</sup> Zacaïre, "Haiti on His Mind," 58-61, 70.

<sup>120</sup> Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 120; Plummer, "Firmin and Martí."

<sup>121</sup> Secretario Interno to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, January 22, 1908. APSGP 785/30/1.

<sup>122</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Alcalde Municipal, Santiago, October 14, 1914. APSGP 2837/9.



Haiti, he traveled between the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica before settling permanently in France.<sup>123</sup>

These military, political, and economic linkages between Haiti and Cuba were built by individuals who moved between both countries outside of the major migratory movements of the early 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Santiago de Cuba in 1883, someone unsuccessfully requested a passport so that Cristina Duharte, the daughter of a *patrocinada* slave could travel to Haiti.<sup>124</sup> Although it is impossible to know the identity or motive of the person who requested the passport, had they been successful, they would have joined a well-established community of Cubans in Haiti. In addition to the immigrants from Europe and the Americas that settled in 19<sup>th</sup> century Haiti there was a significant number of Cubans. By the 1890s, the number of Cuban immigrants in Port-au-Prince trailed only the Germans and the French.<sup>125</sup> This community of Cubans in Haiti established strong social and economic ties with Haitians. Between 1850 and 1871, 10 marriages were conducted between Haitians and Cubans in Port-au-Prince.<sup>126</sup> Others did not formalize their union through church or state. For instance, José Cristobal Polanco y Ferrer was born in Santiago de Cuba in the 1840s and moved to Port-au-Prince in 1876. He had three children outside of marriage with Delcamise Cebeca, a Haitian woman.<sup>127</sup> When Polanco registered the birth of his third child with Haitian authorities in 1905, two resident Cubans served

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<sup>123</sup> Gaillard, *Les Blancs Débarquent II*, 214,17,25.

<sup>124</sup> Untitled Expedient relative to Cristina Duharte's petition for a passport. March 14, 1883. Archivo Provincial de Santiago de Cuba: Juzgado de Primera Instancia (hereafter APSJPI) 788/6/4. It is unknown who requested the passport. Duharte denied making the request.

<sup>125</sup> Corvington, *Port-Au-Prince, 1888-1915*, 26,29,38,93.

<sup>126</sup> Burnham, "Immigration and Marriage," 278.

<sup>127</sup> Letter to Secretario de Estado, Habana from Celestino Bencomo, Consulado de la Republica de Cuba, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. August 19, 1909. "Copia y Traducción Literal" [de acta de nacimiento de Jose Cristobal Polanco], August 27, 1893. "Copia y Traducción Literal" [de Extracto de los Registros del Estado Civil de Port-au-Prince, Seccion Sud], July 9, 1901. "Copia y Traducción Literal." [de Extracto de los Registros del Estado Civil de Port-au-Prince] June 12, 1905. ANCSEJ 23/711/7-11.

as witnesses.<sup>128</sup> One of them, Simon Hierrezuelo, had requested a passport in Santiago a few years before to travel to Port-au-Prince.<sup>129</sup> Polanco's case was not unique. After Cuban independence, the Cuban consul in Haiti inquired about the citizenship rights of "illegitimate children" born in Haiti, "some of a Cuban father and Haitian mother, others of a Haitian father and a Cuban mother, and some whose parents are both Cuban."<sup>130</sup> Cubans had a strong economic presence in Haiti as well, where they had a reputation for being tailors and shoemakers. Cuban musicians and bullfighters regularly passed through Port-au-Prince in the 1890s as well.<sup>131</sup> In 1885, a hair salon called "*La Cubana*" was opened in Port-au-Prince. In 1930, its proprietor was Jean Rodriguez, of unknown, perhaps Cuban, origin.<sup>132</sup>

The regular movement of Cubans to Haiti continued into the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1901, Cubans Vicenta Rodriguez and José R. Pérez separately asked the Governor of Oriente for passports to travel to Haiti.<sup>133</sup> In 1903, Manuel Salazar, Julian Padilla, Mariano Clavijo y Riviera, Marcelino Hechavarria, Mariano Tur, and Manuel Raventos--all Cuban natives--requested passports from the governor to travel to Haiti.<sup>134</sup> In 1906, Alfred Uoldis,

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<sup>128</sup> "Copia y Traducción Literal." [de Extracto de los Registros del Estado Civil de Port-au-Prince], June 4, 1905, ANCSEJ 23/711/11.

<sup>129</sup> Letter to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, From: Simón Hierrezuelo, December 02, 1902, APSGP 1800/5.

<sup>130</sup> Letter to Jefe del Despacho del Departamento de Estado en Habana from Jorge A. Campuzano, Consul de la Republica de Cuba en Port-au-Prince, Haiti. November 06, 1906. Letter to Cuban Consul in Port-au-Prince from Pedro C. Salcedo, Jefe interino del Departamento de Estado. August 20, 1908. ANCSEJ 23/711/2-5.

<sup>131</sup> Corvington, *Port-Au-Prince, 1888-1915*, 26,29,38,93.

<sup>132</sup> "Salons de coiffure," *Haiti Journal*, June 22, 1931; "Salon de coiffure: La cubana," *Haiti Journal*, January 27, 1930.

<sup>133</sup> Vicenta Rodriguez to Gobernador Civil de la Provincia de Oriente, October 24, 1901; José R. Pérez to Gobernador Civil de la Provincia de Oriente, September 25, 1901. Both in APSGP 1800/3.

<sup>134</sup> Manuel Salazar to Gobernador Civil, Santiago, June 11, 1903; Manuel Raventos to Gobernador Civil, Santiago [re: Julian Padilla]. June 11, 1903; Mariano Clavijo y Riviera to

Matilde Rodriguez, and Adel Rodriguez requested passports in Cuba to travel to Haiti.<sup>135</sup> In this period, the number of Cubans coming to Haiti was significantly lower than the number of Haitians heading the opposite direction.

In 1913, 1,422 Haitians entered Cuba legally, representing the official beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century migration of seasonal cane cutters. These immigrants, however, were hardly blazing a new trail. Not only were their movements mirrored on a global scale by the migration of millions of people, but they were also reinforcing a long tradition of migrant flows going to and from Haiti, including some Haitians who traveled to Cuba. Haiti's participation in the global migratory movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shaped the population flows heading to Cuba. As world historians argue, the large-scale, long-distance movements that occurred around the globe during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were "closely linked" to shorter-distanced, often seasonal movements that characterized regions like the Caribbean, creating what Adam McKeown calls "a spectrum of overlapping migrations."<sup>136</sup> Life stories of individuals who traveled between Haiti and Cuba in the 20<sup>th</sup> century clearly illustrate these overlaps. Octavio Pérez migrated to Cuba from Haiti in 1916. He had been born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 1900 to a Haitian woman named Maria Despaigne and Julio Pérez, an immigrant from Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic living in Haiti.<sup>137</sup> Jorge Hansen and his wife were born in Jamaica before moving to Haiti. While there, they gave birth to a daughter, Gertrudis before all three migrated to Santiago

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Gobernador Civil, June 11, 1903; Manuel Raventos to Gobernador Civil [re: Marcelino Hechavarria]. Mariano Tur to Gobernador Civil, June 11, 1903. All in APSGP1800/6.

<sup>135</sup> Alfred Uoldis to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, March 09, 1906, Matilde Rodriguez and Adel Rodriguez to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, November 12, 1906. All in APSGP 1800/8.

<sup>136</sup> McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846-1940," 156-7, 61.

<sup>137</sup> Citizenship Petitions for Octavio Pérez. July 22, 1938 and May 14, 1942, Archivo Provincial de Santiago: Registro del Estado Civil: Tomo de Ciudadanías (hereafter APSRECTC) 365/114, 175.

de Cuba. In Cuba, Gertrudis married José Puzo Ronchon, a Haitian-born individual, in 1917.<sup>138</sup> Other connections extended outside of the Caribbean entirely. Santiago Chade and Cecilia Esmeja were born in Mount Lebanon in Ottoman Syria in 1877 and 1882 respectively. The two were married and migrated to Haiti before having two sons in Port-au-Prince in 1897 and 1899. In 1903, parents and children permanently relocated to Santiago de Cuba.<sup>139</sup> Julian Caluff y Abraham was born in Tripoli, Syria in 1905. By the 1920s he was living in Cuba though his Syrian-born mother was in Haiti.<sup>140</sup>

## 2.2 FROM RESTRICTION TO LEGALIZATION, 1902-1912

The migration of Haitians to Cuba in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurred despite Cuban restrictions on the immigration of contract laborers. In 1898, Spanish colonial control formally ended in Cuba, only to be replaced by the political, economic and military dominance of the United States. As in other Caribbean areas under United States control, and following larger global trends, the movement of people and goods between Haiti and Cuba became further subject to state control as borders strengthened in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>141</sup> Two Cuban immigration laws, based on legislation from the United States, were passed in 1902 and 1906. Both restricted the entrance of migrant contract laborers, effectively banning Haitians and British West Indians from entering the country. While Cuban law described the ban in terms of a desire to forbid contract

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<sup>138</sup> Citizenship Petition for José Puzo Ronchon, September 16, 1940, APSRECTC 341/15/203.

<sup>139</sup> Citizenship Petition for Cecilia Esmeja y Chade, May 20, 1941, APSRECTC 358/6/65.

<sup>140</sup> Citizenship Petition for Julian Caluff y Abraham, November 19, 1940, APSRECTC 342/16/46.

<sup>141</sup> Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 600-01; Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money," 499-501; Engerman, "Changing Laws," 76; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 12-4.

laborers, state officials and many other sectors of society opposed Caribbean immigrants on racial grounds. Journalists and government officials voiced their fears that allowing Haitians and other immigrants into Cuba would put an end to white Cubans' numerical majority. They also complained that these immigrants carried diseases, could potentially cause a race war between blacks and whites, and had primitive habits that would cause the Cuban nation to regress. Instead, Cuban officials, influenced by scientific racism, sought to attract European immigrants to "whiten" the population and provide labor for the growing sugar industry.<sup>142</sup>

Cubans' opposition to immigration was coupled with a large increase in sugar production and with the sugar companies' attempts to procure immigrant laborers. In 1898, Cuba produced 350,000 short tons of sugar. By 1910, sugar production reached 2,021,000 short tons.<sup>143</sup> This growth was concentrated in the eastern provinces of Oriente and Camagüey. During sugar harvests, which commenced at the beginning of the calendar year, companies required a constant supply of cane so that mills could grind through the night. As a result, a large and heterogeneous labor force consisting of skilled and unskilled, agricultural and mechanical workers was required for production. When sugar prices were stable, companies offered competitive wages for agricultural work in the region. Eventually, the 1902 ban on the immigration of Caribbean contract laborers was overturned in time for the 1913 harvest.

In the period between 1902 and 1912, the Cuban government sought to restrict the movement of people that had taken place between Haiti and Cuba outside the gaze of state officials during the previous century. On the surface, Cuban government statistics verify the

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<sup>142</sup> Carlos de Velasco, "El problema negro," *Cuba Contemporánea*, Feb. 1913; Corbitt, "Immigration in Cuba," 304; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 52, 101-2; Naranjo Orovio and García Gonzalez, *Racismo e inmigración*; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 39-44; Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba," 53, 56.

<sup>143</sup> Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom*, 70.

measure's success. Not only was Haitian migration minimal in the period, but spikes in 1913 (the first year migration was legalized) and 1915 (the year the U.S. occupied Haiti) seem to indicate the power of Cuban sugar companies and U.S. imperial policies in causing migration (see table 1).

**Table 1: Haitian Immigrant Arrivals in Cuba According to Official Statistics**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Haitian Migrants</b>
1902	10
1903	0
1904	0
1905	0
1906	--
1907	--
1908	0
1909	0
1910	0
1911	221
1912	172
1913	1,422
1914	120
1915	2,416

Source: Compiled from Cuba, *Censo De La República De Cuba, 1907*, 60; Cuba, *Census of the Republic of Cuba 1919*, 176; Secretaria de Hacienda: Sección de Estadística General, "Estado Comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902, 1903, 1904, y 1905" 2-Nov-1906. ANCSF 115/99.

These statistics do not tell the whole story. As elsewhere in the Caribbean, aggregate data collected by states may obscure the multiple movements of individual migrants.<sup>144</sup> Guillermo Coco Couchat was born in Haiti during the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1913, he was living in Banes, Cuba, the site of the company that had received presidential permission to

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<sup>144</sup> Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 11.

import migrants that very year.<sup>145</sup> Unlike other newly arriving workers around him, Couchat had been in Cuba long before legalization. He had lived in Cuba since as early as 1907, residing in the province of Camagüey.<sup>146</sup> This means that he arrived at the company site from within Cuba, not abroad. The case of Couchat and other Haitians in Cuba shows that immigration restrictions were not always successful.

Some Haitians' journeys to Cuba occurred before entries were recorded in 1902. Haitian native Julian Pol y Pié arrived in Baracoa, Cuba on May 5, 1896.<sup>147</sup> Haitians Pablo Gil and Amorés Pools arrived in 1896 and 1898 respectively.<sup>148</sup> Others arrived in years when no Haitians appear in immigration statistics. The case of Bautista Nustelier y Fortunés is a perfect reflection of the long-standing connections between Haiti and Cuba and the problem with immigration statistics. Nustelier was born to a Haitian mother and Cuban father in Miragoane, Haiti in 1901. Two years later he traveled to Cuba; presumably accompanied by one or both parents. Yet immigration statistics declare that not a single Haitian entered Cuba in 1903.<sup>149</sup> The discrepancy between official migration statistics and individual life stories is not unique to Nustelier. Data about individual migrants shows that many entered Cuba in years when published statistics do not show the entrance of any Haitians. On February 17, 1904, Haitian native José Rafael Castellano disembarked in the port of Antilla, Cuba.<sup>150</sup> Edelman A. Fis

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<sup>145</sup> Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 212.

<sup>146</sup> Expediente related to Guillermo Coca Couchat. ANPCP 187/20.

<sup>147</sup> "Julian Pol y Pié," March 1, 1937, APSRECTC 371/3/13.

<sup>148</sup> "Amorés Pools soa, #23" and "Pablo Gil soa, #22" Censo 1918 de Holguín. Archivo Provincial de Holguin: Gobierno Municipal de Holguín (hereafter APHGM), 23/4972/103.

<sup>149</sup> It is hard to believe that he would have entered the country as a Cuban, seeing that he formally applied for Cuban citizenship in 1931. "Bautista Nustelier y Fortunés" #182, July 27, 1931. APSRECTC 353/1/182.

<sup>150</sup> "Jose Rafael Castellano," APRECTC 370/2/126.

arrived in the same year.<sup>151</sup> In 1905, Filomena Lené and José Pols entered Cuba separately.<sup>152</sup> In 1906, Eladio Fichs and Rafael Julian first set foot there.<sup>153</sup> Pablo Lebore y Rios, Oscar Siguel, José Manuel, Manuel Fones, and Alfredo Thomas arrived in Cuba in 1908.<sup>154</sup> In 1909, Benito Leucé y Siril, Sijano Amedon, Juan Rafael Fis, Daniel Allas, and Nestor Cade arrived in Cuba.<sup>155</sup> Felip Fiss, José Fidua and Epifanio Ducal also arrived in 1910.<sup>156</sup> All of these individuals were born in Haiti, migrated to Cuba during the eleven years of restriction, and entered Cuba in years in which no Haitians were recorded. Between 1904 and 1912, twelve Haitian couples were married in Guantánamo.<sup>157</sup> Three of the marriages, including Occiano Guincio and Cornelia Videau, were between Haitians and Cubans.<sup>158</sup>

The discrepancy between official migration statistics and individual life stories is partially a result of the way migrants were defined and counted by the Cuban government. First, statistics labeled entering individuals as “passengers” or “immigrants” depending on the class of steamship in which they traveled. Many migrant workers were probably counted as passengers and vice versa. Arriving passengers were required to show \$30 in landing money to

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<sup>151</sup> “Edelman A. Fis, soa, #24” Censo 1918 de Holguín APHGM 23/4972/114.

<sup>152</sup> “Filomena Lené,” #167, March 26, 1937, APSRECTC 342/16/167. “José Pols soa, #1” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/115.

<sup>153</sup> “Eladio Fichs soa, # 10” and “Rafael Julian soa, #18” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/103.

<sup>154</sup> “Oscar Siguel soa, #16,” “José Manuel soa, #25,” Manuel Fones soa, #9” and “Alfredo Thomas soa, #20,” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/96, 102, 103; “Pablo Lebore y Rios,” February 27, 1934, APSRECTC 364/na/130.

<sup>155</sup> “Nestor Cade (Miguel Hechevarria), May 31, 1937, APSRECTC 371/3/68; “Benito Leucé y Siril,” June 30, 1934. APSRECTC 370/2/137; “Sijano Amedon, soa #104,” “Juan Rafael Fis, #136” and “Daniel Allas soa, #136” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/104, 136.

<sup>156</sup> “Felipe Fiss,” December 3, 1934, APSRECTC 370/2/212; “Epifanio Ducal soa, #8” and “Juan Hayb soa, #1” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/96, 103; “José Fidua, #18” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4973/27.

<sup>157</sup> Compiled from APGREC

<sup>158</sup> Marriage Record of Tomás Balrut and Luisa Thomas. May 05, 1905, APGREC 4/43/27. Marriage Record of José Felidó and Paula Riera. July 1, 1910, APGREC 13/130/2-3.



authorities.<sup>159</sup> Between 1902 and 1913, 6,956 Haitian passengers arrived in Cuba and only 3,676 departed, leaving 3,280 unaccounted (see table 2).

**Table 2: Haitian Passengers in Cuba, 1902-1913**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	<b>Departures</b>	<b>Net Gain/ Loss</b>
<b>1902</b>	81	47	+34
<b>1903</b>	151	97	+54
<b>1904</b>	174	62	+112
<b>1905</b>	282	194	+88
<b>1906</b>	395	328	+67
<b>1907</b>	1,031	334	+697
<b>1908</b>	705	393	+312
<b>1909</b>	648	462	+186
<b>1910</b>	854	508	+346
<b>1911</b>	914	425	+489
<b>1912</b>	209	328	-119
<b>1913</b>	1,512	498	+1,014
<b>Total</b>	6,956	3,676	+3,280

Source: “Movimiento de Pasajeros,” Cuban Gaceta Oficial, April 20, 1910 in United States National Archives, Record Group 59, Records Relating to Internal Affairs in Cuba, 1910-1929 (hereafter USNA RG 59), roll 84; Ferrer, *Anuario estadístico*, 24-5.

Second, published statistics are unable to give any sense of the number of migrants who entered the country illegally.<sup>160</sup> Finally, some Caribbean migrants were counted by the Cuban government in categories like “Unspecified West Indians,” a contingent boasting 3,359 arrivals between 1903 and 1907. In short, many more people from Haiti and other parts of the Caribbean entered Cuba in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than previously thought.

<sup>159</sup> Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931,” 33.

<sup>160</sup> Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931,” 32-35.

**Table 3: Haitian Immigrants, Net Gain of Passengers, and Unspecified Antilleans, 1902-1913**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Haitian Immigrants</b>	<b>Net Gain of Haitian passengers</b>	<b>“Unspecified West Indians”</b>
<b>1902</b>	10	+34	
<b>1903</b>	0	+54	144
<b>1904</b>	0	+112	233
<b>1905</b>	0	+88	479
<b>1906</b>	--	+67	1,550
<b>1907</b>	--	+697	953
<b>1908</b>	0	+312	--
<b>1909</b>	0	+186	--
<b>1910</b>	0	+346	--
<b>1911</b>	221	+489	--
<b>1912</b>	172	-119	--
<b>Total</b>	403	+2,266	3,359

Source: “Movimiento de Pasajeros,” Cuban Gaceta Oficial, April 20, 1910 in USNA RG 59, roll 84. Olmsted and Gannett, *Cuba*, 106. Ferrer, *Anuario estadístico*, 24-5.

Many of the Haitians who arrived in Cuba between 1902 and 1912 did so by taking advantage of the existing commercial and personal networks between the two countries, legal loopholes, and lax law enforcement. One way Haitians entered Cuba during the period of restriction was to hitch a ride on one of the numerous commercial ships that moved between Haiti, Cuba, and other parts of the Caribbean. In September 1911, for instance, the *Sirena* arrived in Cuba “to establish a storehouse to deposit salt.” Among the crew were many Haitians “who stayed on land” after the boat left.<sup>161</sup> Later that year, the Mayor of Baracoa declared that

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<sup>161</sup> Jefe de la Policía Gubernativa to el Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, June 9, 1911, APSGP 2837/9.

undocumented migrants entered Cuba “with the aid of the large traffic in coastal trade that is carried out along the coasts of Haiti.”<sup>162</sup>

Migrants were often dropped off away from major ports in desolate areas of the Cuban coast. In 1911, a group of nine Haitians “disembarked clandestinely” in Yateritas, outside of Guantánamo.<sup>163</sup> Such journeys were fraught with risk and hardship. A group of six Haitians who arrived in 1911 displayed “evident signs of prostration due, without a doubt, to fatigue and the insufficient nourishment they have suffered since the time of their disembarkation.”<sup>164</sup> At other moments, ship captains favored the ports where law enforcement was haphazard. “Certain steamship companies,” complained a Cuban sanitation official in 1911, “inverted the order of their stops, discharging in ports like Santiago de Cuba all of the personnel they feared would be rejected in Havana.”<sup>165</sup>

As Haitian individuals continued traveling to Cuba between 1902 and 1912, Cuban sugar companies and labor recruiters began working to bring in migrants illegally. In fact, their techniques mirrored those established by migrants and ship captains. Sometimes, companies brought workers into Cuba through minor or private ports that were not heavily policed by Cuban authorities. Cuban officials reported that in 1911, in Nipe, the private port of the company that later became the United Fruit Company, the company was “importing black workers from Haiti and the other Antilles...without there being measures to apply the law of

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<sup>162</sup> Consul d’Haiti, Santiago to Gouverneur [Oriente], September 14, 1911, APSGP 785/37/62.

<sup>163</sup> Telegram to Gobernador Civil, Santiago de Cuba from Herrera, Admor. Aduana, Caimanera, March 21, 1911. APSGP 785/37/1.

<sup>164</sup> Letter to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente from Jefe Local de Sanidad, April 18, 1911. APSGP 785/37/21.

<sup>165</sup> Report to Consejo de Secretarios From Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficencia. August 23, 1911, ANCSP 121/12.

immigration prohibiting such importation.”<sup>166</sup> Some Haitians who entered the country as passengers were aided by labor contractors. Joseph Vital, a sailor on the *Abdel-Kader* “dedicates himself to introducing immigrants in Santiago de Cuba without previous authorization from the Cuban government.” Vital “operates...in accordance with a contractor in Santiago de Cuba and the immigrants he brings.” When they disembark, he “collects the thirty pesos that each immigrant brings along” eventually “returning to Haiti with the same money to return.”<sup>167</sup>

Sugar companies’ efforts to bring Haitians into Cuba illegally during the period of restriction was only one of their strategies to obtain a steady supply of laborers. In addition to taking advantage of Cuba’s fluid eastern border, companies recruited laborers of other nationalities through legal channels. Organizations like the *Asociación Fomento de Inmigración* sought to bring single immigrants and families from Spain, the Canary Islands, various parts of Europe and other places that were officially sanctioned by the Cuban government.<sup>168</sup>

Companies’ active recruitment of migrants of various nationalities, both legally and illegally, was coupled with attempts to overturn the Cuban government’s ban on contract immigration. Between 1902 and 1912, the sugar companies repeatedly put pressure on the Cuban government to allow Caribbean contract laborers to enter the country for the harvest season. As mentioned previously, their efforts were met with strong opposition in the Cuban press and in many sectors of the Cuban government who believed that non-white immigrants would bring diseases and primitive cultural practices while thwarting their plans to “whiten” the

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<sup>166</sup> Report to Consejo de Secretarios From Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficencia. August 23, 1911, ANCSP 121/12.

<sup>167</sup> Cuban Consul in Port-au-Prince to Jefe del Departamento de Inmigración May 10, 1911, APSGP 785/33/7.

<sup>168</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 40-2; Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba," 54-6; Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 78-83.

country.<sup>169</sup> However, opponents of migration faced a politically powerful bloc. In general, the importance of sugar to the Cuban economy gave sugar interests significant clout in Cuban national politics. Their strength was augmented by the fact that a significant amount of the capital funding Cuban sugar expansion came from U.S. companies and investors. Finally, the U.S. government, another political ally of sugar interests, exerted enormous control over Cuba's political affairs through the Platt Amendment.<sup>170</sup>

Sugar growers exerted enormous pressure on the Cuban government to allow contract laborers to enter Cuba. Between 1900 and 1912, Cuban organizations like the *Circulo de Hacendados*, *Asociacion Fomento de Inmigración*, the *Sociedad de Inmigración Puerto-Riqueña*, and the *Liga Agraria* pressured the Cuban government to overturn its ban on contract labor. Their initial proposals were to contract individuals and families from Europe and specific parts of the Americas for agriculture labor, though none specifically requested to bring Asian or Afro-Caribbean laborers.<sup>171</sup>

By the early 1910s, sugar company pressure had convinced some officials in the Cuban government to soften their position against contract labor. In 1911, the Cuban Secretary of Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor was considering allowing "coolie" contract laborers to enter Cuba for the upcoming sugar harvest.<sup>172</sup> The next year, the restrictions on contract immigration were lifted. In 1912, the Ponupo Manganese Company, a U.S. mining firm, was permitted to contract 500 Spanish laborers for work in their mines in eastern Cuba.<sup>173</sup> The same year, the

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<sup>169</sup> Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba," 56.

<sup>170</sup> Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom*, 77; Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 1.

<sup>171</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 29-40.

<sup>172</sup> Jackson to U.S. Secretary of State, June 27, 1911, USNA RG 59, 837.55/18.

<sup>173</sup> Hugh Gibson to U.S. Secretary of State, September 16, 1912, USNA RG 59, 837.55/19.

Nipe Bay Company specifically requested to bring contract laborers from the Caribbean, which effectively paved the way for Haitians and British West Indians to enter Cuba.

After years of political pressure, sugar companies' requests for access to more labor were granted. In 1913, Cuban president José Miguel Gómez approved a measure that would allow the Nipe Bay Company to import 1,400 workers from Haiti and Jamaica. It was renewed by another decree when sugar prices spiked during World War I. These decrees permitted immigrant workers to come to work in the Cuban sugar industry during the war. Throughout the 1920s, the immigration of Haitian and British West Indian laborers was maintained piecemeal by specific presidential authorizations and company requests for migrants.<sup>174</sup> In many ways, this is similar to temporary labor migration programs in the United States that circumvented restrictive immigration policies through an official fiat.<sup>175</sup> But rather than a product of the conflicts between the sugar companies and anti-immigrant voices, the content of Cuban immigration policies was shaped by the longstanding flows of people between Haiti and Cuba and by the actions of migrants themselves.

Sugar interests and their allies in the United States were not the only ones petitioning for the legalization of Afro-Caribbean immigration. Their well-known actions occurred alongside requests of a different sort coming from local authorities in Oriente, Cuba. While top-down pressure emerged from corporate offices and sites of political power in the United States, other requests emanated from rural Cuba and its coastlines as a result of exchanges between Cuban officials, Haitian consuls, and the agricultural workers who continually traveled to Cuba despite legal prohibitions. Sugar company pressures were responsible for the legalization of migration,

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<sup>174</sup> Corbitt, "Immigration in Cuba," 306-7; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 39-44; Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba," 56.

<sup>175</sup> Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 19-20.

the encounters and exchanges between local actors strongly shaped the content and implementation of the new legislation.

By 1910, Haitians' illegal entrances into Oriente had reached such levels that they were customarily reported and discussed by local authorities. In 1911, one official complained that immigrants in Cuba "harm our working class and constitute a serious danger to our institutions."<sup>176</sup> Another declared that immigration from the Caribbean created "dangers...for public health" because Haitian migrants represented "the lowest on the social scale" and would bring bubonic plague and other diseases to Cuba.<sup>177</sup> These official complaints were part of a larger effort to militarize the Cuban border and stop the immigration of Haitians to Cuba. In 1911, the Cuban Undersecretary of the Interior told the Governor of Oriente to use the "means within your reach so that the Agents at your orders pursue without break or rest the [immigration] infractions that are being denounced."<sup>178</sup> In addition to "augmenting the Coast Guard service," the Secretary of Sanitation and Beneficiencia suggested using rural informants. He proposed "appointing a certain number of men of the sea (fishermen or sailors) to the ranks of the Coast Guard" to increase surveillance on the border. Although they would be "without salary", the Secretary suggested that "they could be remunerated for each service they offer."<sup>179</sup> Others wanted to increase the personnel on land. The Governor of Oriente believed that "it has not been possible to establish a complete vigilance, due to the scarcity of force at hand." He therefore spoke of the need to "increase as necessary the rural force in the coasts of that district

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<sup>176</sup> Subsecretario de Gobernacion, Habana to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, June 07, 1911, APSGP 785/33/6.

<sup>177</sup> Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficiencia, quoted in Subsecretario, Havana to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, May 31, 1911, APSGP 785/33/1-2.

<sup>178</sup> Subsecretario de Gobernacion, Habana to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, June 07, 1911, APSGP 785/33/6.

<sup>179</sup> Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficiencia, quoted in letter to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, From: Subsecretario, Habana. May 31, 1911, APSGP 785/33/1-2.

to better guarantee the public order and avoid the repeated infractions of immigration law.”<sup>180</sup> Similarly, the Mayor of Baracoa identified “the imperious necessity that the number of individuals upon whom the Rural Guard depends be larger in this district,” so that they could monitor both land and coastline.<sup>181</sup> Haitian officials responded with their own plans to strengthen the border. In 1910, the Haitian *Chargé du Consulat* told the Governor of Oriente that he had written the Haitian government “with the goal of redoubling the surveillance of [Haitian] coasts.”<sup>182</sup>

The militarization of the border had direct effects on incoming migrants, who were arrested in increasing numbers upon arrival in Cuba. In 1910, the governor of Oriente was informed of four clandestine voyages with 51 Haitian migrants on board. The following year, seven ships were stopped with 78 migrants (75 Haitians and 3 Jamaicans).<sup>183</sup> Despite the increase in arrests, there was no sign that the flow of Haitians would stop. In fact, Haitians drew on their long tradition of movement and labor in Cuba to justify their presence there. From their jail cell in Guantánamo, Haitians Jean Felix and Raphael Maurice were aided in writing a letter to their consul in Santiago de Cuba to protest their arrest. They argued that their labor and long-term residency in Cuba entitled them to stay. “We have been here a good number of years,” they declared and “we are accustomed to working in the countryside.” Their claim on the consul was

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<sup>180</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Secretario de Gobernacion, Havana, April 20, 1911, APSGP 785/35/2-3.

<sup>181</sup> Alcalde Municipal de Baracoa to Gobernador Civil de la Provincia de Santiago de Cuba, April 15, 1911, APSGP 785/35/1.

<sup>182</sup> Chargé du Consulat to Gouverneur de Santiago. September 27, 1910, APSGP 785/31/5.

<sup>183</sup> Compiled from APSGP 785/31,35 and 37 and J.A. Ulysse A.T. Simon, Cayes to Secretaire d’Etat au Departemente des Relations Exterieures, April 18, 1911. University of Florida, Gainesville, Haitiana Collection (hereafter UFGHC), Box 1, (MS23A).



unequivocal. “We believe that you are the sole person responsible for the Haitians seized here.”<sup>184</sup>

Haitian consuls, in fact, were held legally responsible for detained Haitian migrants. Cuban officials repeatedly made it clear that jailed Haitians would be “at the disposition of the Haitian consul who ought to re-embark them for said country.”<sup>185</sup> In January 1911, Cuban officials complained that Haitians stayed in Cuban jails for too long, causing expenditures. They stressed that it was the responsibility of Haitian consuls “to return them” to Haiti.<sup>186</sup> At times, the Cuban government requested money from the consul for the food consumed by detained migrants. Consuls however, had difficulties obtaining money from the Haitian government to either repatriate the migrants or pay for their board in jail. “If I don’t receive satisfaction from my government or our Chargé d’Affaires in Havana,” the Haitian consul told the Governor of Oriente regarding a group of jailed migrants, “I regret to inform you that it will be pecuniarily impossible to repatriate them.”<sup>187</sup> As migrants kept coming, the Haitian Consul’s budget came under attack. In June of 1911, the Haitian consulate owed \$63.00 to the Cuban government. By August of the same year, the amount was \$110.88.<sup>188</sup> In response, Haitian consuls in Cuba put pressure on officials in Havana, Santiago and Port-au-Prince to resolve the administrative and

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<sup>184</sup> Letter from Jean Felix and Raphael Maurice, Guantanamo to Consulat-Haitien, Santiago, April 20, 1911, APSGP 785/37/27. In rural Haiti, it was common for illiterate people to have letters and documents written on their behalf by area scribes on important occasions such as marriages. See Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi parla l’oncle*, 209-16.

<sup>185</sup> Letter to Gobernador Civil, Santiago from Manuel Leon, Administrador de Aduana, Guantanamo, September 28, 1910, APSGP 785/31/6.

<sup>186</sup> Letter to Gobernador Civil, Santiago de Cuba from Manuel Leon, Admor. Aduana, January 17, 1911, APSGP 785/ 31/ 23.

<sup>187</sup> Letter to the Governor of Oriente from le Consulat de Haiti, Santiago. April 27, 1911. APSGP 785/37/42.

<sup>188</sup> “El Consul de la Republica de Haiti en Santiago de Cuba al Ayuntamiento de Baracoa Debe:” June, 23, 1911, APSGP 785/37/42; Gobernador de Oriente to Sr. Alcalde Municipal de Baracoa from, August 25, 1911, APSGP 785/37/59.

financial problems that detained migrants were causing. The consul's first recourse was to contact the Haitian government in Port-au-Prince to arrange for the repatriation of incarcerated migrants. In one case in April 1911, after waiting almost two weeks for a response from the Haitian government, the consul began communicating with officials on Cuban soil.<sup>189</sup>

To the Haitian consul in Cuba, the only solution was for detained migrants to earn money through their labor. He pleaded with the governor of Oriente that "Cuban authorities be so complacent as to let [a group of detained Haitians] work, without surveillance so that they may pay the fees of their detentions and those of their repatriation." These requests were sent to government officials outside of Oriente as well. The consul also asked the Haitian *Chargé d'Affaires* in Havana to negotiate with the Cuban central government on behalf of the jailed migrants. He asked the latter to set them free while assuring that "more severe measures will be taken in the future." His goal was to have the migrants "work [in Cuba] to pay what they owe."<sup>190</sup>

Cuban officials in Oriente responded in a variety of ways to the administrative problems caused by the increased detention of migrants. Officials at different administrative levels often gave conflicting orders. For instance, in April 1911, there were 21 Haitians imprisoned in Baracoa, in Oriente, for "infringing the Law of Immigration." After spending fifteen days in jail without being officially charged, they were released by a municipal judge in Baracoa who invoked the principle of *Habeas Corpus*. Two days later, customs officials in Santiago asked the police to arrest the Haitians again because of a letter they received from the Cuban *Secretaria de Hacienda* in Havana. After the migrants were taken to Santiago, two Haitian officials who were

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<sup>189</sup> Consulat de Haiti, Santiago to Monsieur le Gouverneur [of Oriente], April 27, 1911, APSGP 785/37/28-9.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

acquaintances of the governor asked that they be released. In response, the governor of Oriente brought the details of the case directly to the President of Cuba seeking a judgment.<sup>191</sup>

Despite the strong anti-immigrant sentiments harbored by many Cuban officials, the Governor of Oriente took these and other requests by Haitian officials very seriously. As Haitian consuls asked that migrants be allowed to pay for their room, board, and repatriation through work in Cuba, the governor assured them that he “wanted to find a legal means to satisfy your requests.” However, he realized that doing so went against the spirit of immigration laws. He told the Haitian consul that if Haitian migrants were allowed “to enjoy their liberty so they can see to the payment of their room and board and the cost of their return to Haiti with the fruits of their labor, it would leave the immigration laws circumvented and without effect and establish a fatal precedent for successive identical cases.”<sup>192</sup>

The Presidential order to legalize Afro-Caribbean immigration to Cuba was influenced by these encounters between migrants and Haitian and Cuban officials in Oriente. The decree permitting Afro-Caribbean immigration in Cuba reflected the pleas that migrants and consuls had made during the previous decade as well as the concerns of Cuban officials. Haitian consuls’ previously unsuccessful requests that migrant laborers work in Cuba to pay for the cost of their room, board, and return passage were included. One of the prominent components of every piece of immigration legislation in Cuba was the requirement that sugar companies return migrants to their homelands at the end of every harvest and prevent them from incurring costs to the governments of Cuba or Haiti. The first presidential decree to authorize contract laborers, which was promulgated on January 14, 1913, declared that the Nipe Bay Company was obligated

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<sup>191</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Presidente de la República, May 03, 1911, APSGP 785/ 37/34-7.

<sup>192</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Consul de Haiti, September 19, 1911, APSGP 785/37/64.

to assume “the costs and risks of the expedition of these *braceros*” from their “landing to their place of work.” A 1917 decree by president Mario Menocal was even more explicit. Any individual or company that contracted migrants was required “to properly guarantee that [migrant laborers] not become a public charge.” The state had the legal right to exact money from any person or entity who contracted laborers and failed to satisfy these state demands.<sup>193</sup> In Cuba (and later Haiti), migration laws required recruiters and companies to make cash deposits for each contracted migrant worker to ensure that they could be returned home yearly without cost to either government. Migrants paid these fees directly to recruiters and ship captains or indirectly to companies through wage deductions (see chapter 3).

The executive decrees permitting immigration reflected the anti-immigrant racism that Cuban officials in Oriente had articulated between 1902 and 1912 as well. In 1916, only three years after legalization, the Cuban government added sanitary regulations to its migration policies, taking its cue from the racially charged characterizations of migrants as disease carriers. Incoming laborers were required to receive a vaccination upon arrival in Cuba. Sanitary officials in Santiago were told “to examine, microscopically, the blood of all immigrants coming from Jamaica, Porto Rico and Haiti in order to discover the probable existence of germs of malaria or falaria...[and] prevent the introduction into Cuba of contagious diseases.”<sup>194</sup> The 1917 presidential decree specifically required companies to ensure that “immigrants will not be a threat to public health.” They were required to “attend to the treating and curing of immigrants

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<sup>193</sup> José M. Gómez, Decreto Presidencial No. 23, “Autorización para introducir braceros antillanos,” January 14, 1913 and Ley de Inmigración, August 4, 1917 both reproduced in Pichardo Viñals, *Documentos*, 370, 421.

<sup>194</sup> Merrill Griffith, American Consul to Secretary of State, Washington, May 31, 1916, USNA RG 59 837.55/33

in case of sickness, in accordance with sanitary dispositions.”<sup>195</sup> Migrants were also required to pay \$2.00 (directly or through wage deductions) for a vaccination.<sup>196</sup> Over a decade later, the United Fruit Company was paying Cuban officials a “vaccination charge” that was passed on to the migrants. However, “few, if any...were vaccinated.”<sup>197</sup>

Like other areas of public health in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these sanitary laws were heavily influenced by racial, political, and economic concerns.<sup>198</sup> For instance, the U.S. consul in Santiago declared that Cuban officials did not “entertain any serious apprehension with regard to the introduction of malaria, falaria or miasmatic germs of whatever character through immigrants.” Instead, blood examinations were “a voluntary deception...for the express purpose of preventing...or at least curtailing the constantly increasing influx of these neighboring Islanders.”<sup>199</sup>

Another sanitary measure required Afro-Caribbean migrants, and sometimes passengers, to pass through quarantine stations.<sup>200</sup> Stations like Cayo Duan in Santiago de Cuba were uncomfortable, unsanitary and economically disadvantageous for incoming migrants. Over a decade after legal migration began, after tens of thousands of migrants had already passed through the Cayo Duan station, newspapers discussed ongoing projects to improve sanitary

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<sup>195</sup> Ley de Inmigración, August 4, 1917 reproduced in Pichardo Viñals, *Documentos*, 421.

<sup>196</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 6.

<sup>197</sup> John H. Russell, Port-au-Prince to the U.S. Secretary of State, Washington D.C., October 28, 1927, USNA RG59 837.5538/3

<sup>198</sup> Espinosa, "A Fever for Empire," 288; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 48; McLeod, "'We Cubans'," 59; Stepan, "'The Hour of Eugenics'," 42-4.

<sup>199</sup> Merrill Griffith, American Consul, Santiago to U.S. Secretary of State, Washington D.C., June 01, 1916, USNA RG 59 837.55/34

<sup>200</sup> McLeod, "'We Cubans'," 61; "Protesta de unos pasajeros," *La Independencia*. January 11, 1923.

conditions at the station.<sup>201</sup> As late as 1931, Langston Hughes described Cayo Duan as “a jail-like fortress in the harbor, zooming with mosquitoes, crawling with bedbugs and alive with fleas.” Upon being released from quarantine, Hughes’ companion, Zell Ingram, became ill from the poor conditions.<sup>202</sup> The physical discomfort of quarantine was matched by the economic disadvantages it produced for migrants. In 1916, there was “a fee of eighty cents (\$0.80) per day imposed upon each [migrant].”<sup>203</sup>

Legalization and subsequent regulation brought other economic obligations for migrants that probably emerged from the requests made by Haitian consuls prior to 1913. In 1919, a Haitian law required migrants to pay the consulate a \$2.00 registration fee upon entrance into Cuba, which represented more than a day’s wages in most years.<sup>204</sup> Legalization also required migrants to pay for their return passage. The process of obtaining a ticket was fraught with fraud and needless expense. One Haitian observer described the “Haitian parasites, known as *courtiers*, connected to some Cubans, tolerated by the Police and the companies; [who] form a dangerous bloc on the Santiago pier.” When migrants arrived from the fields, *courtiers* often sold them tickets for steamships that were not functioning or had not yet arrived in port.<sup>205</sup>

Migrants were also vulnerable to abuse from corrupt Cuban officials, especially in the ports. In 1915, twenty-five Haitian migrants deposited the required money to enter Cuba. Later, when they sought to retrieve the amount, they received only a small percentage.<sup>206</sup> In September 1917, “some police officers” in the port of Santiago were “taking advantage of their authority to

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<sup>201</sup> “Se piensa edificar un hotel en Cayo Duan para alojar los inmigrantes,” *Diario de Cuba*, March 01, 1928.

<sup>202</sup> Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 34.

<sup>203</sup> E. Nazon to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, June 02, 1916, APSGP 374/30/1.

<sup>204</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 6-7.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> “Haitianos quejosos,” *El Cubano Libre*, October 08, 1915.

deceive Haitians and take money from them.” The officers “threatened [Haitians] with searching their trunks, [and] looking for letters directed towards Haiti without stamps” even though it was not a crime to carry unstamped letters in Cuba.<sup>207</sup>

The new difficulties of entering and leaving Cuba explain why some Haitians continued to travel to Cuba outside of official channels and others chose to stay in Cuba after the end of the sugar harvest. For instance, in July 1915, Haitians Félix Pierre, Josegenio Domec, Dubin Blaise, José Salomón, Luis Daniel, Bernard Hippolite, Marceus Ducler, Arceus Dugona, Dubón Delias and Emilio Jacques landed in Punto Caleta, Cuba clandestinely. The group was immediately arrested and taken to Cayo Duan.<sup>208</sup>

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Haiti was integrated into larger regional and global flows of ideas, goods, and people. Contacts with Cuba were common, despite the differences in the timing of their independence movements and processes for abolishing slavery. Commercial, cultural, political, and human exchanges continued even as Cuba became independent and migration policies hardened against non-white contract laborers. Between 1902 and 1912, the Cuban government explicitly restricted the immigration of Afro-Caribbean contract laborers though Haitians continued to arrive, however. As Cuba’s eastern border became militarized around 1910, arrests of undocumented Haitian immigrants increased. In response, Haitian consular

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<sup>207</sup> Comandante de Caballería, Delegado de la Secretaria de Gobernación to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, September 26, 1917, APSGP 375/1/1.

<sup>208</sup> “Los inmigrantes haitianos,” *El Cubano Libre*, July 24, 1915. For other instances see “Multa rebajada,” *El Cubano Libre*, August 01, 1915; “Lo de la goleta ‘San José’” *El Cubano Libre*, October 17, 1915.

representatives made concrete requests to allow incarcerated migrants to work in Cuba to pay for their repatriation back home. Consular requests to allow illegal immigrants to work on Cuban soil occurred as sugar companies were lobbying the Cuban government to legalize immigration. Although the sugar companies were largely responsible for lifting the restrictions on migration, the actions of migrants and Cuban officials shaped the eventual form of migration regulations. By analyzing the flows of goods, people, and ideas that preceded the legalization of migration in Cuba, this chapter has sought to illustrate migrants' role in shaping Cuban immigration policies. In theory, the migrants who explicitly articulated their opposition to Cuban immigration restrictions achieved their goals. However, the legalization of contract migration came at a high cost for Haitians and other migrants entering Cuba. New regulations requiring migrants to make cash deposits and conform to sanitary measures emerged directly from interactions between Haitian migrants, consular representatives and Cuban officials in Oriente. New legislation allowed migrants to work in Cuba at the same time that it created new obligations and difficulties for them. Despite these new obstacles, Haitians continued to arrive in Cuba; their numbers increased substantially in the years after migration was legalized. It is to these individuals, their experiences in Haiti and Cuba, that this dissertation now turns.



### **3.0 LEAVING HAITI FOR CUBA: RURAL CONDITIONS, RECRUITMENT, REGULATIONS**

On August 28, 1917, 25-year-old Joseph Redon Rosen left his home in Aux Cayes, Haiti and migrated to Cuba. For the next seven years, he traveled within Cuba and worked on various sugar plantations. On June 24, 1924, he returned to his hometown in Haiti and married Eudocia Lafortun. By the middle of August, the two were back in Cuba on a small farm in San José de Cacocum in Holguín where they had seven children and settled permanently.<sup>209</sup> Joseph Redon Rosen and Eudocia Lafortun were two of approximately 200,000 individuals who migrated between Haiti and Cuba during the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Their story illustrates how kinship and individual choices shaped Haitians' migratory patterns during the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century---even against the backdrop of the Cuban sugar economy and the depressed conditions of rural Haiti. Such micro-level factors, however, have been largely ignored in previous scholarship that focuses on the structural factors of Haiti's rural poverty, the U.S. military occupation of the country (1915-1934), and the labor demands of Cuban sugar companies.

Structural factors do play a role, however. From the colonial period to the present, natural resources have been extracted from rural Haiti for local consumption and export, leading to severe environmental devastation. As in other parts of the Caribbean, the colonists of Saint

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<sup>209</sup> Joseph Redon Rosen to Juzgado Municipal de Holguín, May 25, 1938, Archivo Provincial de Holguín: Juzgado Municipal de Holguín (1889-1965) (hereafter APHJMH), 25/748/2.

Domingue cleared forests and imported slaves to plant sugar, a highly destructive crop, on a massive scale.<sup>210</sup> After the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), early experiments with large-scale plantation agriculture were eventually abandoned. Nevertheless, the Haitian government has arguably been the largest *de jure* landowner in Haiti. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Haitian heads of state distributed land to military officers to buy loyalty, often without formal title. Eventually, peasant families established customary rights over small plots of land, which were divided through inheritance, sale, lease, and conflict---creating a situation in which more and more people were dependent upon smaller plots of land. Rural Haitians combined planting for subsistence and export on their plots. However, a natural increase in the Haitian population, the nature of the crops, and peasants' heavy dependence on small plots led to deforestation, soil erosion, and a decrease in land fertility. It is no wonder that many scholars point to demographic pressure, land shortage, and poor rural conditions as the primary causes of Haitian migration.<sup>211</sup>

Many argue that the nineteen-year U.S. military occupation of Haiti (1915-1934), which coincided with the peak years of migration to Cuba, exacerbated these rural conditions by concentrating land in the hands of U.S. capitalists, as it did in other parts of the occupied Caribbean.<sup>212</sup> Like other imperial actions in Latin America and the Caribbean, the U.S. invasion of Haiti was justified using the language of the Roosevelt Corollary, Theodore Roosevelt's 1904 declaration that the United States would use its military might when "civilization" was

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<sup>210</sup> Richardson, *The Caribbean in the Wider World*, chapter 2; Stinchcombe, *Sugar Island Slavery*, chapter 4; Funes Monzote, *De bosque a sabana*.

<sup>211</sup> For studies that specifically link migration to poor rural conditions see Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy*, 97; Gerlus, "The Political Economy of Haitian Migration", 80. For larger studies of land and rural conditions in 19<sup>th</sup> century Haiti see Lundahl, *Politics or Markets?*, chapters 8 – 11; Blancpain, *La Condition Des Paysans Haitiens*; Moral, *Le Paysan Haitien*, chapters 1-2; Moya Pons, "The Land Question in Haiti and Santo Domingo."

<sup>212</sup> López Segrera, "Slavery and Society in the Caribbean," 148; Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 70-2.

threatened by political instability in the hemisphere. The occupation failed to instill democracy in the Caribbean country, though it did consolidate lucrative loans in U.S. banks and allowed companies to invest in Haiti, especially in export crops.<sup>213</sup>

In this context, some scholars claim that the United States occupation caused Haitians to migrate by expropriating land to promote commercial fruit, rubber, and sugar production on a large scale. The most emphatic reports of U.S. land acquisitions were made by Georges Séjourné and Perceval Thoby, leaders of the anti-occupation organization *l'Union Nationaliste*.<sup>214</sup> Historians have drawn on these reports to argue that massive land expropriations caused Haitian emigration to Cuba.<sup>215</sup>

Other scholars have challenged reports of expropriations and interrogated whether land shortages actually caused migration. Some question whether the thousands of acres of land concessions granted to U.S. companies, before and during the occupation, were ever claimed to the extent of actually expelling the families residing on them. Brenda Gayle Plummer writes: “In the course of the 1920s, venture capitalists initiated schemes to grow cotton, pineapples, and other products. Most did not succeed. In some instances speculative companies never intended to plant.” U.S. President Calvin Coolidge even warned against concentrating land in foreign hands in Haiti.<sup>216</sup> Rather than identifying U.S. capitalists as the agents of land expulsion, Samuel Martínez argues that population growth and patterns of land tenure converged late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to produce the first generation of rural, international migrants in Haiti. He argues

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<sup>213</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 12-3, 38-41, 175-8; Castor, *L'occupation américaine d'Haiti*, 276.

<sup>214</sup> Séjourné, "Petite propriété," 7. See also Séjourné and Thoby, *Depossessions*.

<sup>215</sup> Castor, *L'occupation américaine d'Haiti*, 109-14; Millet, *Les Paysans Haitiens*, 57-8. Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy*, 97.

<sup>216</sup> Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 112; Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, 186-7.

that migrants were risk-taking individuals who had some opportunities for renting land but few avenues for earning the cash necessary to do so.<sup>217</sup>

Analyses of Haitian migration and the U.S. occupation are not limited to debates about land tenure. Historians are also divided about the specific relationship between the occupation government and the migratory movement to Cuba. Many argue that the occupation exacerbated the already-harsh conditions of rural Haiti through racism, violence, taxation, and state centralization.<sup>218</sup> U.S. officials' racism toward Haitians was notorious. For instance, U.S. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan famously marveled, when he learned of Haitian history and society, "Dear me, think of it! Niggers speaking French." Top occupation official John Russell declared that the Haitian peasant was "more or less of an animal, who will do whatever he is told." Later, he drew from the racial science of his day to declare that Haitian peasants had "the mentality of a child of not more than seven years of age."<sup>219</sup>

The U.S. presence in Haiti disrupted rural livelihoods and the organization of labor as well. During the first five years of the occupation, U.S. officials resurrected and reinterpreted a series of laws from the 19<sup>th</sup> century collectively called the *Code Rural*. Among its most unpopular components was the *corvée*, a system of forced labor that required Haitian peasants to work with little food, often at a distance from their home communities, to build roads or perform other work projects without receiving wages. In response to forced labor regimes and road building projects, peasant soldiers called *Cacos* organized an armed rebellion against the U.S.

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<sup>217</sup> Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 64.

<sup>218</sup> Moral, *Le paysan haitien*, 60-5; Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, 186-7; Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 245-6; Plummer, "Haitian Migrants and Backyard Imperialism," 38.

<sup>219</sup> Both quoted in Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 48, 125. For a discussion of the scientific racism equating certain groups to children and its influences on imperialism, see Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 144-8.

occupation. The rebellion lasted between 1918 and 1920 and represented the most serious military threat to the U.S. presence in Haiti. During the repression of the rebellion, rural communities were destroyed, villages burned, and between 3,000 and 11,500 Haitians were killed. Untold thousands more were displaced in the process.<sup>220</sup>

Some historians interpret Haitian migration to Cuba as a goal of U.S. policy in Haiti. They argue that when U.S.-led capital projects were unsuccessful in Haiti, the government encouraged labor migration to Cuba and the Dominican Republic, where more successful sugar plantations already thrived.<sup>221</sup> Rolando Alvarez Estévez called the occupation “a magnificent opportunity for the Cuban bourgeoisie and the North American monopolies to convert [Haiti] into a supplier of cheap labor with the goal of increasing capital investments in the Cuban sugar industry.”<sup>222</sup> Historians also emphasize the role of Cuban sugar companies as an important factor in Haitian emigration to Cuba. In addition to offering higher wages than anywhere else in the region, sugar companies recruited heavily in Haiti and elsewhere. Marc McLeod writes: “the majority of Haitian immigrants were recruited in Haiti and traveled to Cuba under contract to cut cane for large sugar concerns such as the United Fruit Company.”<sup>223</sup>

The apparent collusion between Cuban sugar companies and U.S. officials in Haiti has led many scholars to compare the movement of Haitians to Cuba in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which had ended a century before. “If they had improved anything with respect to their African ancestors,” write Alejandro García and Oscar Zanetti “it was, above all, the shorter distance of the voyage.” Scholars still refer to the

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<sup>220</sup> Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 10.

<sup>221</sup> Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, xi; López Segrera, “Slavery and Society in the Caribbean,” 148; Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom*, 171.

<sup>222</sup> Alvarez Estévez, *Azúcar e inmigración*, 54.

<sup>223</sup> McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba,” 59. See also Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy*, 99, 103.

movement and treatment of Haitian workers using the language of the slave trade and the Middle Passage.<sup>224</sup>

This scholarship leaves many unanswered questions about Haitian migration to Cuba. Were Haitians' movements to Cuba an effort to assert their autonomy in the face of violence and racism of U.S. officials? Or did it signify an extension of the *corvée* and a loss of their liberty as they were being forced to work in a modern form of slavery? Recent scholarship on migration history raises questions for disentangling the issues of the conditions of rural Haiti and the occupation government's relationship to the migratory movement. First, scholars show that migratory movements must be analyzed using local lenses, not national ones because "emigration originated not in a nation...but in particular localities and villages."<sup>225</sup> This is especially important for Haiti, a country where political and economic conditions have varied across regions from the colonial period to the present.<sup>226</sup> Scholars also demonstrate that kinship, gender, family structures, social networks, individual creativity, and available alternatives to migration have a profound effect on migratory movements, even those that occurred in inauspicious circumstances or appear to have been orchestrated by powerful companies and states.<sup>227</sup> Finally, world historians argue that the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed massive transformations in the mechanics of migration as a result of states' attempts to regulate migration, enforce borders, identify individuals, and define the concept of the free migrant.

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<sup>224</sup> Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 216; Alvarez Estévez, *Azúcar e inmigración*, 40; Sklodowska, *Espectros y espejismos*, 66; Sevillano Andrés, *Trascendencia de una cultura marginada*, 16; Gómez Navia, "Lo haitiano en lo cubano," 12.

<sup>225</sup> Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*, 4. See also Fog-Olwig, *Caribbean Journeys*, 6, 15-6.

<sup>226</sup> Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 96; Stinchcombe, *Sugar Island Slavery*, 231; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 12.

<sup>227</sup> Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, ix-x, 18; de Haan, "Migration on the Border of Free and Unfree Labour," 197-8; Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 4; Richardson, *Panama Money in Barbados*, 3-4; Van Lottum, "Labour Migration and Economic Performance," 554.

Programs of Indian and Asian indentured migration were abolished in the period, putting an end to the system by which individuals could sign a labor contract and indebt themselves in order to settle in a new country. Contract migration may have changed but it did not disappear. As states sought to curtail indenture, temporary labor programs were instituted throughout the globe, which allowed employers to import previously-contracted immigrant laborers for fixed periods of time before returning them to their country of origin.<sup>228</sup> These processes of global transformation overlapped temporally with the movement of Haitians to Cuba, suggesting that the migration of Haitian workers to Cuba was part of a larger global story.

This chapter builds on these bodies of scholarship to argue that during the U.S. occupation of Haiti, migration to Cuba was transformed from a grassroots process confined to the southern peninsula of Haiti into a more centralized, highly regulated activity that occurred widely throughout the island. First, I show that Haitian emigration to Cuba originated in the coastal towns of the southern peninsula and the rural areas surrounding Port-au-Prince before the occupation. During the early years of the military occupation, the number of Haitians heading to Cuba increased, though they mostly originated in the same areas. Despite their heterogeneity, the regions that sent migrants to Cuba were marked by thriving maritime networks to Cuba and poor internal roads, making travel to Cuba much more feasible than movement within Haiti. During the occupation, the southern peninsula was not seriously affected by the Caco rebellion, its harsh repression, or complaints of large-scale land expulsion. Nevertheless, the quotidian activities of U.S. forces and struggles over labor were highly disruptive to peasant livelihoods. Migration to Cuba was only one of many responses that peasant households employed, often in conjunction with other strategies, in response to changes in rural society. Like emigration, these

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<sup>228</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 3,11-2; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 14-8.

techniques were shaped by ideas of gender, age, and kinship. Between 1918 and 1923, Haitian government regulations transformed emigration from a grassroots process carried out by a mix of formal and informal agents into a top-down process driven by states and sugar companies. This legislation carried hallmarks of both the system of indentured labor, which was disappearing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and newer temporary labor schemes, which were just emerging, indicating that such systems were not always so discrete.

### **3.1 THE REGIONAL PATTERNS AND CAUSES OF HAITIAN EMIGRATION TO CUBA**

Between 1902 and 1931, Cuban statistics report the arrival 189,362 Haitians in eastern Cuba.<sup>229</sup> However, quantitative data about their regions of origin is scarce. Cuban entry statistics note migrants' nationality but do not offer specific information about their places of birth. In Haiti, no emigration statistics were collected until November 1915---almost four months after the beginning of the U.S. occupation and many years after the first Haitian agricultural laborers traveled to Cuba.<sup>230</sup> Even after 1915, regional emigration data and port statistics are only available for certain months and years. Despite the lack of systematic statistics, Haitian port

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<sup>229</sup> Compiled from Cuba, *Censo de la república de Cuba 1907*, 60; Cuba, *Census of the Republic of Cuba 1919*, 176; Secretaria de Hacienda: Sección de Estadística General, "Estado Comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la Republica, en los años civiles 1902, 1903, 1904, y 1905," November 2, 1906, ANCSF 115/99; Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," table vii; Republica de Cuba. Secretaria de Hacienda. Sección de Estadística. *Inmigración y Movimiento de Pasajeros* (Havana: Tipos Molina y Ca, 1932).

<sup>230</sup> Division Commander, southern Division, "Report on Labor Conditions in the Southern Division," February 12, 1920, USNARA RG 127 E 176 Box 1, Folder: 'Monthly Reports Jan 1918 - Sep 1921.'



records, steamship routes, information about individual migrants, and state officials' qualitative observations may be combined to adumbrate the regional patterns of migration to Cuba.

Haitian migration to Cuba originated in the coastal areas of the Southern peninsula and the areas around Port-au-Prince. Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo, the ports of call for many thousands of migrants, were directly linked by non-stop steamship routes to Haiti's southern port city of Aux Cayes and the capital, Port-au-Prince. A direct steamship trip from Aux Cayes to Santiago de Cuba took approximately 20 hours.<sup>231</sup> The arrival of a ship from Aux Cayes or Port-au-Prince into Santiago or Guantánamo was a common occurrence in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>232</sup> For instance, on July 25, 1917, the *Emerson Faye* arrived in Santiago de Cuba from Port-au-Prince. The same day, the ship left Santiago for Aux Cayes, Haiti.<sup>233</sup> Migrants from these areas also landed in the Cuban ports of Antilla and Puerto Padre, the ports favored by the private steamships of the United Fruit and Chaparra sugar companies respectively. Initially, Haiti's northern cities like Cap-Haitien and Port-de-Paix did not have direct routes to Cuba, requiring additional stops for anyone heading there.<sup>234</sup> Later, however, these Northern areas would be served almost exclusively by company-owned ships running between Port-de-Paix and the Cuban ports of Antilla and Puerto Padre (to be discussed below). A steamship ride from Port-de-Paix to Cuba lasted about 14 hours.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Maurice P. Dunlap, American Consul, Port-au-Prince, "Significance of Haitian Emigration to Cuba," September 10, 1925, USNA RG 59 838.5637/6.

<sup>232</sup> Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city of Aux Cayes has been renamed to Les Cayes. The city is also referred to simply as Cayes. In this chapter, I refer to it as Aux Cayes unless it appears differently in a direct quotation.

<sup>233</sup> "Ecos del puerto: Mas pasajeros," *El Cubano Libre*, July 25, 1917; "Ecos del puerto: Goletas que salieron," *El Cubano Libre*, July 26, 1917.

<sup>234</sup> Steamship arrivals and departures were published regularly in major newspapers like Santiago's *Diario de Cuba* and Guantánamo's *La Voz del Pueblo*.

<sup>235</sup> Winthrop R. Scott, "Immigration in Northern Haiti," March 22, 1924, USNA RG 59 838.56/1.

The steamship connections between southern Haiti and eastern Cuba explain why so many Haitians traveled through those ports. According to statistics collected by the Haitian government, of the 10,640 Haitians who traveled to Cuba in 1918, approximately 78% (8,392) left through the port at Aux Cayes.<sup>236</sup> Between October 1919 and September 1920, 29,181 Haitians left for Cuba with the vast majority (22,604) doing so through the southern ports of Cayes and Petit Goâve and an additional 3,365 leaving from Port-au-Prince.<sup>237</sup>

These regional trends changed as the North became a more significant site of migration during the 1920s. In October 1927, the Port-au-Prince newspaper *Le Temps* declared that the South was no longer the primary sender of migrants: “Today, it is the turn of the North West and of the Artibonite, of Port-de-Paix, of Gros Morne, of Jean Rabel, of St. Louis-du-Nord.”<sup>238</sup> Indeed, during the 1920s, flows from Haiti’s northern ports were on the increase. Between October 1919 and September 1920, 3,212 Haitians traveled to Cuba via the Northern port of Port-de-Paix, representing 12% of the movement.<sup>239</sup> Exactly one year later, in the same months (October 1920-September 1921), the number increased by over 2,000 to 5,421 migrants, which represented almost 22% of total migration to Cuba in the period.<sup>240</sup> In 1926, the United Fruit Company recruited 8,000 Haitians to migrate to Cuba via Port-de-Paix, representing

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<sup>236</sup> Division Commander, southern Division, “Report on Labor Conditions in the Southern Division,” February 12, 1920, USNARA RG 127 E 176 Box 1, Folder: ‘Monthly Reports Jan 1918 – Sep 1921.’ Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931,” table vii.

<sup>237</sup> United States Senate, *Inquiry 2*, 1361.

<sup>238</sup> “It urges the stopping of Emigration,” *Le Temps*, October 21, 1927. Translated and enclosed in USNA RG59 837.5538/3 John Russell, Port-au-Prince to Secretary of State, Washington D.C. October 28, 1927.

<sup>239</sup> United States Senate, *Inquiry 2*, 1361.

<sup>240</sup> “Le scandale de l’émigration,” *Le Matin*, January 26, 1922.

approximately 64% of the annual migration total (12,346). The following year, they requested permission to recruit 12,000.<sup>241</sup>

Data for individual migrants confirms that Haitians traveled through the ports that were relatively close to their homes. In other words, Haitians who left through ports in the South were probably from that region. Cuban citizenship records for the region of Oriente contain biographical information for 154 Haitian agricultural laborers who traveled to Cuba between 1896 and 1934.<sup>242</sup> These individuals represent a small portion of the Haitians who traveled to Cuba. Nevertheless, their life stories offer an unprecedented look at the regional patterns of Haitian migration to Cuba.<sup>243</sup>

**Table 4 Haitian Agricultural Workers' Birthplaces and Migration Dates<sup>244</sup>**

Date Range	Port-au-Prince	Southern Peninsula	Northern Peninsula
1890s-1915	5	20	0
1915-1919	4	38	0
1920-1934	12	64	11

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<sup>241</sup> USNA RG 59 837.5538/3 John Russell, Port-au-Prince to Secretary of State, Washington D.C. October 28, 1927; Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," Table vii.

<sup>242</sup> The 58 volumes of citizenship changes are housed in the Archivo Provincial de Santiago de Cuba: Registro del Estado Civil: Tomos de Ciudadanías, legajos 327-383. This number does not include the numerous Haitian-born individuals in the record who did not work in agriculture. Special thanks to Robert Whitney for bringing this collection to my attention.

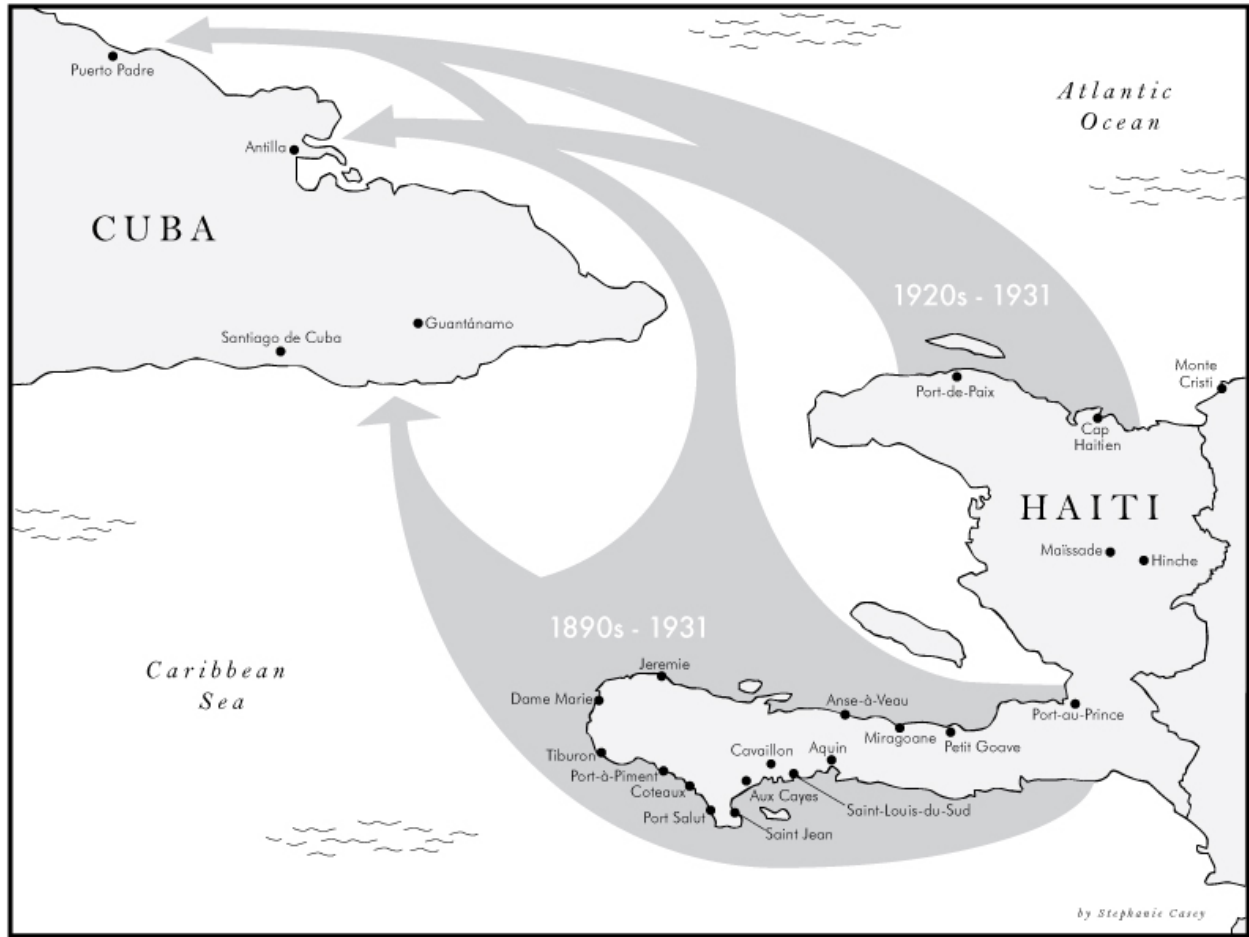
<sup>243</sup> For a discussion of the importance of micro-level data for understanding large-scale processes, see Putnam, "To Study the Fragments/ Whole," 616, 18; Scott, "Small-Scale Dynamics," 475.

<sup>244</sup> Compiled from APSRECTC 327-383.

The vast majority (122) were born in coastal towns in Haiti's southern peninsula and traveled to Cuba between 1896 and 1934---encompassing the full years of the migratory movement. The primary sending areas in the Southern peninsula were coastal towns like Aux Cayes, Cavaillon, Aquin, Jeremie, Coteaux, Dame Marie, Saint Louis de Sud, Saint Jean, Tiburon, Port-à-Piment, Port Salut, Anse-à-Veau, Miragoane, and others. Twenty-one of the sampled agricultural workers came from Port-au-Prince between 1904 and 1928. Finally, the eleven agricultural workers from Haiti's Northern peninsula arrived between 1920 and 1927, though port data suggests some movement in the North both before and after those dates. In the North, migrants left towns like Cap-Haitien, Gonaives, Port-de-Paix, and Mole-St. Nicholas and traveled to Cuba via Port-de-Paix.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Compiled from APSRECTC 327-383.



**Figure 2 Map of Regional and Temporal Patterns of Haitian Migration to Cuba**

Although the migrant-sending areas of southern Haiti were situated along the coast, they were a heterogeneous group with few commonalities. While food was “scarce and hard to obtain” in Port à Piment, Port Salut, and Aquin, Dame Marie was known to be a “very fertile” place where a variety of fruits and vegetables were “in abundance.” The areas also diverged greatly in terms of their water supplies. Miragoane, Port-à-Piment, and Port Salut were situated in dry areas where clean water was available through streams and wells. In Aquin, the only water available came from “stagnant wells” and “small streams,” which one official described as

“polluted and dangerous.” Dame Marie and Aux Cayes were known for being marshy areas with rivers full of non-potable water. One U.S. observer called Aux Cayes a “bog” because water from the surrounding areas drained into the town and stagnated. Finally, although most of these areas produced coffee, their relative economic importance for this and other crops differed. Aquin was the site of a small trade “in dye-wood and coffee but the revenue derived from this in the course of a year is not great.” Dame Marie, on the other hand, possessed three major cocoa and coffee processing mills, which annually exported between 15,000 and 20,000 bags of cocoa from a privately owned, closed port. Aux Cayes was a thriving commercial port on direct steamship routes with the Panama Canal Zone, Martinique, France, and Cuba. Other cities like Port-à-Piment and Port Salut, though situated on the coast, did not export directly, but sent their merchandise to Aux Cayes.<sup>246</sup>

Despite the variations in resources, port facilities, and economic importance, these southern zones shared certain commonalities, some of which predated the occupation. First, the sending areas of Haiti’s southern peninsula were distant from the areas of rebellion and the reports of large-scale land expulsions during the occupation. However, they were not immune to more subtle and highly disruptive actions by U.S. occupation troops that have not received as much scholarly attention. Finally, these areas were marked by a poor system of internal roads and a thriving network of small ships that connected them to Aux Cayes, Port-au-Prince, and ultimately, Santiago de Cuba.

The regional and temporal patterns of Haitian’s movements to Cuba question the causal link between the land expulsions and rural violence of the U.S. occupation of Haiti and

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<sup>246</sup> R.L. Shepherd, “Intelligence Report: Aquin,” May 10, 1921, USNA RG 127 E38 Box 11, Folder H-14. (Hereafter IRH); IRH-16: Aux Cayes, May 9, 1921; IRH-38: Dame Marie, May 7, 1921; IRH-75:Miragoane, May 20, 1921; IRH-91: Port-à-Piment; IRH-92: Port Salut, June 15, 1921.

migration to Cuba. In 1918, the U.S. imposed a new constitution to govern Haiti. In a break with the radical, century-old policies that came out of the Haitian Revolution, the new document permitted foreigners to own land, opening the countryside to U.S. capitalists. During the occupation, foreign companies were granted land concessions totaling at least 266,600 acres, though historians have been sharply divided on how much of this land was physically claimed by companies.<sup>247</sup>

The most vocal allegations of land expulsions came from Georges Séjourné of the *Union Nationaliste*, an organization ardently opposed to the foreign military occupation. In 1938, Séjourné wrote that in the Department of the North, the occupation government had “expelled all the farmers of lands of national domain *en masse*...under the specious pretext that they did not have regular titles.”<sup>248</sup> The document is certainly referring to a series of events that occurred in 1930 in an area near Hinche called Maïssade. In September of that year, the Haitian government threatened to expel families who had subsisted on land in Maïssade since the 19<sup>th</sup> century if they refused to pay rent to the state. The rightful ownership of the land was being decided in the Haitian courts. Nevertheless, the occupation government refused to wait and demanded that residents pay. The ultimatum caused a scandal throughout Haiti and met with stiff resistance from urban and rural residents alike.<sup>249</sup>

Clearly, the Maïssade Affair demands more research to illuminate occupation land policies and Haitian responses to them. For our purposes, however, identifying the Affair as the

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<sup>247</sup> The figure is calculated by Suzy Castor who argues that these concessions played a significant role in dispossessing peasants and causing emigration. Castor, *L'occupation américaine d'Haiti*, 109. David Nicholls and Brenda Gayle Plummer argue that it is impossible to know how much land was claimed or ignored by companies. Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 112; Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, 186-7.

<sup>248</sup> Séjourné, "Petite propriété," 7. See also Séjourné and Thoby, *Depossessions*.

<sup>249</sup> "Un scandale inoui: La dépossession en masse de toute une population," *Haiti Journal*, September 23, 1930.

object of Séjourné's tract questions the link between land expulsion and migration to Cuba. The dispute occurred in 1930 at a great distance from the Southern peninsula---one year before migration to Cuba legally ended. The fact that it was met with such opprobrium from Haitians and became the central focus of the *Union Nationaliste's* critique of U.S. land policies raises questions about the frequency with which such large-scale events like this occurred. Instead, as will be described below, many parts of rural Haiti were affected by subtler, everyday forms of occupation violence that disrupted their rural lifestyles on a smaller, and less systematic scale.

While systematic land expulsions occurred late in the occupation in the North of Haiti, the migratory movement to Cuba originated in the South before the occupation began. As other scholars have noted, land lay fallow in at least some parts of the South from whence migrants left, even during the occupation.<sup>250</sup> For instance, in Petit Goâve, in the Southern peninsula, there was "a large percentage of the good land practically untouched" in 1921.<sup>251</sup> In fact, the availability of land for rent may have influenced some to migrate to Cuba. One official noted "that the Haitian returning from Cuba invests in land which is leased to him, and thereafter departs again for Cuba to obtain the necessary funds which will permit him to build a good home."<sup>252</sup>

The violence of rebellion and counter-insurgency in rural Haiti, both before and during the occupation, was mostly distant from the South. Between 1902 and 1915, Haiti had nine different presidents and countless failed aspirants to executive control. Brenda Gayle Plummer argues that "what seemed to be anarchic behavior was actually highly patterned." Often military

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<sup>250</sup> Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 61.

<sup>251</sup> District Commander, Petit Goave to Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, November 4, 1921, USNA RG127 E165 Box 6, Folder: Petit Goave.

<sup>252</sup> District Commander, Petit Goave to Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, November 10, 1920, USNA RG127 E165, Box 6, Folder: Reports, Conditions, Petit-Goave.

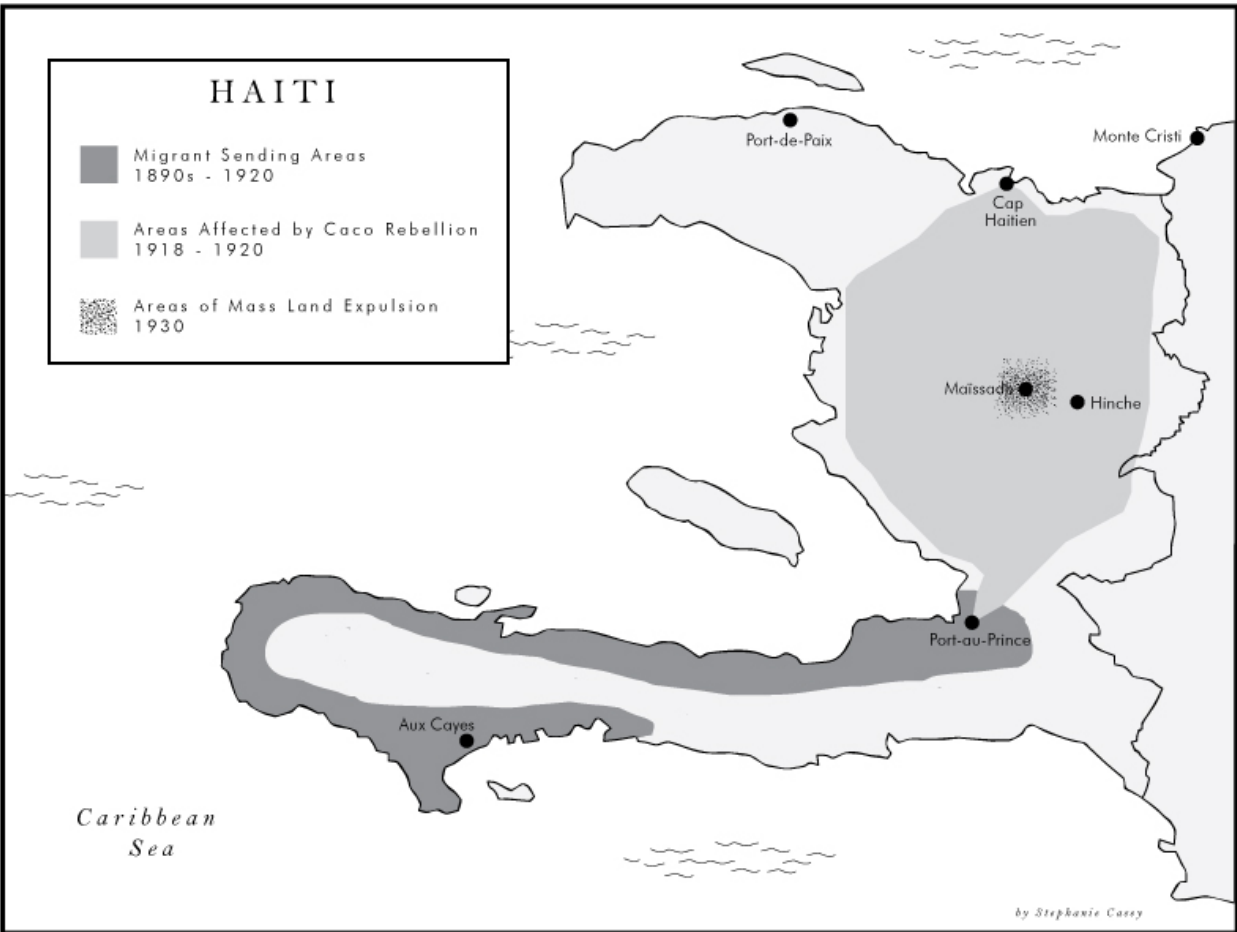


leaders formed peasant armies in the North before marching into Port-au-Prince and seizing control over the government. At other moments, the Haitian congress would appoint a president in the case of a power vacuum. Throughout this period, only two individuals from Southern Haiti attempted to seize executive power. In 1902, Calisthène Fouchard unsuccessfully marshaled troops against Augustin Simon Sam. In 1908, Antoine Simon successfully employed a southern army in his presidential bid. The vast majority, however, fought in the North and Artibonite.<sup>253</sup> This regional trend continued during the U.S. occupation. The so-called Caco rebellion radiated from the North and West around Hinche, which was a great distance from the Southern Peninsula. The rebellion had been quashed by 1920, years earlier than the heyday of migration from Northern Haiti.<sup>254</sup> Thus, scholars must be very cautious to assume that the Caco rebellion or land expulsion were linked in any simplistic way to the migratory movement to Cuba.

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<sup>253</sup> Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 20, 97, 128.

<sup>254</sup> Bellegarde-Smith, *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*, 105-12. For a description of Marines' violence against the Caco Rebellion see Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 150-64.



**Figure 3** Map of areas of rural violence, mass land expulsion, and migration to Cuba  
**Areas of rural violence identified in Bellegarde-Smith, *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*, 109.**

Although Southern Haiti did not experience the brunt of U.S. military violence or land expropriation, the presence of foreign soldiers and the enactment of occupation policies drastically altered the contours of life in the region. These transformations created some economic opportunities for Haitians, though hardships and disruption were more typical.

The presence of U.S. soldiers who received high wages and were accustomed to eating significantly more than Haitian subsistence farmers tested an area's capacity to produce food, even when soldiers' rations were being shipped into an area. In Aux Cayes, an officer noted that "import flour can be found in very large quantities tho[ugh] of poor quality; beef cattle are poor in quality and about sufficient in number to meet the demands of the native population, and this is not much." The officer concluded that "an American force occupying Cayes could not...live on the country but must bring its supplies" since "this is not a country where people figure on supplying an occupying force." Despite this, he recognized that food would be purchased from local markets. "There is just sufficient native produce to fill out the soldiers fare and to add a little something to his field supplies."<sup>255</sup> In theory, the presence of well-paid troops would have raised competition and prices for food, creating an economic opportunity for merchants in rural Haiti.

If increased demands could raise the prices of food, so could the strategic policies of the U.S. government. During World War I, the thriving German community that had played an active role in Haiti's economy and politics during the previous half-century was placed into interment camps in Haiti and later expelled from the country; leaving an economic vacuum in provincial towns.<sup>256</sup> In Aux Cayes in 1918, "the sequestration of German business firms" caused commerce to be "sluggish" since the German community had previously conducted "a large part of the commercial activities" and "no firms...have as yet filled the vacancies caused by the

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<sup>255</sup> R.L. Shephard, "Officers report: Haiti, Aux Cayes," May 9, 1921, USNA RG127 E38 Box 11, Folder: H-16.

<sup>256</sup> McCrocklin, *Garde dHhaiti*, 125-6; Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 91-2.

closing of German business houses.”<sup>257</sup> The next month, prices of imports were “exorbitant, due to the fact that there isn’t much competition as the Germans were formerly the principal merchants.”<sup>258</sup>

Increased demand on food and the elimination of merchants caused prices to increase and lead to scarcity. For rural Haitians who purchased food and imported goods, the need for cash, available in Cuba, is self-explanatory.<sup>259</sup> Price increases probably also influenced Haitians to head to Cuba so that they could rent land upon their return and take advantage of the market, as many of them did.

However, migrating at a moment of high food prices did not guarantee one’s ability to take advantage of the economic situation. First, Haitian rural markets were disrupted by the actions of U.S. troops as well as the taxation accompanied by the state-building projects of the occupation. Peasants’ ability to buy and sell at rural markets was threatened by troops’ actions as well as U.S. policies. In 1920, near Grand Goâve in southern Haiti, a group of U.S. soldiers was accused of “firing a resounding series of gunshots” in “the heart of an established market.” As a result, “the alarmed market women abandoned their merchandise which became prone to pillage.”<sup>260</sup> In the migrant sending area of Aquin in 1918, the city’s market was “rapidly disappearing due to the enforcement of market taxes. The marketers are going to Miragoane

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<sup>257</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, “Monthly Reports on Conditions, Aux Cayes, for August 1918,” USNA RG127 E176 Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>258</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, “Monthly Reports on Conditions, September 1918,” September 30, 1918, USNA RG127 E176 Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>259</sup> For a discussion of peasants purchasing imported goods, especially cloth, see Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 23.

<sup>260</sup> Lorcy Volcy, Conseiller de la 4eme Section to Magistrat Communal de Grande Goave, December 1920. RG 127 E179 Box 1 Folder Claims and Complaints 1 of 5.

where the taxes are not enforced” thus increasing the already high transportation costs of commercial farming in the South.<sup>261</sup>

Haitians’ ability to sell their produce could also be hampered by local or international price fluctuations. During World War I, when demand for sugar climbed, markets for coffee closed. In December 1917, *Haiti: Commerciale, Industrielle et Agricole* declared that the war had prevented European countries from importing coffee and “opened for Haiti the era of a crisis without precedent.”<sup>262</sup> In 1914 Haiti exported 39.57 thousand metric tons of coffee. By 1918 coffee exports were down to 19 thousand metric tons.<sup>263</sup> At the very moment that Cuban sugar companies offered historically high wages, Haitian coffee growers were forced to sell their product for a low price or hold out for better rates. Either way, cash was scarce for Haiti’s coffee producers. At the local level, food prices also faced sharp, sudden decreases as a result of the economic centralization associated with the occupation of Haiti.<sup>264</sup> In 1920, merchant companies and *speculateurs* (urban-based merchants of peasant produce) in Port-au-Prince dumped their excess goods in Aux Cayes and “flooded the local market.” As a result, stores were “filled to capacity” and there was “resentment on the part of the regular local merchants on this account” because “their calculations have been upset and...prices may drop.”<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, “Monthly Reports on Conditions, September 1918,” September 30, 1918, USNA RG127 E176 Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921. See also Millet, *Les paysans haitiens*, 39.

<sup>262</sup> “La baisse du café et la situation économique,” *Haiti: Commerciale, Industrielle et Agricole*, December 1, 1917.

<sup>263</sup> Samper and Fernando, “Appendix,” 430.

<sup>264</sup> On the economic centralization of Haiti under the U.S. occupation see Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 104.

<sup>265</sup> J.A. Rossell, Department Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie, “Monthly Report of Conditions (October 1920),” November 03, 1920, USNA RG127 E176, Box 1, Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

Rural Haitians' livelihoods and customary rights were also disrupted by seemingly benign occupation policies. In the rural outskirts of Port-au-Prince, Marines constructed a golf course in 1922 on "public land." For the previous "approximately twenty years," this land had been used for cattle grazing by Haitians "whose only resource" was "a small commerce in milk." U.S. authorities revoked the customary right because "the animals destroyed the 'greens' every night." Nevertheless, the owners "flatly refused to keep them off the field, saying the field was free and that they would continue to drive them" there. Eventually, the animals were captured, the owners were charged 40 gourdes (8 USD) for their return, and the milk business suffered.<sup>266</sup> In another example, a group of Marines built a topographical survey station near Jacmel in 1920 on top of a tree-lined hill. After construction "they proceeded to cut down" a number of "'cocoanut trees and 'pitite mil' [corn]" because the crops "obstructed the use of [the] surveying instrument." However, such actions were "contrary to the wishes of the owner."<sup>267</sup> When a crowd of peasants approached the station in an effort to stop the destruction of their food supply, soldiers drew their guns and fired upon them.<sup>268</sup>

Conflicts over resources and customary rights were also tied to struggles between Haitians and occupation officials over labor, even after the *corvée* was officially abolished.<sup>269</sup> In Anse-à-Veau, during a 1922 drought, Haitians accused Lieutenant Kenney, a U.S. Marine, of "terroris[ing] the population by sending every day some prisoners and armed *gendarmes* to

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<sup>266</sup> Statement of First Sergeant Bert R. Berry. June 28, 1922. P. Calicott to Major Coney. June 23, 1922, USNA RG127 E165 Box 3, Folder: Claims and Complaints of Natives 2 of 3.

<sup>267</sup> District Commander, Jacmel to Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, "Complaint of the Prefet of Jacmel, Haiti," December 03, 1920. RG 127 E179 Box 1 Folder Claims and Complaints 1 of 5.

<sup>268</sup> R.B. Steele, Asst. Topogr. Engr., Haitian Topogr. Survey, December 18, 1920, RG 127 E179 Box 1 Folder Claims and Complaints 1 of 5.

<sup>269</sup> The link between struggles over labor and Haitian emigration was first identified in Chomsky, "Migration and Resistance," 1,5.

penetrate the fields by force and chop grass according to their needs.”<sup>270</sup> Lt. Kenney’s use of prison labor was a common occupation tactic with origins deep in 19<sup>th</sup> century Haiti.<sup>271</sup> Although the *corvée* ended by 1920, Haitians arrested for vagrancy were often forced into unpaid labor. In 1921, officials in Aux Cayes described prisons as “rather crowded for the most part as many vagabonds and petty thieves are picked up now.”<sup>272</sup> Of the 497 arrests made in Port-au-Prince in October 1923, the most common offense (153) was “vagabondage.”<sup>273</sup>

Occupation officials frequently used words like “vagabonds” and “vagabondage” to describe Haitians who rejected the ideals of the occupation. As with other instances when U.S. officials labeled Haitians, the moniker was imbued with the stereotypes of larger Atlantic ideologies of anti-black racism—namely that black men were lazy, thieving and prone to violence.<sup>274</sup> Able-bodied Haitians who were perceived as lazy or potential thieves were always targets. In 1924 *L’Opinion Nationale* reported that, “in order to repress vagabondage the Police are picking up all journeymen they meet along the road.”<sup>275</sup> Haitians whose actions were construed as disrespectful to U.S. officials were similarly subject to arrest and forced labor on charges of vagabondage. “Several arrests have been made during the month for insulting

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<sup>270</sup> A.N. Torchon, Csse Gvt Nippes [Commissaire Gouvernement de Nippes] to Ministre de l’Interieur, Port au Prince, n.d. [1922]. D.C. McDougal, Chef de la Gendarmerie d’Haiti to President of Haiti, June 9, 1922. USNA RG127 E174, Box 1, Folder: Complaints, Dept. South 1 of 2.

<sup>271</sup> Bellegarde-Smith, *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*, 68.

<sup>272</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of Gendarmerie, “Monthly Report of Conditions for April 1919,” May 15, 1919, USNA RG127 E176, Box 1, Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>273</sup> Chief of Police, Port-au-Prince to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, “Report of Activities, Police Department, during the month of October 1923,” November 10, 1923, USNA RG127 E165 Box 1, Folder: ‘Summary of GD’H 1921 Folder 1 of 2’

<sup>274</sup> See for instance Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*, 10.

<sup>275</sup> Summary and translation of “Les sans-aveu,” *L’Opinion Nationale*, April 26, 1924 by Thomas A. Tighe, “Memorandum for the Chief of the Gendarmerie,” April 30, 1924, USNA RG127 E165, Box 1, Folder: Morning Reports of Intelligence to AHC 1924 2 of 2.

remarks made to gendarmes and against officers.” The label was applied so frequently that one U.S. official referred to the existence of a “vagabond class.”<sup>276</sup> In contemporary Haiti, the term is still used to signify “someone with no respect for anything or anyone, a brigand, a person capable of any transgression.”<sup>277</sup>

Like other facets of occupation policy in Haiti, racial ideologies and concerns with stability were heavily tied to economic interests and the needs of production. *L’Opinion Nationale* hinted that the motivation for charging all traveling laborers with vagabondage involved “more than the exercise of crime.”<sup>278</sup> In fact, officials did not hide the fact that the labor of “vagabonds” was crucial for carrying out underfunded occupation projects. In 1923, a U.S. official lamented that a “general raid...on the vagabonds” in Hinche was “not as good as expected” because of a “lack of vagabonds...due to the fact that all of the men are able to obtain work.”<sup>279</sup> For Marines, convict labor was seen as a source of food for both humans and animals. In 1918, officials complained of the “noticeable shortage of American vegetables...in Cayes.” Their proposed solution was to construct “a prison farm...which will supply forage for Gendarmerie horses and vegetables for the Gendarmerie and prison messes. A saving from two

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<sup>276</sup> District Commander, Jacmel to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, September 30, 1923, USNA RG127 E165, Box 1, Folder: 'Summary of GD'H 1921 Folder 1 of 2'

<sup>277</sup> Wilentz, *The Rainy Season*, 154. Valerie Kaussen traces Haitian *indigeniste* poets’ attempts to fashion the image of the urban vagabond from this negatively charged meaning into one more akin to French poet Aurthur Rimbaud’s characterizations. Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, 37-8.

<sup>278</sup> Summary and translation of “Les sans-aveu,” *L’Opinion Nationale*, April 26, 1924 by Thomas A. Tighe, “Memorandum for the Chief of the Gendarmerie,” April 30, 1924, USNA RG127 E165, Box 1, Folder: Morning Reports of Intelligence to AHC 1924 2 of 2.

<sup>279</sup> District Commander, Hinche to Dept. Commander, Central Department, "Report Rural Police - Month of September 1923," October 1, 1923, USNA RG127 E165, Box 1, Folder: 'Summary of GD'H 1921 Folder 1 of 2'



to three hundred dollars will be realized on the forage alone.”<sup>280</sup> As a result, U.S. officials evaluated the conditions of imprisoned Haitians in terms of the potential value of their labor. In Aux Cayes, an official complained that a “lack of prison clothing works a hardship” on individuals arrested for vagabondage. It also “decrease[s] the value of” prisoners “who are not decently enough clothed to be sent out to work.”<sup>281</sup>

As the previous chapter demonstrated, migration between Haiti and Cuba pre-dated the U.S. occupation and increased during it. Indeed, some of the factors encouraging migration to Cuba existed before 1915. In Southern Haiti, the lack of good roads made it very difficult for peasants to sell their agricultural products or travel to other places. In 1909, one U.S. traveler described the roads surrounding Jacmel as “almost inaccessible” making it “painful for man and beast” to use them.<sup>282</sup> Before and during the occupation, road conditions were so bad that cities like Jeremie were considered to be “partially isolated from all other large towns in Haiti.”<sup>283</sup> The lack of passable roads made it impossible for farmers to market crops beyond the local level, even when they flourished. In Aux Cayes, a U.S. official noted that “daily rains” were “beneficial...to the crops, althou[gh] extremely bad for the roads and trails.”<sup>284</sup> In Jeremie, the Haitians who “attempted to engage in agriculture,” were “forced to quit due to the primitive

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<sup>280</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, “Monthly Reports on Conditions, September 1918,” September 30, 1918. USNA RG127 E176 Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>281</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of Gendarmerie, “Monthly Report of Conditions for April 1919,” May 15, 1919, USNA RG127 E176, Box 1, Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>282</sup> Wilcox, *Sailing Sunny Seas*, 154.

<sup>283</sup> R.L. Shephard, “Officers report: Haiti, Jeremie,” May 9, 1921, USNA RG127 E38 Box 11, Folder: H-56.

<sup>284</sup> Harold H. Utley, District Commander, Gendarmerie d’Haiti, Department of the South, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie, “Monthly Report of Conditions, District of Aux Cayes, July 1921,” July 31, 1921, USNA RG 127 E176, Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921

mode of transport, which eats up more than the profits. The small peasant frequently selling his crop in town for less than the actual cost of the transportation." Road improvement, one official argued would be "the greatest incentive that could be given to agriculture."<sup>285</sup>

Apologists for the occupation constantly claim that U.S. oversaw the construction of many miles of road in rural Haiti. However, these roads were built for the strategic purpose of transporting U.S. troops to quell rural rebellions---not economic development *per se*.<sup>286</sup> As a result, the vast majority of roads were built in the North and West of Haiti instead of the South. In 1923, *Le Temps* declared that U.S. occupation forces "spend large amounts of money to build good roads in the Northern part of the country where the cacos used to make their depredations."<sup>287</sup> Such road building projects involved *corvée* labor, thus contributing to the rural rebellions that roads were supposed to help eliminate.<sup>288</sup> As *Le Temps* noted, there was little incentive for U.S. officials to build roads in areas of calm. The "regions of the south" had "not attracted any interest from our Government" because they had "been always peaceful." The article ended with a macabre quip. "[W]e hope that some cacotism [sic] starts at Jacmel [on the Southern coast], which would cost some 500 Haitiens lives and a dozen Americans; then the road surely would be made."<sup>289</sup>

While inland trade and transportation were difficult, coastal movements were relatively easy. "The country people," an official in Jeremie explained, "find it very difficult to bring

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<sup>285</sup> District Commander, Jeremie to Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, June 21, 1921, USNA RG 127 E165 Box 6, Folder Report Jeremie Conditions.

<sup>286</sup> Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 32-3.

<sup>287</sup> Summary, by U.S. officials of "Au fil de l'heure," *Le Temps*, August 31, 1923 in "Memorandum for the Brigade Commander" September 1, 1923, RG 127 E 165 Box 1 Folder: 'Summary of GDH 2 of 2'

<sup>288</sup> Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 32-3.

<sup>289</sup> Summary, by U.S. officials of "Au fil de l'heure," *Le Temps*, August 31, 1923 in "Memorandum for the Brigade Commander" September 1, 1923, RG 127 E 165 Box 1 Folder: 'Summary of GDH 2 of 2'

their products to market, as nearly all the roads are in a pitiable condition." However, "Between seacoast towns small boats are found to be a great advantage."<sup>290</sup> As the previous chapter demonstrated, these coastwise vessels linked Haiti and Cuba and permitted flows of goods, ideas and people before the U.S. occupied either country militarily. These lines of communication continued into the period of the occupation of Haiti as well. In Aux Cayes in 1918, Cuban merchants were "buying up chickens and other food products for exportation to Cuba."<sup>291</sup> A U.S. official in 1920 declared "that the greater part of all the coffee from the Port-a-Piment section goes out of Haiti...and presumably into Cuba."<sup>292</sup> For Haitians in the rural and coastal areas of Haiti's Southern peninsula, maritime travel to Cuba was as much or more within the realm of the possible than a journey only a few miles inland. A U.S. official's 1921 remark about Aux Cayes said it all: "Except to Santiago de Cuba communications are poor."<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> District Commander, Jeremie to Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, March 8, 1920, USNA RG 127 E165 Box 6 Folder Jeremie, Reports of Conditions No. 134. Michel Rolph Trouillot makes a similar argument about coastwise transportation in Haiti. Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 97.

<sup>291</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, "Monthly Reports on Conditions, September 1918," September 30, 1918, USNA RG127 E176 Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>292</sup> Department Commander, "Report (Monthly) of Conditions," November 6, 1920, RG 127 E176 Box 1 Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan 1918-Sep1921

<sup>293</sup> R.L. Shephard, "Officers report: Haiti, Aux Cayes," May 9, 1921, USNA RG127 E38 Box 11, Folder: H-16.

### 3.2 HAITIAN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS AND THE ALTERNATIVES TO MIGRATION TO CUBA

Not all Haitians living in the coastal towns of the Southern peninsula responded to rural poverty, market fluctuations, disruptions by troops, struggles over forced labor, poor road conditions, and easy access to Cuba in the same way. While some migrated to Cuba, others remained on agricultural land, migrated elsewhere, joined the military, or sought education in a rural school. These options were not mutually exclusive, especially at the level of the household. They were often combined with migration to Cuba and one another. Nor was every strategy open to every person. Haitians' age, gender, and role in the household shaped their decisions to leave, stay behind, or pursue a different strategy.

For many Haitians, like other Caribbean migrants, leaving their rural homes for Cuba was not an abandonment of their country but a strategy to improve their social and economic position there.<sup>294</sup> As will be explained in chapter eight, many migrants used the cash earned in Cuba to rent land or maintain a farm for subsistence or commercial agriculture. "The Haitian returning from Cuba invests in land which is leased to him, and thereafter departs again for Cuba to obtain the necessary funds which will permit him to build a good home."<sup>295</sup> Although the Haitians who migrated to Cuba were overwhelmingly men, the agricultural labor and commercial activities of remaining family members were crucial for the success of the enterprise. In Aux Cayes, observers commonly noted that "agricultural work is performed by women and children," since

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<sup>294</sup> Fog-Olwig, *Caribbean Journeys*, 30, 194; Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, xiii, 19-21.

<sup>295</sup> District Commander, Petit Goave to Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, November 10, 1920, USNA RG127 E165, Box 6, Folder: Reports, Conditions, Petit-Goave.

men were “in the habit of going to Cuba to work.”<sup>296</sup> Some men traveled seasonally, investing money in their Haitian homestead and returning to Cuba when the “money is gone.”<sup>297</sup> Others remained in Cuba after harvests ended, using a mixture of formal and informal networks to send monetary remittances home. In 1915, Jacobo Julio traveled within Cuba from Jobabo to Alto Cedro “with the object of looking for 50 *pesos* he had saved there, to send them to his family in Haiti.”<sup>298</sup> Envelopes with money were regularly “sent from Cuba with friends and later mailed [from with]in Haiti” to relatives.<sup>299</sup>

Military service represented another alternative to both migration and agricultural labor for Haitian men. One of the most lasting effects of the military occupation of Haiti was the creation of a U.S.-trained police force called the *Garde d’Haiti* (originally the *Gendarmerie d’Haiti*). Its officer corps was initially staffed by U.S. Marines. Enlisted men were Haitian peasants who were promised ten dollars a month. In 1916, there were 1,500 Haitian enlisted men in the organization. By 1931, there were 2,153.<sup>300</sup> However, the *Gendarmerie* was not immune to the economic problems that other Haitians faced. In Jeremie in 1919, high food prices made it impossible “to give the Gendarmes a well balanced ration.”<sup>301</sup> Nor did military service, which garnered enlistees approximately 30 cents a day, close off the option to migrate to

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<sup>296</sup> District Commander, Gendarmerie d’Haiti, Department of the South, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie, “Monthly Report of Conditions, AUX CAYES, for the month of June, 1921,” July 10, 1921, USNA RG127 E176, Box 1, Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> “El billete del premio mayor del último sorteo, ha sido falsificado,” *El Cubano Libre*, October 12, 1915.

<sup>299</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes “Monthly Report on Conditions,” March 12, 1918, USNA RG127 E176 Box 1 Folder: ‘Monthly Reports Jan 1918 – Sep1921’

<sup>300</sup> The 1915 treaty establishing the Gendarmerie allocated funds for 2,533 enlisted men. McCrocklin, *Garde D’haiti*, 68, 214, 46; Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 86.

<sup>301</sup> District Commander, Jeremie to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, December 10, 1919, USNA RG127 E165, Box Box 6, Folder: Jeremie, Reports of Conditions No. 134.

Cuba, which offered migrants between one and three dollars a day. These higher wages may explain why, after enlisting, many men deserted for Cuba. In February 1918 in Aux Cayes, “there were eight desertions...and it is believed all have gone to Cuba.” In fact, U.S. boasts of creating disciplined troops out of rural Haitians were undermined by the fact that “One Gendarme will make no efforts to apprehend another, but rather they will give him assistance” in deserting the force and leaving the country.<sup>302</sup>

Haitians who did not want to enlist in the Gendarmerie or remain on a family plot of land could attend a rural school, such as the *Service Technique* at Damien. Yet as in other areas marked by rural poverty, a tradition of migration, and the availability of wage labor abroad, the draw of Cuba was too strong even for those who attended these U.S.-led vocational schools.<sup>303</sup> In the south of Haiti, unidentified “school teachers” reported that “the older boys...go to Cuba in preference to serving an apprenticeship,” suggesting that the U.S. goal of educating Haitians in trades along the lines of Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute was not always popular with Haitians.<sup>304</sup>

Cuba was not the only migratory destination for Haitians to consider. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Haitian peasants from many regions of the country traveled to the Dominican Republic to engage in commerce and agricultural labor.<sup>305</sup> The porous border between the two countries makes specific numbers impossible to obtain, though one official

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<sup>302</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes “Monthly Report on Conditions,” March 12, 1918, USNA RG127 E176 Box 1 Folder: ‘Monthly Reports Jan 1918 – Sep1921’

<sup>303</sup> Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*, 213.

<sup>304</sup> Division Commander, southern Division, “Report on Labor Conditions in the Southern Division,” February 12, 1920, USNA RG 127 E 176 Box 1, Folder: ‘Monthly Reports Jan 1918 – Sep 1921.’ For a description of education under the occupation, see Baber and Balch, “Problems of Education,” 103-4; Pamphile, *Clash of Cultures*; Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier*, chapter 2.

<sup>305</sup> See, among others Turits, “A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed”; Derby, “Haitians, Magic, and Money”; Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*; Supplice, *Zafra*.

estimated that it was “much larger than to Cuba.”<sup>306</sup> Like other migratory movements in the period, Haitians’ movements to the Dominican Republic and Cuba were not discrete, but “overlapping.”<sup>307</sup> To mention one example, on June 15, 1926, a group of 270 Haitians and 74 Dominicans boarded the *Belle Sauvage*, an English steamer, in Puerto Padre, Cuba. Two days later, they stopped in Port-de-Paix, Haiti and 194 of the 270 Haitians left the ship. The following day, 76 Haitians and 74 Dominicans disembarked in the Dominican port of Monte Cristi, a region that boasted over 10,000 Haitian residents in 1920.<sup>308</sup>

Haitians wishing to leave the countryside also moved to urban spaces. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Haitian cities grew as a result of rural-urban migration.<sup>309</sup> In 1906, Port-au-Prince had a population of 101,133. By 1950, the population had grown to 261,720.<sup>310</sup> This growth occurred despite the existence of both legal and unofficial restrictions on rural-urban migration at many moments in Haitian history. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, rural-born Haitians were often expelled from cities except on specific market days. Later, as in other parts of the world, formal restrictions on internal movement were abolished in favor of more subtle legal obstacles based on hygiene and sanitation, though the goals were similar.<sup>311</sup> As chapter eight will show,

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<sup>306</sup> Winthrop R. Scott, “Immigration in Northern Haiti,” March 22, 1924, USNA RG 59 838.56/1

<sup>307</sup> McKeown, “Global Migration, 1846-1940,” 161.

<sup>308</sup> Customs certification that migrants were dispatched from Puerto Padre signed by Enrique A. Planos y Ochoa, Administrador de la Aduana de Puerto Padre, June 15, 1926. Certification of Migrant Disembarkation signed by J.L. Villanueva, Vice-Consul de la Republica Dominicana, José Aybar, Interventor de Aduana y Comandante del Puerto, Monte Cristi, June 18, 1926, “Relación de los Inmigrantes que por cuenta de The Chaparra Sugar Company conduce el vapor *La Belle Sauvage* con destino al puerto de Monte Cristo,” June 15, 1926, Archivo Nacional de Cuba : Secretaría de Agricultura, Industria y Comercio, Agricultura, Comercio y Trabajo y Agricultura y Comercio, (hereafter ANCSAIC) 4/45/81, 91, 95. Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint*, 132.

<sup>309</sup> Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 142; Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 110.

<sup>310</sup> n.a., *Haïti 1919-1920: Livre bleu d'haïti*, 62; Locher, “The Fate of Migrants,” 311.

<sup>311</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 41.

during and after the U.S. occupation of Haiti, anyone who entered a city without shoes could legally be expelled or arrested. The law was rationalized on sanitary grounds though the effect was to restrict the movement of the peasantry, a group often unable to purchase shoes.

Although Cuba was a more popular migratory destination for Haitian men, the restricted world of urban Haiti may have been easier for women and children to enter, though often at a very high cost. Young Haitian women from the countryside could obtain access to urban spaces by entering sexual relationships with wealthy men in cities. In 1931 in the city of Cap Haitien, a hotel manager defended the logic of Haiti's urban-rural segregation to Langston Hughes. When pressed, the manager declared "Ah, but women—that is different...They are young, vigorous, sweet as mangoes, these little peasant girls!" Indeed, the manager had a "shoeless mistress," a "teen-ager from the hills" who "had not been in the city long."<sup>312</sup> Such practices have been variously interpreted as a severe form of exploitation and an opportunity for women to "determine what they want or need in exchange for sexual services."<sup>313</sup> Many women also moved between cities and countryside selling agricultural goods.<sup>314</sup>

Other longstanding practices provided channels to bring rural-born children into Haitian cities. Since Haitian independence, the *ti-moun* or *restavek* system has been an exploitative mechanism of internal migration in Haiti as impoverished rural families send their children into the homes of wealthy, urban-based families. In contemporary Haiti, *restaveks* are mostly young girls, though it is impossible to know if this was the case during the decades under consideration.

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<sup>312</sup> Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 25-6.

<sup>313</sup> Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 135. For a critique of the exploitative nature of labor and sexual relationships for Caribbean women see Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, 61-2.

<sup>314</sup> N'Zengou-Tayo, "'Fanm Se Poto Mitan'," 122-4, 26; Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, 121.



Regardless, both girls and boys have lived as *restaveks* in Haiti then and now.<sup>315</sup> The informal arrangement required host families to feed, clothe, and educate the child in exchange for his or her domestic labor. However, the system was often rife with neglect as well as physical, psychological and sexual abuse.<sup>316</sup> In the 1930s, *restavek* children often ended up “in the hospital, victims of bad treatment.”<sup>317</sup> Although they resisted their treatment then and now, the system enjoyed widespread, though not unlimited, popular and judicial support.<sup>318</sup> In 1933, Livie, a six-year old girl from Aux Cayes was sent by her parents to live with a wealthy family in Port-au-Prince. At the age of twelve, she ran away from the house because “if she had complained to her mistress, she would perhaps have been dumped in prison for insubordination.”<sup>319</sup> In Cap Haitien in 1927, Cyrus Severe and Luc Pierre, were “accused of having stolen...201 gourdes” from the head of the household for whom they worked as *ti moun*. The two boys admitted to the theft and “gave back 170 gourdes.” Nevertheless, the Assistant Government Prosecutor declared “that the jury must punish the guilty parties to set an example and assure peace of mind to the numerous persons who have ‘ptits mounes.’” The jury, however, acquitted them.<sup>320</sup>

The comparatively wider spaces for women and children in Haiti’s restricted cities may explain why some members of a household headed to urban spaces while others ventured to

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<sup>315</sup> Kovats-Bernat, *Sleeping Rough in Port-Au-Prince*, 12. References to the *restavek* or *ti moun* system appear with regularity in 20<sup>th</sup> century travelers accounts of Haiti. See Dunham, *Island Possessed*, 42.

<sup>316</sup> Jean-Robert Cadet offers a brief history of the system and a moving description of his experiences as a “slave child.” Cadet, *Restavek*. Kovats-Bernat, *Sleeping Rough in Port-Au-Prince*, 60.

<sup>317</sup> Madeleine G. Sylvain, “Ti moun,” *La Phalange*, April 15, 1939.

<sup>318</sup> Kovats-Bernat, *Sleeping Rough in Port-Au-Prince*, 1,2-60.

<sup>319</sup> Sylvain, “Ti Moun,” *La Phalange*, April 15, 1939.

<sup>320</sup> AG McCune, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Gdh, “Intelligence Report: Department du Nord,” July 25, 1927, USNA RG127 E169 Box 1, Folder: Intelligence Reports, Nord 2 of 2.

Cuba or remained on rural land. In 1937, Elda Barjon returned to Haiti from Cuba with savings he had amassed. Rather than returning to the countryside, Barjon went to Port-au-Prince “to stay with one of his relatives” who had already moved there.<sup>321</sup>

### 3.3 THE MECHANICS OF MIGRATION: FROM PRIVATE NETWORKS TO STATE REGULATIONS

In the late summer of 1920, people in the migrant-sending area of Aux Cayes were “becoming anxious about their friends and relatives in Cuba.” Their trepidation was caused by the “rumors” in Haiti “pertaining to unrest and threatened uprisings in Cuba” as a result of the hotly contested Cuban election of 1920.<sup>322</sup> The concern was so strong that Haitian migration to Cuba reportedly “stopped for a few weeks during the elections”---only resuming when the threats of political violence had subsided.<sup>323</sup> The elections in Cuba coincided with a drop in world sugar prices and a decrease in labor demands from Cuban sugar companies. One of the effects was that the individuals “in Cuba who ordinarily send money here [Haiti] to finance the immigration [sic] trade cannot obtain the required money. Therefor[e] the return of Haitian laborers from Cuba to Haiti has practically come to a standstill, and the flocking of laborers to Cuba has decreased

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<sup>321</sup> “Comment le rapatrié de Cuba fut dépouillé de son avoir par son amie et le mari de celle-ci” *Le Matin*, April 23, 1937.

<sup>322</sup> Department Commander, Aux Cayes, “Monthly Report of conditions Department of Cayes,” August 2, 1920, USNA RG 127 E 176

<sup>323</sup> District Commander, Jeremie to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, December 1, 1920, USNA RG127 E165, Box 6, Folder: Jeremie, Reports of Conditions No. 134. Haitians’ decisions to avoid the potential political violence of early Republican Cuba is understandable, given the latter country’s experience of rural violence in the aftermath of previous elections that was geared at different times toward people of African-descent and even immigrant laborers. For an analysis of the local and national effects of post-election violence in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba, see McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 65-6, 80-1.

perceptibly.”<sup>324</sup> The migration hiatus of 1920 illustrates the significance of the grassroots, private networks that channeled migration between Haiti and Cuba. Before 1923, they were responsible for moving money, information, and people between the two countries.<sup>325</sup> In this period, “small sloops which carry immigrants to Cuba” plied along the Haitian coast picking up passengers.<sup>326</sup>

Some Cuban sugar mills recruited laborers by inserting themselves into these networks. Instead of hiring specific labor contractors, companies paid return migrants for every individual they convinced to work in Cuba. Upon returning to Haiti, many migrants “attempt[ed] to secure several more laborers and if he can get them to Cuba the company gives him a certain percentage on them. By this system nearly every man who returns is a sort of labor agent.”<sup>327</sup> This explains why family members were often in Cuba together, even when sugar companies were involved in recruitment and transportation. For instance, two brothers, Dionisio and Calderon Despaigne were “residents of Preston, [Cuba]” site of the United Fruit Company in 1918.<sup>328</sup> In Camagüey, Cuba in 1936, Alberto Fiz lived on a sugar plantation with his mother and younger sister.<sup>329</sup>

The vast majority of the Haitians whose journeys were recorded by the Cuban government were men between the ages of 14 and 45. Nevertheless, over 10,000 women and

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<sup>324</sup> Department Commander, “Report (Monthly) of Conditions,” November 6, 1920, RG 127 E176 Box 1 Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan 1918-Sep1921

<sup>325</sup> For a discussion of the importance of networks to migratory processes, see McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks*, 7-20.

<sup>326</sup> K.E. Rockey, “Monthly Report-District of Cayes,” November 30, 1919, USNA RG127 E176, Box 1, Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>327</sup> Division Commander, southern Division, “Report on Labor Conditions in the Southern Division,” February 12, 1920, USNA RG 127 E 176 Box 1, Folder: ‘Monthly Reports Jan 1918 – Sep 1921.’

<sup>328</sup> “Un haitiano fallece en la estación de la policia: Una victima del paludismo,” *La Independencia*, August 24, 1918.

<sup>329</sup> Gregorio Rivera Gonzalez, Guardia Rural, Report and Witness Testimony, February 5, 1936, Archivo Provincial de Camagüey: Tribunal de Urgencia (hereafter APCTU) 4/8/2.

1,000 children entered Cuba officially as migrants between 1912 and 1929.<sup>330</sup> As the opening of this chapter indicated, kinship may have influenced Haitian women to travel to Cuba. In June 24, 1924, Eudocia Lafortun married Joseph Redon Rosen, a return migrant from Cuba, in Aux Cayes, Haiti. Later, she moved with him to Cuba permanently.<sup>331</sup>

This grassroots recruitment occurred alongside more formal, larger-scale arrangements. In 1919, recruitment offices existed in Aux Cayes, Port-au-Prince, and St. Marc; “some of them printed their own business cards.”<sup>332</sup> One of these was the Bonnefil Frères firm. In 1912, it established commercial branches in Aux Cayes, Haiti and Santiago de Cuba. By 1920, the firm operated a printing press, as well as “ice plants, moving picture shows, automobile trucks, lighters,” and “agricultural exploitations” in Haiti. They also served as recruiting “agents for the Sugar Companies of ‘Preston’ and ‘Alto Cedro’, Cuba,” and owned their own ships.<sup>333</sup>

In Haiti and other parts of the world, informal migration networks were eventually replaced by state regulation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Adam McKeown argues that globally, “migrants were torn out of informal social networks and institutions” before being “reinsert[ed]...into new matrices of bureaucratic power.” This involved creating the juridical category of “free migrant,” instituting a passport system for identifying individuals, and creating a system of international borders. He argues that these sweeping regulations were motivated by the desire to halt the abuses that occurred in the “unfree,” privately operated systems of Indian and Chinese indenture. Paradoxically, they were also designed to exclude these Asian migrants from entering territories in Europe and the Americas. Although such liberal policies originated

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<sup>330</sup> Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931,” table vii; McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism,” 670.

<sup>331</sup> Joseph Redon Rosen to Juzgado Municipal de Holguín, May 25, 1938, APHMH 25/748/2.

<sup>332</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 5.

<sup>333</sup> n.a., *Haiti 1919-1920: Livre bleu d'Haiti*, 205.

in countries that sought to exclude Asian immigrants, they were instituted via gunboats in colonies throughout the world.<sup>334</sup>

In some ways, the migration policies developed under the U.S. occupation of Haiti follow these larger global trends. Between 1918 and 1923, the Haitian government enacted policies that regulated the mechanics of migration by seeking to eliminate informal networks and institute passport controls. However, there were some key differences. While states around the world eliminated indenture in order to create the juridical category of “free migrant,” this category was officially eliminated in Haiti. In occupied Haiti, a “free migrant” was defined as a laborer going to Cuba without a contract. In order to put an end to this practice, which was widely perceived as being exploitative toward migrants, the Haitian government required migrants to sign contracts with sugar companies before leaving. Interestingly, their arguments were reminiscent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century justifications of Asian indenture systems that had been declared illegal by the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the British Empire by 1920.<sup>335</sup>

Although migration regulations in occupied Haiti required laborers to sign contracts before leaving and even justifying it in parallel ways to previous apologists for indentured labor, the movement was not a throwback to 19<sup>th</sup> century systems of indenture. Rather, it was one manifestation of a newly emerging form of temporary guestworker programs. As systems of indentured labor were formally abolished throughout the world, new programs of temporary labor migration were created. Like the previous system of indenture, these programs required individuals to sign contracts before migrating. They differed, however, in that the new systems represented a partnership between private companies and government institutions. In theory, state oversight would protect workers from the abuses they experienced from recruiters and

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<sup>334</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 3, 11-2.

<sup>335</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 67-70; Mahase, "'Plenty a Dem Run Away'," 465.

employers. Companies would be guaranteed a labor force that could be segregated from the general population and inserted into racially divided labor hierarchies. Finally, workers would be deported at the end of their contract period in order to appease anti-immigrant voices in the receiving society, decrease the likelihood of worker radicalism, and allow sending societies to benefit from returnees' newly acquired cash and skills.<sup>336</sup>

As in other migratory movements, migrants' actions and experiences in Haiti were not necessarily dictated by companies and states, especially during the early attempts at regulation. As the following analysis will show, new regulations did not eliminate migrants' autonomous mobility within and between Haiti and Cuba or the importance of private networks. In Haiti, regulations were less effective in regions marked by thriving private networks, showing the uneven application of new laws. In fact, Haitian migration laws changed in response to migrants' actions. Nor did Haitian government supervision put an end to the abuses previously associated with privately contracted migration. As the following chapters will show, in Cuba, migrants were not segregated from other groups despite company attempts to divide labor hierarchies along racial lines. Migrants also moved relatively easily between plantations, making it difficult for companies to deport workers when contracts expired. In short, the movement of Haitians to Cuba and the laws regulating it shared characteristics with both indentured and temporary forms of contract migration, suggesting more overlap and a stronger relationship between the systems than previously realized. The fact that migrants' actions shaped this transition suggests the need to bring migrants into analyses of policy formations normally understood as the result of the actions of companies and states.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 16-7; Cohen, *Braceros*, 4-7, 9.

<sup>337</sup> For similar recent arguments about the need to bring migrant actions into analyses of policymaking, see Cohen, *Braceros*, 2.

In late 1918, the Haitian government made its first major attempt to regulate migration to Cuba. After the 1918 sugar harvest in Cuba, the Haitian government temporarily banned migration to Cuba because it was believed that return migrants were spreading flu in Haiti. During the short-lived ban, the Haitian government took the opportunity to regulate the process of emigration. Migrants would henceforth be required by law to have contracts in hand before receiving a passport.<sup>338</sup> Some Haitians responded to this legislation by staying put. In early 1919, migration to Cuba was “practically at a stand still as the Haitians of these parts are not anxious to sign contracts which are required by law. The laborers are very reluctant of signing their names to anything as past experiences have made them suspicious.”<sup>339</sup> Haitian observers henceforth distinguished between the migrants who held contracts with Cuban sugar companies, as the law stipulated, and the so-called *émigrants libres* [free emigrants] who requested passports to travel to Cuba on their own accord.<sup>340</sup>

The new legislation had different effects in the regions of Haiti. In the North, with its direct connections to the company-controlled Cuban ports of Antilla and Puerto Padre, contracted emigration became the primary form of travel to Cuba. Of the 3,212 migrants who left via the Northern city of Port-de-Paix in late 1919 and early 1920, about 93% (2,988) made the journey in January and February, the beginning months of the Cuban sugar harvest—suggesting their close ties to the Cuban sugar industry and companies. In the South, where grassroots networks flourished, sugar companies continued to recruit formally but the obligation

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<sup>338</sup> Gonzales to Secretary of State, November 15, 1918.USNA RG59 838.5637. Department of State to American Legation, Havana, January 3, 1919, USNA RG59 838.5637/3.

Blanchard to Secretary of State, January 6, 1919.USNA RG59 838.5637/5.

<sup>339</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, “Monthly Report of Conditions, January 1919,” January 31, 1919, USNA RG127 E176, Box 1, Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>340</sup> Haiti, *Bulletin Officiel du Departement des Relations Extérieures*, 12.

of migrants to have a contract in hand before leaving was largely a dead letter. Indeed, of the 22,394 Haitians who left through the port at Cayes in late 1919 and early 1920, only 22% (5,057) left in January and February. The rest were spread throughout the other months of the year.<sup>341</sup>

In the South of Haiti, migrants and state officials subverted these early passport requirements. In the South, in 1919, an official complained of the frequency with which a migrant “will receive two or three passports for the same voyage, then sell the ones he does not need.” The buyers of these “will insert their own pictures and attempt to get away, and frequently succeed for there is absolutely no way of checking up on passports issued.”<sup>342</sup> Officials complained that it was too expensive to solve this problem since “the necessity...of having a photograph of each emigrant taken and feeding him during the additional time required to obtain the photographs, [and] have properly descriptive passports prepared” would drain state resources. Realizing this, “a quantity of passports is prepared in advance, any photograph at hand is affixed, and any name at all is inserted. This affords opportunity for exactions in connection with the issuance of passports of this kind.”<sup>343</sup>

These regional trends led some officials to claim that the typical Haitian from the North was “more disciplined” because he “demands repatriation when the harvest is finished,” “buys only the strict necessities in Cuba,” and therefore “returns to Haiti with almost all his earnings.” The migrants from the South were considered more prodigal because they “make large purchases before leaving Cuba.” In actuality, such observations probably reflect differences in migrants’

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<sup>341</sup> United States Senate, "United States Senate Inquiry 2," 1361.

<sup>342</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of Gendarmerie, “Monthly Report of Conditions for February,” March 17, 1919, USNA RG127 E176, Box 1, Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>343</sup> A.J. Maumus, Acting Financial Adviser to General Receiver, “Fraud in connection with passports of emigrants,” June 8, 1921, translated and Reprinted in: Senate, "United States Senate Inquiry 2," 1369.



goals, the nature of their contracts, and whether they planned to spend significant time in Cuba or settle permanently in Haiti.<sup>344</sup>

In the years following the passage of the earliest migration regulations, the Haitian government added additional statutes to regulate migration further and increase the state's role in the movement to Cuba. In November 1920, an additional law required migrants to register at the port of debarkation and enter only those "Cuban ports where there is a Haitian consulate."<sup>345</sup> This new legislation intended to protect migrants from abuse, decrease official corruption, and provide revenue for the Haitian government. Unfortunately, it did not achieve these goals. Many migrants did not receive their passports at all.

The present method is that the captain or other officer of the vessels carrying emigrants or the agent of the embarkers delivers to the Haitian consul the passports of the emigrants and \$2 for each passenger, under pretext that it is to pay the Immatriculation tax....the passports are not at any time in the possession of the emigrant nor delivered to him by the consul after control.<sup>346</sup>

This afforded opportunistic consuls the chance to earn significant money through fraud by "oblig[ing] the emigrant to obtain a new passport for his return voyage."<sup>347</sup>

Despite laws passed to regulate migration, it was still conducted by a mixture of companies, informal recruitment, and small ships. In fact, in 1921, well after the law requiring migrants to hold a contract was passed, there were still "several different methods of carrying on

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<sup>344</sup> "Enquête de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme sur notre émigration à Cuba: Interview de Monsieur L. Callard," *Le Nouvelliste*, May 26, 1925. Similar observations about the habits of seasonal vs. permanent migrants have been made in the Dominican Republic. See Martínez, *Decency and Excess*, 47.

<sup>345</sup> United States Senate, "United States Senate Inquiry 2," 1365.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 1365-6.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

the emigration business from Haiti to Cuba.”<sup>348</sup> The Haitian state authorities did not effectively regulate emigration to Cuba until 1923. That year, the Haitian government passed a comprehensive emigration law designed to end “the bad treatment inflicted on Haitian workers, particularly those known as ‘*émigrants libres*’” the “free migrants” who traveled to Cuba outside the auspices of Cuban sugar companies.<sup>349</sup> The transition from informal networks to state bureaucracy was at hand.

The new regulations required all ships to obtain a certificate declaring “seaworthiness and passenger capacity” at an annual cost of 500 gourdes (100 USD). Captains without a certificate would pay a fine of between 100 and 1,000 gourdes for every migrant on board.<sup>350</sup> While state officials saw the law as a corrective to private abuses, others interpreted it as the ruin of private, small-scale initiative. *Le Matin* argued that the new law would “be an advantage for the vessels of great tonnage, but will mean at the same time the ruin of the Haitien Maritime Commerce made by some schooners, small unities, which will not be able to compete with the big steamers belonging to foreign companies.”<sup>351</sup> Indeed, the movement of migrants between Haiti and Cuba would now be carried out by large-capacity, officially-registered ships like the *Nemesis* with a capacity of 262, or the *Wanderer III* and *Haiti*, each with a capacities of 400 migrants.<sup>352</sup> In

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<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 1355.

<sup>349</sup> Haiti, *Bulletin Officiel du Departement des Relations Extérieures*, 12.

<sup>350</sup> American Vice Consul in Charge, Port-au-Prince to U.S. Secretary of State, Washington D.C., “Transmission of voluntary report on the new Law on the Transportation of Laborers from haiti to Work Abroad.” March 22, 1923, USNA RG59 838.56/orig.

<sup>351</sup> Translation and summary of *Le Matin*, April 8, 1924 by Thomas A. Tighe, “Memorandum for the Chief of the Gendarmerie,” April 09, 1924, USNA RG127 E165 Box 5, Folder: Morning Reports of Intelligence to AHC, 1924 1 of 2.

<sup>352</sup> Surveyeur General des Douanes to Receveur General des Douanes, “Nombre de passagers alloues aux Navires Wanderer III-Nemesis et Haiti,” June 11, 1926, NYPL Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: Kurt Fisher Haitian Collection (Additions), (hereafter NYKFHCA) Box 3, Folder 7.

1924, the above-mentioned Bonnefil Frères paid 1,000 gourdes (200 USD) to register two ships.<sup>353</sup>

The 1923 law also required labor recruiters to register with the government, eliminating the practice by which all return migrants became informal contracting agents. Labor recruiters were now required to “pay a license of \$100.00 a year while foreigners must pay for a similar license, \$5,000.00.” In addition, “each emigrant, or the agent in charge must pay a tax to the government of \$8.25” to cover “the cost of an emigrant’s passport, good for a return trip from Cuba to Haiti.”<sup>354</sup> As a result, small-scale labor recruiters and informal social networks were replaced by new migration agents like Homer Howell, a U.S. Marine stationed in Port-de-Paix, who was hired by the United Fruit Company to supervise labor recruiting in the Northern city where he was reportedly very popular.<sup>355</sup>

Rather than catching a ride on a passing sloop and acquiring a second-hand passport with somebody else’s photograph, Haitian migrants now were compelled to travel with companies. Proponents of this highly controlled form of emigration employed the triumphant language of liberty that resounded throughout the globe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only a partnership between states and reputable companies could produce free migration. However, in occupied Haiti, the category of *émigrant libre* was eliminated, not consolidated as in other parts of the world. In Haiti, the occupation government defined freedom as the right of migrants to enter legal contracts with companies for a fixed period of time. These arguments were reminiscent of those that justified the 19<sup>th</sup> century system of East Indian and Chinese indenture that had been

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<sup>353</sup> Haiti, *Bulletin Officiel des finances et du commerce*, 71.

<sup>354</sup> Maurice P. Dunlap, American Consul, Port-au-Prince, “Significance of Haitian Emigration to Cuba,” September 10, 1925, USNA RG59 838.5637/6.

<sup>355</sup> Bach, *Strange Altars*, 99; Belizaire, “Suggestion d’un patriote,” 2; “Question d’émigration,” *Le Matin*, February 23, 1924; “Falleció en un accidente aereo el agente de inmigración de la <<United Fruit>> en Haiti,” *Diario de Cuba*, February 24, 1928.

eliminated just a few years before.<sup>356</sup> For *Le Matin*, freedom entailed a citizen's "right to dispose of his liberty...but not without guarantees and protections to keep him from becoming an object of traffic, exploited by himself and others."<sup>357</sup> In 1927, John Russell, the U.S. High Commissioner of Haiti, sought to limit the ability of Haitians to head to Cuba or companies to recruit. However, he believed that an emigration ban would oppose the constitutional rights of Haitians by restricting their "freedom of movement." Russell declared that requiring Haitians to stay in Haiti would "be construed as virtually making slaves of them" and was therefore not a feasible policy.<sup>358</sup>

For proponents of the new system, these protections would be guaranteed by the partnership forged by sugar companies and the state. *Le Matin* praised the United Fruit Company for providing "fifty cents a day for [migrants'] nourishment." In addition, "the company buys them slippers, pants, shirts, etc. to permit them to debark decently in the neighboring island. And so, little by little, all guarantees will be offered to the emigrant, thanks to the always beneficent intervention of the state."<sup>359</sup> Others were more critical. For *Le Nouvelliste*, the new law "simply kills the individual liberty and rather favors a few sugar plants in Cuba to the prejudice of numerous Haitians."<sup>360</sup>

These new migration regulations did not put an end to old forms of official corruption and migrant abuse. In 1924, an official lamented that "very frequently" a migrant's "passport is lost and the returning emigrant is subject to the regular passage tax of \$2.00 upon entrance at a

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<sup>356</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 67-70.

<sup>357</sup> "Question d'émigration," *Le Matin*, February 23, 1924.

<sup>358</sup> USNA RG59 838.504/5 – John Russell to the Secretary of State, October 28, 1927.

<sup>359</sup> "Question d'émigration," *Le Matin*, February 23, 1924.

<sup>360</sup> Translation and Summary of *Le Nouvelliste*, June 2, 1923 by G.H. Scott, "Memorandum for the Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti," June 4, 1923, USNA RG127 E166 and 170, Box 1, Folder: Reports, Intelligence to AHC 1923.

Haitian port,” suggesting that officials’ previous methods of fleecing migrants survived the new regulations.<sup>361</sup> Despite laws requiring the United Fruit Company to vaccinate workers, whose costs were passed on to migrants, in 1927, “few, if any...were vaccinated.”<sup>362</sup> In addition, the United Fruit Company sent medical personnel to ships, rejecting workers they believed were too weak to be productive.<sup>363</sup>

Abuses were also rampant in the process of returning migrants, even though migration legislation was specifically geared toward preventing them. For instance, in 1928, the United Fruit Company in Cuba was required by law to return the Haitians they had contracted that season. This was the only way to get a return on the money they had deposited. During the harvest season, many Haitians had left the plantation to find work elsewhere. In order to make sure that they returned the proper number of migrants, the company disingenuously announced that work was available on the plantation. As soon as enough Haitians arrived, they were forcibly loaded on a steamer and returned to Haiti. Those who were returned were not necessarily those that had been contracted.<sup>364</sup>

Abuses were also geared toward Haitian women, suggesting that kinship was not the only factor that motivated women to head to Cuba. In 1925, the Haitian League of the Rights of Man and Citizen, a group concerned with the welfare of workers, emigrants, and impoverished youth claimed: “There are Haitian women who are sold to Cuba...at a price which varies...according

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<sup>361</sup> Maurice P. Dunlap, American Consul, Port-au-Prince, “Significance of Haitian Emigration to Cuba,” September 10, 1925, USNA RG59 838.5637/6.

<sup>362</sup> John H. Russell, Port-au-Prince to the U.S. Secretary of State, Washington D.C., October 28, 1927, USNA RG59 837.5538/3

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Letter from T. Godoy, Santiago de Cuba to R.B. Wood, Chaparra Sugar Company, November 15, 1928, Archivo Provincial de Las Tunas, Cuban American Sugar Mills Company (hereafter APLTCASMC), 1/43/444/192, 225.

to their age and other individual conditions.”<sup>365</sup> In a published interview with the league, Monsieur F. Hibbert, Haitian *Chargé d’Affaires* in Cuba, explained that “the mills facilitate the arrival of women and children in order to retain workers.”<sup>366</sup> Some Haitian women were contracted to “clean bottles” in Cuba, which they found out upon arrival, was a euphemism for working as prostitutes for sugar laborers.<sup>367</sup>

The practice of selling young women in Cuba was carried out by Haitian individuals, not just companies. One Haitian woman was arrested in the streets of Santiago de Cuba when she tried to deliver “six young Haitian peasant women who had just arrived” to their buyers.<sup>368</sup> In Niquero in 1928, seventeen-year-old Angela Rios accused her Cuban mother and Haitian stepfather of trying to “sell her or trade her to other Haitians for food or other articles.”<sup>369</sup> Sadly, trafficking of women of various nationalities was not so uncommon in Cuba. In 1925, Cuban immigration officials circulated a report among officials in Oriente, Cuba concerning the need to crack down on *La Trata de Mujeres* (The Trade in Women) of all nationalities.<sup>370</sup> In sum, for those who migrated to Cuba after 1923, the new demands of state regulation were coupled with the old abuses by state officials, private contractors, and companies.

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<sup>365</sup> “La Ligue Haitienne des Droits de L’homme et du Citoyen s’occupe des travailleurs, des émigrés et de l’enfance pauvre,” *Le Nouvelliste*, April 30, 1925.

<sup>366</sup> “Enquête de la Ligue Haitienne pour la Defense des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen sur notre émigration, Interview de Monsieur F. Hibbert.” *Le Nouvelliste*, May 28, 1925.

<sup>367</sup> Pedro Díaz, “Guanamaca,” 36.

<sup>368</sup> “Enquête de la Ligue des Droits de l’Homme sur notre émigration à Cuba: Interview de Monsieur B. Danache,” *Le Nouvelliste*, May 13, 1925.

<sup>369</sup> Juez de Instrucción de Manzanillo to Presidente de la Audiencia de Santiago de Cuba, December 6, 1928, ANC: Audiencia de Santiago (Siglo xx), (hereafter ANCASXX) 46/9/1.

<sup>370</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Comisionado de Inmigración Encargado de la Cuarentena, April 3, 1925, APSGP 786/13/25.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

By identifying the areas of rural Haiti that sent migrants to Cuba and tracing state efforts to regulate the migratory movement, this chapter questions simplistic causal arguments about migration. During the early years of the migratory movement, the major sending areas were distant from cases of land expulsion and rural rebellion that have influenced many previous accounts of Haitian migration to Cuba. Instead, migrant sending areas were marked by a poor system of internal roads and a thriving network of small ships that plied along the coast and connected them to Aux Cayes, the port with strong connections to Santiago de Cuba. Although Haitians took advantage of the networks that linked their country to Cuba before the U.S. occupation, the presence of U.S. troops and the implementation of new policies created new disruptions and opportunities in rural Haiti that motivated different members of Haitian households to obtain land for rent, attend a school, join the Haitian military, or migrate to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, or cities.

Over the course of the occupation, the migratory movement to Cuba became regulated by the Haitian state in response to actions taken by migrants and consuls. The result is that the grassroots, private networks of recruiting and transportation were gradually replaced by state-regulated, centralized methods of recruitment by sugar companies. Although these changes were made in the name of worker welfare and individual liberty, Haitian men and especially women were still subject to both official and private forms of corruption and exploitation as they made their way to the sugar plantations, coffee fields, and urban spaces of Cuba. Haitian migration to Cuba overlapped temporally with indentured migration and guestworker programs. It contained elements of both. Like indenture, many migrants relied on private networks to fund their travel to Cuba. Like guestworker programs, Haitians were contracted to cut cane for sugar companies

for a single season, where they were to be segregated from the larger population and deported. However, by staying in Cuba after the expiration of their contracts, avoiding deportation, and creating social, economic, political, and religious networks with individuals of other nationalities, they defied the major tenets of such programs. It is to the spaces that Haitians inhabited in Cuba to which this study now turns.



#### 4.0 HAITIAN LABORERS ON CUBAN SUGAR PLANTATIONS

Alejo Carpentier's 1927 novel, *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, describes rural Cuba during World War I as a place in which "life is organized according to [sugar's] will." One effect of sugar production is the "new plague" of "ragged Haitians" or "black mercenaries with straw hats and machetes at their belts." When not cutting cane, these immigrants sequester themselves in their *barracones* (labor barracks), the "stone constructions, long like a hangar, with iron window panes" that were originally built for slaves to inhabit. Haitians and other immigrants are also the targets of scorn from Carpentier's protagonist, Menegildo Cue, an Afro-Cuban who drives oxen on the local sugar plantation. He "felt strange among so many blacks with other customs and languages. The Jamaicans were 'snobby' and animals! The Haitians were animals and savages!" Cue also complained that Cubans "were without work since the *braceros* from Haiti accepted incredibly low daily wages!"<sup>371</sup> Carpentier's assertions about the strength of Cuban sugar companies, Haitians' low position as cane cutters, and their isolation from other groups reflect commonly held beliefs in 1920s Cuba that have strongly influenced present-day historical accounts.

As Carpentier attests, the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century witnessed significant transformations in Cuban society that were part and parcel of a major growth in sugar production. In 1898, the United States intervened in Cuba's wars for independence, hastening the defeat of Spain and limiting the victory of the Cuban separatists. Rather than enjoying full

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<sup>371</sup> Carpentier, *Écue-Yamba-Ó*, 18,21,52,65,66.

independence from Spain, Cubans were now subject to a new colonial relationship with the United States. While some sectors of Cuban society questioned the role that sugar should play after independence, a rush of investors and politicians from both Cuba and the United States sought to increase production. The United States, through political control, investment capital, and trade treaties cemented the future of Cuban sugar production. In 1898, Cuba produced 350,000 short tons of sugar. When U.S. troops left the island in 1902, production had more than doubled to 973,000 short tons. Cuban sugar production peaked in 1929, at 5,775,000 short tons.<sup>372</sup>

The renewed phase of sugar production was distinct from previous periods. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, new, modernized mills called *centrales* began replacing the older *ingenios*.<sup>373</sup> These new mills had an increased capacity to grind cane, which they obtained either from cane fields owned by the company or more often by contract from farmers called *colonos*. *Centrales* were especially prevalent in the eastern provinces of Oriente and Camaguey, the new regions of production. Whereas in 1901, 15% of Cuba's sugar was produced in these zones, by the 1920s and 1930s, they were responsible for over half of the sugar crop.<sup>374</sup>

In Oriente and Camaguey, the expansion of sugar production profoundly altered the physical and social landscape. Sugar was sowed in land previously devoted to other crops. Forests were cleared to provide wood for new company buildings and space for more cane fields. Water sources were diverted to supply the needs of the sugar economy and railroads were built to connect distant *colonias* (cane farms) with *centrales*.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom*, 70; McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 36,75,86.

<sup>373</sup> Iglesias García, *Del ingenio al central*.

<sup>374</sup> Santamaría García, *Sin azúcar no hay país*, 419; Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom*, 220.

<sup>375</sup> Funes Monzote, *De bosque a sabana*, Chapters 5-6.

Sugar companies also played a role in the demographic transformation of rural Cuba as plantations attracted immigrants from various parts of the Americas and wider world. Company managers, engineers, sugar experts and even colonists arrived in the eastern part of Cuba from the United States.<sup>376</sup> An even larger influx of workers from Spain, the Canary Islands, China, and other parts of the Caribbean and Latin America provided the labor that powered sugar production. As chapter two demonstrated, during the earliest years of sugar expansion, Cuban planters requested permission to bring in non-white contract laborers from Haiti, the British West Indies and other neighboring islands. Their petitions revived longstanding, racially charged debates about Cuba's labor needs and the ideal demographic makeup of the island.<sup>377</sup>

Despite opposition from Cuban journalists and even individuals within the Cuban government, sugar companies, with the support of the United States government, managed to have Caribbean contract immigration legalized by 1913. As Carpentier's text illustrates, almost half a million immigrants from Haiti, the British West Indies, and other parts of the Caribbean arrived in Cuba during the next two decades. Haitian and British West Indian migrants were heavily concentrated in the provinces of Oriente and Camaguey. At the regional and local level, the effects of sugar production and migration were especially noticeable. From 1907 to 1919, the populations of Oriente and Camaguey increased by 60.6% and 93.6% respectively, making them the fastest growing regions in a country whose overall population increased by 33% in the period. By 1919, Oriente's population had surpassed that of the province of Havana. The influence of migration from other parts of the Caribbean is especially apparent in this process. In 1919, individuals who were not born in Cuba, Spain, the United States, China or Africa

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<sup>376</sup> Vega Suñol, *Norteamericanos En Cuba*, 32-3; Cirules, *Conversación*, 271.

<sup>377</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 22-42; Naranjo Orovio and García Gonzalez, *Racismo e inmigración en Cuba en el siglo xix*.

represented 5.9% of the population of Oriente province and 4.7% in Camaguey. These immigrants were even more heavily concentrated in areas with large sugar mills. For instance, they represented 8.1% of the inhabitants of Banes, the site of the United Fruit Company plantation in Oriente. In Las Tunas, the site of the Chaparra sugar mill, they made up 11% of the population in 1919.<sup>378</sup>

Caribbean immigrant laborers, whom Carpentier depicted as “black mercenaries with straw hats and machetes at their belts,” were often conceptualized as pawns of the sugar companies. Many Cubans accused immigrants of cutting cane for low wages and blocking Cuban workers’ attempts at demanding higher salaries. In 1916, *La Política Cómica* published a satirical column about the “tourists of color” who were arriving regularly from Haiti and Jamaica. They reportedly came “to Cuba to enjoy themselves cutting cane, accepting for sport a lower daily wage than what is paid” to Cubans.<sup>379</sup>

Haitian immigrants, even more than other groups, were associated strongly with the stereotype of impoverished cane cutters who remained distant from other groups. Santiago’s *Diario de Cuba* used a combination of racial and economic logic to explain why Haitians were particularly apt for cane cutting. “The cane needs Haitian arms,” argues the newspaper, since cane cutting “is a work to which races of a superior civilization do not adapt...Sugar cannot be produced in Cuba by paying a higher salary than the one for which Haitians work.”<sup>380</sup> In 1928, during a brief emigration ban from Haiti, the Cuban commercial press wondered “Who would take the place of the Haitians in the cane fields, since it is well known that Cubans will not cut cane?” “Cuban sugar growers,” they added, “could not afford to pay [the] higher wages” Cubans

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<sup>378</sup> Cuba, *Census of the Republic of Cuba 1919*, 286, 90, 434.

<sup>379</sup> “Turistas de color: El sport de tumbar caña,” *La Política Cómica*, March 16, 1916.

<sup>380</sup> “¡El haitiano es el único inmigrante necesario en Cuba!: Notas del momento” *Diario de Cuba*. August 23, 1928.

would inevitably demand.<sup>381</sup> A recruiter in charge of “contracting and bringing braceros for the labors of the *zafra* [sugar harvest]” for the Santa Lucía Sugar Company was told to hire “whomever you can...as long as they are Haitian or a Jamaican who is purely a laborer.”<sup>382</sup> The statement illustrates the common practice in which British West Indians, despite their different islands of origin, were often called “Jamaicans” at the same time that they had a reputation for moving out of cane cutting.<sup>383</sup> Haitians, on the other hand, required no contingencies. They were *ipso facto* cane cutters. Thus Haitians, even more than British West Indians or Cubans, were relegated to cutting sugar cane.

Company control over workers also manifested itself in administrators’ attempts to segregate workers on plantations, where strong associations between immigrants’ nationalities and specific labor roles held sway. Employing a technique originating in the period of slavery and prevalent elsewhere in the Americas, Cuban plantation managers sought to divide workers along racial, national or ethnic lines to prevent mobilization across labor sectors. Such divisions played a strong role establishing and reinforcing racial hierarchies based on the putative skills and characteristics of each group.<sup>384</sup> Reports by company administrators seem to confirm this phenomenon in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Cuba. Frank Garnett, the superintendent of the Cuba Company in Camaguey described his decision “to house [Chinese laborers] in the *batey* separate from all other labor. Chinese are particularly suited to [work in the sugar centrifuges], and it should put

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<sup>381</sup> Curtis to the Secretary of State, July 26, 1928, USNA RG59 837.5538/ 11.

<sup>382</sup> Labor Recruiter Certificate of Timoteo Dixon, signed by Fernando Cuesta y mora, Secretario de la Administración Provincial de Oriente, March 23, 1928, APSGP 311/1/2. Jefe de la Jurada, Central Santa Lucia to Timoteo Dixón, March 14, 1928, APSGP 311/5/1.

<sup>383</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 82-4; Chailloux Laffita and Whitney, "British subjects y pichones en Cuba," 57; Wynter, "Jamaican Labor Migration to Cuba," 240.

<sup>384</sup> McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 105-7; Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio* II, 8; Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work*, xi; Esch and Roediger, "One Symptom of Originality," 4; Giovannetti, "Grounds of Race," 16-18.

an end to strikes in this department of the sugar house.”<sup>385</sup> Other officials from the same company describe cartmen who “are mostly Cubans and refuse to sleep in the same quarters with Haytians and Jamaicans.”<sup>386</sup> The ideal plantation labor hierarchy, on which Haitians were said to inhabit the lowest rung, holds strong parallels with slavery in Cuban society. Despite the technological and organizational transformations in the Cuban sugar industry in the period after abolition, the task and organization of cane cutting did not change noticeably.<sup>387</sup> Furthermore, as Carpentier’s text shows, Haitians were associated with barracones, the barracks that were built to house slaves during the apex of Cuban slave society. Manuel Moreno Fraginals called them “the maximum symbol of slavery’s barbarism.”<sup>388</sup> This association between Haitians and slavery was so strong that some Cubans believe that it was Haitians who had brought the barracones to Cuba. The national press contributed to consolidating this association, referring to Haitians as the only workers who would perform the labor that former slaves had been forced to do.<sup>389</sup>

The historiography of sugar production, perhaps unwittingly, has echoed many of the statements produced by Cuban nationalists, press, and company administrators from the 1910s

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<sup>385</sup> Frank Garnett, Superintendent to George H. Whigham, Vice President, the Cuba Company, New York. October 22, 1913, University of Maryland: Cuba Company Papers (hereafter UMCCP), Box 9, Folder 4c.

<sup>386</sup> Wm. W. Craib, Executive Agent, Jatibonico to George H. Whigham, Esq., President, The Cuba Co., NY. June 02, 1916, UMCCP 29/3b/leo-139.

<sup>387</sup> García Rodríguez, *Entre haciendas y plantaciones*; Dye, *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production*; Moreno Fraginals, *El Ingenio I*, 98.

<sup>388</sup> Moreno Fraginals, *El Ingenio II*, 74.

<sup>389</sup> “¡El haitiano es el único inmigrante necesario en Cuba!: Notas del momento” *Diario de Cuba*, August 23, 1928. For a discussion of the historical legacies of barracones in the Caribbean see Giovannetti, “Grounds of Race,” 23-4. For scholars who describe Haitian migrants in terms of slavery see Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, xi; Alvarez Estévez, *Azúcar e inmigración*, 40; Gómez Navia, “Lo haitiano en lo cubano,” 8; Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 216; Sevillano Andrés, *Trascendencia de una cultura marginada*, 16, 29.

<sup>389</sup> Gómez Navia, “Lo haitiano en lo cubano,” 15; Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931,” 27; Berenguer Cala, *El Gagá de Barrancas*, 9; Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 248.

and 1920s.<sup>390</sup> Scholars argue that Haitians' low literacy rates, inability to speak English, non-Christian religious practices and lack of labor-related skills made them less likely than British West Indians to move up in sugar hierarchies or out of sugar work entirely.<sup>391</sup> Others emphasize cultural differences between Haitians and other groups, which only strengthened anti-Haitian racism. "Haitians were segregated in social relations. To the Haitian immigrant, marginalization was applied with the most crudeness, not just by white components of society, but even by Cuban mestizos and blacks who rejected them."<sup>392</sup> Other scholars point to Haitians' lack of participation in labor unions as proof of their isolation.<sup>393</sup> Though scholars have studied the organizations of Afro-Cubans, British West Indians, and other immigrant groups, they have not analyzed the organizational efforts of Haitian immigrants.<sup>394</sup>

The most recent scholarship on the Cuban sugar industry has begun to show the risks of assuming that Cuban nationalist statements or company administrators' goals accurately reflect the reality of life on a plantation. Gillian McGillivray argues that many of the claims made by 1920s Cuban nationalists about the foreign domination of the sugar industry oversimplify the complex relationships between foreign capital, small farmers, Cuban politicians, other local actors and the Cuban state. She and others claim that not all mills were large enough to segregate their workers.<sup>395</sup> Similarly, Barry Carr demonstrates that sugar companies "never succeeded in totally dominating their workforces" due to the high degree of labor mobility and

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<sup>390</sup> Gómez Navia, "Lo haitiano en lo cubano," 15; Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," 27; Berenguer Cala, *El Gagá de Barrancas*, 9; Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 248.

<sup>391</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Comparison of Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 609; Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 246.

<sup>392</sup> Gómez Navia, "Lo haitiano en lo cubano," 15.

<sup>393</sup> Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 248.

<sup>394</sup> Giovannetti, "The Elusive Organization Of "Identity", 4-18; Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*.

<sup>395</sup> McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, xvii, 118-21, 61-63; Giovannetti, "Grounds of Race," 19.

the existence of “alternatives to exclusive dependence on wage labor.”<sup>396</sup> Taken together, these studies suggest that Haitians’ experiences should not be reduced to categorical descriptions of isolated cane cutters at the bottom of labor hierarchies based merely on the stereotypes of the Cuban press or the pretensions of sugar companies. Finally, scholars of late 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary Cuba have shown that many Haitians remained in Cuba after the mass deportations of the 1930s, suggesting that remaining Haitians had more time to establish communities in rural Cuba than previously realized. The Cuban census of 1970 showed the existence of 22,579 Haitians on the island.<sup>397</sup>

This chapter seeks to reconstruct Haitian sugar workers’ experiences and activities, which cannot be reduced to just cane cutting. To begin with, field workers were not a homogenous mass. Formal company hierarchies, informal distinctions among cane cutters, and different types of cane cutting produced different experiences and wage scales, even among field laborers. Nor were all Haitian sugar laborers employed in this pursuit. They worked in other areas of sugar production as well, including specialized positions in centrales. Although participation in labor unions appears to have been minimal, Haitian workers developed a range of strategies to navigate the harsh world of cutting sugar cane. These included moving between farms, holding out for higher wages and negotiating directly with their colonos. Outside of their work hours, Haitians also employed strategies to diversify their economic activities and exert some control over their lives, despite periodic attempts by company and state officials to suppress them. Through these activities, Haitians constituted social and economic networks on Cuban sugar plantations that frequently cut across national lines. Whether cutting cane, working in other aspects of sugar production, or engaging in alternative forms of labor and leisure, Haitians had

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<sup>396</sup> Carr, "Omnipotent and Omnipresent?," 262.

<sup>397</sup> Espronceda Amor, *Parentesco, inmigración y comunidad*, 20-1.



exchanges with individuals of other nationalities, dispelling the myth of their isolation and segregation on plantations.

#### 4.1 HAITIAN LABORERS ON CUBAN SUGAR PLANTATIONS

In Cuba, the label “Haitian” carried strong connotations of cane cutters for journalists and company officials, though it was not necessarily coterminous with a person born in Haiti (or one of their descendants).<sup>398</sup> Company administrators often applied the term to denote any poor, black, seasonal cane cutter regardless of actual birthplace or national identity. In 1919, for instance, Everett C. Brown, a United Fruit Company engineer spoke of “Haitian cane cutters” who would “get back from Porto Rico [sic] and South America.”<sup>399</sup> Brown’s statement reduces a complex hemispheric circulation of laborers from different parts of the Americas into a misleading category of “Haitian cane cutters.”<sup>400</sup>

At other moments, company officials referred to specific groups of black cane cutters as Haitians without knowing their national origins. During the 1905 sugar harvest, a fire broke out in the cane fields near the San Miguel Sugar Mill in Guantánamo. Salvador G. Rodiles y Vilallonga, the Cuban-born *mayoral* (manager) told officials that it began “very close to five black Haitians who were cutting cane.”<sup>401</sup> A Cuban *capataz* (foreman) identified them as José

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<sup>398</sup> McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 113.

<sup>399</sup> Everett C. Brown to Ethel and Susie Brown, October 11, 1919, University of Florida: Everett C. Brown Collection (hereafter UFECB), Box 1, Folder 2-Cuba.

<sup>400</sup> Petras, *Jamaican Labor Migration*; Putnam, *The Company They Kept*; Chomsky, *West Indian Workers*; Richardson, *Panama Money in Barbados*; Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America*, 87-90.

<sup>401</sup> “Declara Salvador G. Rodiles y Vilallonga,” Juzgado de Instrucción de Guantánamo. February 16, 1905, ANCASXX 25/5/4-6.

Gabriel, Octavio Posiná, José Figueroa, Plácido Belen and José Louis, though he added that only “the first two and the last one [are] Haitians.”<sup>402</sup> For those who did not know laborers personally, all seasonal cane cutters could be described as Haitians. The result is that Haitians’ marginalization was overstated.

Although most Haitian-born individuals cut cane, they also performed other types of labor on sugar plantations. Haitians served as labor recruiters for sugar firms seeking to attract labor away from other companies. These individuals gathered at railroad stations when cane cutters were being transported to “try to bring them to other centrales.”<sup>403</sup> D. Beauville Ferailer, a Haitian, received a salary from the United Fruit Company to work in this capacity.<sup>404</sup> Odelon Placido and Prevenio Laine recruited cane cutters for the Cuban-Canadian Sugar Company (see figure 4).<sup>405</sup>

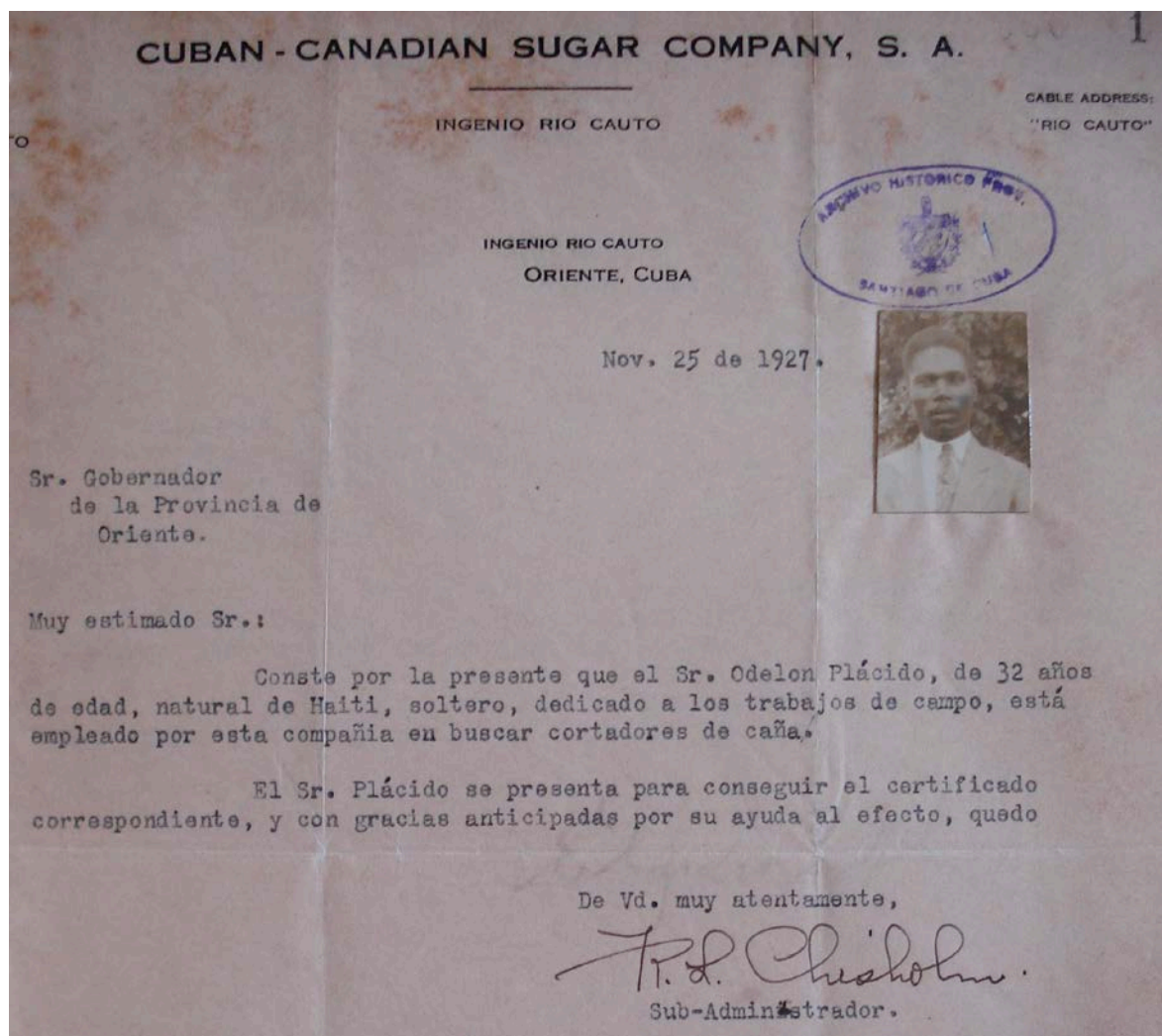
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<sup>402</sup> “Declara Enrique Perdomo,” Juzgado de Instrucción de Guantánamo, February 16, 1905, ANCASXX 25/5/7-8.

<sup>403</sup> Letter to Sr. Rafael Aguirre, Administrador del ‘Central Palma,’ signed by S.S., March 8, 1919, APSGP 307/21/3.

<sup>404</sup> Labor Recruiting Certificate for D. Beauville Ferailer signed by Rafael Barceló y Reyes, Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente. March 14, 1930, APSGP 311/20/1.

<sup>405</sup> Sub-Administrador, Cuban-Canadian Sugar Company, SA. To Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, November 25, 1927, APSGP 309/12/1; Labor Recruiting Certificate for Prevenio Laine signed by Fernando Cuesta y Mora, Secretario de la Administración Provincial de Oriente, December 3, 1927, APSGP 309/15/2.



**Figure 4 Document Permitting Odelon Plácido to Recruit Cane Cutters in Cuba**

**Source: Sub-Administrador, Cuban-Canadian Sugar Company, SA. To Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, 25-nov-1927. APSGP 309/12/1**

Outside of cutting cane, one of the most common jobs for Haitians on sugar plantations was transporting cane from field to factory. As early as 1917, Haitian-born José Miguel drove oxen

on the United Fruit Company plantation in Banes.<sup>406</sup> Eugenio Luis performed the same job there over a decade later.<sup>407</sup> Haitians San Luis, Ramón Alfonso, and Alejandro Sanchez also worked as ox-drivers for firms like the Van Horne Agricultural Company and the Antilla Sugar Company.<sup>408</sup>

Haitians also worked inside the *centrales* where cane stalks were converted into sugar granules, sites previously considered to have been off limits to Haitians, just as they had been to previous generations of slaves.<sup>409</sup> After cane was brought into the central of the Fidelity Sugar Company, Haitian-born Marcos Santiago lifted and transported it to begin the process of transformation.<sup>410</sup> After the juice was extracted from cane stalks in the central San German, Haitian-born Enrique Simon worked with the bagasse (leftover parts of cane stalks), which could be burned for fuel.<sup>411</sup> In the central Tacajó, Haitian-born Estrad Avignon worked in the boiler house where cane juice was heated to eliminate impurities.<sup>412</sup> Haitians Maeny Sterling and Andres Domingo worked in the centrifuges in the central San German crystallizing the sugar granules and separating (purging) them from the honey.<sup>413</sup> Haitians also worked a number of odd

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<sup>406</sup> Work Accident Report for José Miguel, August 27, 1917, Archivo Provincial de Holguín: Juzgado de Primera Instancia de Holguín (hereafter APHJPIH) 290/4962/1.

<sup>407</sup> Work Accident Report for Eugenio Luis, March 11, 1932, APHJPIH 302/5577/1,14.

<sup>408</sup> Work Accident Report for San Luis, March 7, 1930, APHJPIH 296/5284/1,10. Work Accident Report for Ramon Alfonso, February 18, 1931, APHJPIH 300/5453/1,5. Work Accident Report for Alejandro Sanchez, September 3, 1933, APHJPIH 303/5625/9,13.

<sup>409</sup> Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century*, 71.

<sup>410</sup> Work Accident Report for Marcos Santiago, May 5, 1928, APHJPIH 293/5144/2,5,7.

<sup>411</sup> Work Accident Report for Enrique Simon, May 13, 1928, APHJPIH 290/4987/2,10.

<sup>412</sup> Work Accident Report for Estrad Avignon, August 13, 1922, APHJPIH 292/5078/1-2,4-5.

<sup>413</sup> Work Accident Report for Maeny Sterling, February 18, 1929, APHJPIH 294/5170/1.

Work Accident Report for Andres Domingo, March 13, 1933, APHJPIH 303/5657/1. For a full description of converting cut cane into sugar granules see Moreno Fragnals, *El Ingenio I*, 105-25.

jobs inside sugar centrales. José Luco was a mason in the central Canarias near Holguín.<sup>414</sup> Jesus Maria cooked and served drinks as a company employee inside the central San German.<sup>415</sup>

In centrales, Haitian-born laborers worked alongside individuals of other nationalities, disproving the notion that companies were able to divide workers strictly along national lines. José Salas, a mason in the dumper truck [*basculador*] in the Central Tacajó, worked alongside Félix Dias, from Venezuela.<sup>416</sup> In the same central, Haitian-born carpenter Alfredo Ayes worked with Jamaican-born Dean François.<sup>417</sup> Antonio Luis worked with horses for the Fidelity Sugar Company with a Canary Islander named Antonio Hernandez.<sup>418</sup> The above-mentioned Estrad Avignon worked in the boilers in the Central Tacajó with Francisco Weiner, an immigrant from Jamaica.<sup>419</sup>

Although Haitians' labor in centrales was more significant than previous historians recognize, the vast majority cut cane. Like their counterparts in centrales, Haitian cane cutters worked alongside individuals of other nationalities. In Guantánamo in 1933, Haitian-born Andres Felix cut cane alongside Julio Maturrell and Fructuoso Mendoza, two Cubans whom he knew personally.<sup>420</sup> However, the differences among cane cutters were not limited to their

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<sup>414</sup> Work Accident Report for José Luco, October 08, 1919, APHJPIH 292/5058/4.

<sup>415</sup> Work Accident Report for Jesus Maria, February 8, 1929, AP Holguín: Juzgado de Primera Instancia de Holguín. Leg. 294/5166/1.

<sup>416</sup> "Declaración de José Salas," and "Declaración de Félix Dias," August 15, 1922, APHJPIH 292/5077/5-6.

<sup>417</sup> "Declaración de Alfredo Ayes," and "Declaración de Dean François," July 27, 1922. APHJPIH 292/5076/5-6.

<sup>418</sup> "Declaración del Obrero: Antonio Luis," April 28, 1931 and "Declaración del testigo: Antonio Hernandez," May 9, 1931, APHJPIH 300/ 5505/8, 12.

<sup>419</sup> Work Accident Report for Estrad Avignon, August 13, 1922, APHJPIH 292/5078/1-2,4-5.

<sup>420</sup> "Instructiva del Acusado: Andres Felix y no Pie." April 30, 1932; "Declaración de Julio Maturrell," May 1, 1933, "Declaración de Fructuoso Mendoza." April 1, 1933, Juzgado de Instrucción de Guantánamo, Archivo Provincial de Santiago: Audiencia Territorial de Oriente (hereafter APSATO) 348/2544/6, 10-1.

national origins. Even among Haitian cane cutters, variations in age, skill level, status, and wages existed. As 19 year-old males born in Haiti, Julian Fis, José Mariano, Mario Luis, and Manuel Martínez fit the classic image of those cutting cane in Cuban fields.<sup>421</sup> Indeed, from 1912 to 1929, over 90% of the Haitian immigrants who arrived in Cuba were between the ages of 14 and 45.<sup>422</sup> Nevertheless, Haitians and individuals of other nationalities worked in the fields into middle and old age. In 1933, Charles Mani, a Jamaican, was cutting cane for the Fidelity Sugar Company near Holguín at the age of 50.<sup>423</sup> In the same year, Haitian-born Andres Felix cut cane on a plantation in Guantánamo at the age of 60.<sup>424</sup> In 1941, Haitians Enrique Martinez, Alejandro Luis, Juan Batista, and Miguel Mariano were still working as cane cutters on the colonia Caonao in Esmeralda, Camaguey at the ages of 50, 68, 70, and 71 respectively.<sup>425</sup>

Cane cutters were also divided by their degree of skill, which largely derived from their previous work in Haitian sugar fields. Although sugar production in early-20<sup>th</sup> Century Haiti was less prevalent than growing coffee and other crops, some migrants arrived in Cuba with prior experience cutting cane. H.M. Pilkington, an employee of the American Development Company in Haiti noted: “a very large percentage of the vast number of people...who migrated

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<sup>421</sup> Work Accident Report for Julian Fis, February 26, 1929, APHJPIH 294/5173/1; Work Accident Report for José Mariano, April 24, 1930, APHJPIH 296/5308/83; Work Accident Report for Mario Luis, April 27, 1930, APHJPIH 297/5325/1,9; Work Accident Report for Manuel Pol, June 12, 1930, APHJPIH 297/5345/6.

<sup>422</sup> Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931,” Table VII.

<sup>423</sup> Work Accident Report for Charles Mani, March 6, 1933, APHJPIH 303/5654/1,15.

<sup>424</sup> Instructiva del Acusado: Andres Felix y no Pie: Juzgado de Instrucción de Guantánamo. April 30, 1932 [Date incorrectly printed. Other files in the case are marked 1933] APSATO 348/2544/6.

<sup>425</sup> “Diligencia firmado por Francisco Chirino, Orlando Pérez Perna, José D. Barcelas Díaz, April 3, 1941, APCTU 7/20/P.3.

from Haiti to Cuba as skilled cane cutters were educated in this line by the Haitian-American Sugar Co.”<sup>426</sup>

Cane cutters were also divided by formal and informal hierarchies in the cane fields. Haitian-born Luis Agosto, like individuals of other nationalities, served as a *capataz* (foremen) in the cane fields.<sup>427</sup> In addition to cutting cane, these individuals directed other workers in the field and often served as liaisons between laborers and police. On the colonia San Ramon in 1936, a conflict between two Haitian workers resulted in the wounding of one by a gunshot. Antonio Pie, the Haitian-born *capataz*, arrived at the scene of the fight before the police and spoke to both workers. Although Pie did not witness the events, he explained the details to the rural guard, who accepted his narrative and did not take testimony from the actual individuals involved.<sup>428</sup> *Capataces* also received higher wages than other cane cutters. The aforementioned *capataz* Luis Agosto received approximately \$2.00 a day during the 1930 harvest. During the same month on the same colonia, Ignacio Cuba, another Haitian cane cutter, received only \$1.50.<sup>429</sup>

Alongside company hierarchies were unofficial markers of status recognized by workers themselves. Most notably, experienced cane cutters who achieved relative success in Cuba often called themselves *viejos* (old men).<sup>430</sup> This nickname also appears in Haitian novels and newspapers in the period to describe return-migrants who wore nice clothes and carried

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<sup>426</sup> United States Senate, “Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo 1, 790.

<sup>427</sup> Work Accident Report for Luis Agosto, April 15, 1930, APHJPIH 296/5308/51, 59-60.

<sup>428</sup> “Testimonio de Alberto Rios y Diego Rodriguez, Soldados de la Guardia Rural,” February 24, 1936, APCTU 4/4/1.

<sup>429</sup> Work Accident Report for Luis Agosto, April 15, 1930, APHJPIH 296/5308/51, 59-60.

Work Accident Report for Ignacio Cuba, April 24, 1930, APHJPIH 296/5308/66, 75.

<sup>430</sup> Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931,” 51.

money.<sup>431</sup> Haitian workers who self-identified as *viejos* demanded better treatment and better labor conditions. For instance, Haitian-born Juan Bautista, although only 24 years old, declared that “he was already very *viejo* in Cuba” to explain his refusal to travel to a distant field and work during his leisure hours.<sup>432</sup>

Officially recognized distinctions between *capataces* and regular cane cutters were not the only salient factors in determining wages. Wages for field work also differed according to sugar prices in the world market, the time of year, and the company for which one worked. Among these, the international demand for sugar on the world market was perhaps the most important factor. In 1917, as demand and prices for sugar reached unprecedented heights as a result of World War I, Haitian cane cutters made between \$2.00 and \$3.00 per day working for the United Fruit Company.<sup>433</sup> In 1933, during a period of low prices due to worldwide economic depression and overproduction on Cuban plantations, wages in the area ranged between 30 and 80 cents per day.<sup>434</sup>

Wages also reflected the seasonal variations in sugarcane growing and sugar production. During the *zafra* (harvest season), which began in January and varied in length each year, cane stalks were cut as close to the ground as possible and hauled into the central for grinding. During the *tiempo muerto* (dead season), when mills did not grind cane, the smaller numbers of field laborers who stayed on plantations engaged in cleaning the cane stalks to prevent overgrowth. During the 1929 *zafra*, Haitians Elias Gonzalez and Manuel Agostine each received

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<sup>431</sup> “En deux mots,” *La Garde*, June 27, 1937; Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, xi, 114. See Cineas, *Le drame*; Casseus, *Viejo*; Marcelin and Thoby-Marcelin, *Canpé-Vert*.

<sup>432</sup> “Republica de Cuba, Acta” Signed by Aguedo Peña, Jefe Puesto Actuante, Cab Esc 14, G,R, Ier Dto, Militar, Emilio Puche, Guara Jurado, Acusador, SU Juan Batista, Marca, Acusado,” May 25, 1929, “Declaración de José Brown,” May 29, 1929, ANCASXX 29/1/1, 16.

<sup>433</sup> Compiled from Work Accident Reports in APHJPIH for 1917.

<sup>434</sup> Compiled from Work Accident Reports in APHJPIH for 1933.



\$1.50 a day cutting cane on lands belonging to the Antilla Sugar Company.<sup>435</sup> On the same colonia during the *tiempo muerto* just a few months later, Haitian-born Luis Fis earned \$1.20 to clean the cane.<sup>436</sup> Fis' salary during the dead season, although lower than what was earned during the *zafra*, was still higher than what other companies in the same province were paying. On a field belonging to the Van Horne Agricultural Company, another Haitian, Antonio Luis, earned only \$1.00 per day cleaning cane that year.<sup>437</sup>

Despite pervasive accusations in the Cuban press to the contrary, most historians argue that Haitians received the same wages as native workers for similar activities. Alejandro Garcia and Oscar Zanetti support this thesis, although they hypothesize that when the sugar industry declined and anti-immigrant sentiments reached their peak, "it's possible that the [United Fruit] Company took advantage of the situation by some measure and paid lower salaries" to immigrant laborers.<sup>438</sup> In fact, available individual wage data suggests the merits of their hypothesis and the need for further research on this subject. In periods of stable prices and normal sugar production, Haitians and laborers of other nationalities received the same wages. During the 1919 *zafra*, both Haitian and Jamaican cane cutters received \$3.00 per day on United Fruit Company fields. During the harvest of 1933, Jamaican laborer Charles Mani received 40 cents for every 100 arrobas of cane cut from the Cuba Company. Haitians working for the same company, however, received only 20 cents.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Work Accident Report for Elias Gonzalez, March 3, 1929, APHJPIH 294/5178/1; Work Accident Report for Manuel Agostine, March 3, 1929, APHJPIH 294/5177/1.

<sup>436</sup> Work Accident Report for Luis Fis, November 26, 1929, APHJPIH 295/5217/1,8.

<sup>437</sup> Work Accident Report for Antonio Luis, December 03, 1929, APHJPIH 294/5205/1,10.

<sup>438</sup> Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 247.

<sup>439</sup> Work Accident Report for Charles Mani, March 06, 1933, APHJPIH 303/5654/1,15; Work Accident Report for Santiago Pérez, February 20, 1933, APHJPIH 303/5643/1,13; Work Accident Report for José Domingo, February 24, 1933, APHJPIH 303/5645/1; Work Accident Report for Emilio Pol, March 2, 1933, APHJPIH 303/5649/1,12,15.

Although cane cutters received the lowest wages on company pay scales, they worked longer hours than other employees on the plantation. Everett Brown, a United Fruit Company engineer from the United States, explained to his wife that he worked 8 hours a day “from 7-11 a.m.: 1-5 pm in the office.” *Mayorales* and other field managers began their day at 6 and worked for 9 hours. “The niggers,” he said “[work] 10 hours a day.”<sup>440</sup> In other places, it could be as long as fourteen hours.<sup>441</sup>

Cutting cane is a strenuous and onerous activity even in optimal conditions. As groups of men repeatedly swung their machetes for long hours, accidents were common. While cutting or cleaning cane, shards of cane stalk and pieces of wood flew into the air and hit workers’ faces and bodies. After detaching stalks from the ground, workers grabbed them for further chopping and trimming, sometimes grasping hidden thorns and piercing their hands. At other moments, workers missed their targets, producing painful machete slices on legs, arms, and fingers. Finally, the day’s sweat was often enough to send the machete flying out of a worker’s hands entirely, causing injury to themselves or others.<sup>442</sup>

The inherent difficulties of cutting cane on a massive scale were compounded for Haitians and workers of other nationalities by company abuse. One of the most notorious examples of sugar company abuse was the payment of workers with *vales* (vouchers) instead of cash. In 1923, Cuban officials complained that sugar companies were distributing *vales* “instead of daily wages” which workers were forced to use “to buy merchandise” in company stores. In some cases, “these documents were being circulated in establishments in the communities close by.” Although such practices had been outlawed in 1909, there were periodic reports of sugar

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<sup>440</sup> Everett C. Brown to Ethel and Susie Brown, August 17, 1919, UFECB 1/2-Cuba.

<sup>441</sup> Guanche and Moreno, *Caidije*, 28.

<sup>442</sup> All of these injuries appear with frequency among cane cutters of various nationalities in work accident reports in APHJPIH.

and other companies issuing them in subsequent decades.<sup>443</sup> At other moments, company and state officials showed their utter disregard for Haitian laborers. In 1923, Haitian worker Edgard Zéphyr “was killed by a train loaded with cane.” Rather than reporting the accident, Zéphyr was “buried during the night by the Police.”<sup>444</sup> The fact that these abuses were investigated, however, suggests that the control of company and state officials was not unlimited.

One result of working in harsh conditions and receiving wages according to world sugar prices was the poverty and hunger that rural workers faced. When the Central Almeida announced it would only grind limited amounts of cane in 1928, people in the area “feared the phantasm of hunger would appear as soon as the mill ceased its labors.”<sup>445</sup> One U.S. observer noted how poverty hit some groups harder than others. When “the valley was filled with hunger. The Americans, we ate well. Those who suffered most were Antilleans and Cubans.”<sup>446</sup> Even as early as 1922, there were cases of people like Haitian Julio Pie. He was “without work and hungry,” when he tried to drown himself by jumping off of a dock into water in Santiago de Cuba.<sup>447</sup> In Guantánamo in August 1928 an unknown Haitian worker died of bronchitis because

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<sup>443</sup> Gobernador Provincial de Oriente to Alcalde Municipal de Holguín, October 13, 1923, APSGP 308/9/3; Juez de Instrucción, Guantánamo to Presidente de la Audiencia de Oriente, September 22, 1917, ANCASXX 1/5/1; “Declaración de Tirdo Marañón Vivanco [Las Tunas],” October 22, 1934, Archivo Provincial de Las Tunas: Juzgado de Victoria de Las Tunas (hereafter APLTJVL) 103/103/1408/6; “La verdadera situación del personal del central Almeida,” *Diario de Cuba*, January 21, 1933.

<sup>444</sup> Edmond Laporte to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, January 12, 1923, APSGP 376/14/ 1.

<sup>445</sup> “Los vecinos del central Almeida temen que aparezca el fantasma del hambre cuando cese sus labores el ingenio,” *Diario de Cuba*, March 22, 1928.

<sup>446</sup> Cirules, *Conversación*, 175-6. See also: “Los vecinos del central Almeida temen que aparezca el fantasma del hambre cuando cese sus labores el ingenio,” *Diario de Cuba*, March 22, 1928.

<sup>447</sup> “La ciudad de Santiago al minuto: Un haitiano quiso ahogarse,” *El Cubano Libre*, January 23, 1922.

he was “without any of the necessary resources for its treatment.”<sup>448</sup> In the 1930s, when conditions in the sugar industry were depressed throughout the country, a newspaper reported that the Central Almeida was not even solvent enough to pay its employees. As a result “many workers have died of hunger.”<sup>449</sup> No wonder then, that songs in rural Haiti described Cuba as a place where death was a very real possibility.

Céline was a beautiful girl, Céline!  
Céline made her toilet in a gourd,  
She threw the water into the roadway,  
That was for a man to see.  
Céline my dear!  
If it were in Quantanamo, you would have died!”<sup>450</sup>

Another was just as powerful:

They sent me to Cuba  
To die there  
The Virgin of Charity says no  
I’m not afraid of dying, oh!”<sup>451</sup>

Despite these difficult conditions, historians have shown that Haitians rarely participated in labor organizations. Although there are instances in which Haitians interacted with, and even joined, different labor unions, this does not seem to be the most common way they coped with the harshness of life in Cuba.<sup>452</sup> Haitians’ minimal participation in labor unions, however, did

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<sup>448</sup> “En la finca ‘Chapala’ fallece un haitiano sin asistencia médica,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 15, 1928.

<sup>449</sup> Salvador Rivas, “Si el central ‘Almeida’ no hace zafra este año, no es culpa de ningún empleado ni obrero,” *Diario de Cuba*, February 10, 1933.

<sup>450</sup> Courlander, *Haiti Singing*, 172-3. Lyrics translated by Courlander. For a critical interpretation of Courlander’s book, see Largey, *Vodou Nation*, 206-7.

<sup>451</sup> Moral, *Le paysan haitien*, 70.

<sup>452</sup> See Gómez-Navia, “Lo haitiano en lo cubano,” 22-3. Cuban judicial records also contain cases when Haitians interacted with union members, though they usually denied union affiliation to authorities, making it difficult to know their organizing activities with precision. See for instance, the case of Emmanuel Foucand, who was arrested by police in 1934 for carrying Communist party pamphlets but denied having any knowledge of their

not preclude them from creating their own strategies for navigating the harsh work environment of the Cuban sugar industry. Historians have shown that one of the primary ways for sugar laborers to exert control over their labor was to burn cane. This created work since burned cane had to be processed immediately. It also eliminated excess growth and made cutting it much easier.<sup>453</sup> At times, cane burning was combined with complex negotiations between cane cutters and landowners. In Esmeralda, Camaguey, during the harvest of 1936, Haitian laborer Alberto Pie, whose nickname “Vijuel” was probably a derivation of *viejo*, approached the colono whose land he was working. “In representation of his fellow workers,” Vijuel “made a demand to burn the cane, since they were dealing with old cane” that “had a lot of straw” on it. Such cane “is cut with difficulty and easier to cut when burned.” The request to lighten the workload was denied. Fifteen days later, the colonia went up in flames. The fire quickly spread to neighboring farms and burned approximately 70,000 arrobas of cane. The rural guard was quick to arrest both Vijuel and Avilio Mila, another Haitian.<sup>454</sup> Surprisingly, the landowner and manager defended the Haitian workers. Walfredo Abreu Delgado, the administrator of the land, told the Rural Guard that he thought the fire was “intentional, but he didn’t suspect the detainees” since “they have worked in said colonia for many years.”<sup>455</sup> Both Alberto Pie (Vijuel) and Avilio Mila were later acquitted of all charges.<sup>456</sup>

If some Haitian cane cutters benefited from settling on farms for many years and creating interpersonal relationships with colonos, others sought advantage by moving between farms and

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contents and claimed to have carried them to someone in exchange for having a room to sleep in one night. APLTJVL 103/103/1409.

<sup>453</sup> McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 2-3.

<sup>454</sup> “Diligencias por incendio de caña,” February 22, 1936, APCTU 4/5/1.

<sup>455</sup> “Declaración de Walfredo Abreu Delgado [en Esmeralda],” February 25, 1936, APCTU 4/5/17.

<sup>456</sup> “Acta del Juicio Oral y Sentencia: Tribunal de Urgencia de Camaguey,” March 3, 1936, APCTU 4/5/52.

arguing for higher wages.<sup>457</sup> In the cane fields surrounding the Central Cupey in 1918, Haitian-born Julio Poll was accused of “creating resistance to the cutting of cane for the quantity of one peso and ten cents [\$1.10].” He was “demanding an increase to the sum of one peso forty cents [\$1.40]” and creating “an alteration of order amongst the cane cutters.”<sup>458</sup> Poll denied the charges, claiming that he was singled out because he “set out for another colonia where they paid one peso forty cents [\$1.40] for every cart of cane one cut.” Despite marked differences in their narratives of the events, it is clear that the conflict between Poll and the guard centered around issues of workers’ freedom of movement and wage rates. In this case, a physical fight broke out between the two. Poll claimed that the company’s Guardia Jurado “gave him four slaps with a machete [planazos] in the back” when he tried to leave the cane field.<sup>459</sup> Other witnesses declare that Poll “seized a rock, throwing it over Captain Charles.” Meanwhile, they claimed, Poll’s Haitian-born companion Javier Santiago “pulled out a knife and fell upon [the guard] with it.”<sup>460</sup> This was one of many cases of Haitians and other immigrant laborers who physically resisted companies’ efforts to keep them from leaving plantations in the middle of *zafras*.<sup>461</sup> In Jatibonico in March 1925, “a group of Haitians and Jamaicans besieged a pair of rural guards in the colonia Victoria,” most likely over the right to move between plantations.<sup>462</sup>

Workers’ movements between plantations were also facilitated by Haitian migrants who became labor recruiters. Though sugar companies hired them to attract field laborers to their

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<sup>457</sup> Sugar workers’ tendency to move between plantations in Cuba was first detailed in Carr, “Omnipotent and Omnipresent?”, 265.

<sup>458</sup> “Declaración de Leonardo Rodriguez y Aguilera,” May 3, 1918, ANCASXX 48/1/33.

<sup>459</sup> “Comparacencia del acusado: Julio Poll,” April 4, 1918, ANCASXX 48/1/4.

<sup>460</sup> “Declaración de Ricardo Fernandez Valdés,” May 3, 1918, ANCASXX 48/1/32.

“Declaración de Leonardo Rodriguez y Aguilera,” May 3, 1918, ANCASXX 48/1/33.

<sup>461</sup> “Ramon Cuenca, el guarda jurado agredido en Calabazas, en peligro de muerte,” *Diario de Cuba*, February 21, 1928; See Carr, “Omnipotent and Omnipresent?”, 265.

<sup>462</sup> “Grave suceso en Jatibonico,” *La Voz Del Pueblo*, March 28, 1925.

plantations, recruiters generally invited scorn from other sugar companies, state officials, and even laborers themselves.<sup>463</sup> An administrator for the Palma Sugar Company complained that when their agents “bring workers for cane cutting from Santiago de Cuba, they are bothered by elements that congregate in the train station, making a dreadful, calumnious and cruel propaganda that, for example, the workers in this Central are badly treated and hit with machetes.”<sup>464</sup> State and company officials believed that such individuals were merely trying to steal laborers and “bring them to other centrales.”<sup>465</sup> At other moments labor recruiters “penetrated within the limits of distinct farms, conquering the labors there with promises of higher wages, in order to bring them to other centrales.” The Cuban government even passed a law in 1926 requiring recruiters to register with the Cuban state.<sup>466</sup>

Such mobile recruiters could act as a source of information for migrant laborers about work conditions on distant plantations. However, evidence shows their penchant for fraud and migrants’ disillusionment with their false promises. Haitian-born Coclès Simon was a labor recruiter for the Francisco Sugar Company.<sup>467</sup> In addition to attracting Haitians to labor there, Simon falsely claimed to be “a delegate of [the Haitian] consulate,” in order “to exploit” the “Haitians in the countryside.”<sup>468</sup> Resentment against labor recruiters becomes obvious during a fight between a Haitian worker and a rural guardsman at the United Fruit Company. In the middle of the altercation, the worker told the guard to “fuck your mother and the mother of the

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<sup>463</sup> “Contra los tratantes de trabajadores,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, November 26, 1928.

<sup>464</sup> Rafael Aguirre, Administrador de Palma Soriano Sugar Company to Guillermo F. Mascaro, Gobernador de Oriente, March 5, 1919, APSGP 307/21/1.

<sup>465</sup> Letter to Sr. Rafael Aguirre, Administrador del ‘Central Palma,’ signed by S.S., March 8, 1919, APSGP 307/21/3.

<sup>466</sup> Untitled Communiqué by the Governor of Oriente, January 05, 1927, APSGP 310/09/01.

<sup>467</sup> Segundo Admor. General, The Francisco Sugar Company to Sr. Gobernador Provincial, Santiago de Cuba, February 13, 1927, APSGP 309/13/1.

<sup>468</sup> Louis Hibbert, Consul General de Haiti to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, January 05, 1935, APSGP 377/50/1.

labor contractor.”<sup>469</sup> Likewise, when a middle-class Haitian woman who was involved in labor recruiting in Haiti wanted to converse with some migrants in Cuba, one of them responded to her invitation by declaring that he would only meet her “if... she came to visit us and were to eat cane with us.”<sup>470</sup>

## 4.2 LEISURE TIME AND INFORMAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Many of Haitians’ strategies for coping with harsh conditions and low wages occurred outside of work hours. Cuban author and political activist Pablo de la Torriente Brau’s 1930 short story, *Una aventura de Salgari*, describes a nationally diverse group of workers relaxing after a long day of clearing land in Oriente for a sugar company. One character, a Cuban worker, remembers “the polyglot and international camp of Dutch people from Aruba, the English from Barbados, Jamaicans, Haitians, Colombians, Gallegos, Venezuelans and Creoles, in the thick of darkness, waiting for the deep bowl of food, of sad songs from all the countries! And the stories!”<sup>471</sup> De la Torriente Brau’s depiction of Haitians sharing food, songs, and stories with laborers of other nationalities is at odds with conceptions about their isolation in Cuban society. Yet it deals with only one of many of their efforts to relax along with workers of other nationalities.

Written documents describing Haitians’ actions outside of the sites and hours of the workday are proportionally few compared to the psychological, social, and economic significance of such activities. Haitian immigrants’ overwhelming illiteracy, estimated at 90%,

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<sup>469</sup> [que se cagaba en la madre del dicente y en la del Contratista] “Declaración de Emilio Puche Suarez,” May 29, 1929, ANCASXX 29/1/14.

<sup>470</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 11.

<sup>471</sup> de la Torriente Brau, “Una Aventura De Salgari,” 55.



explains the dearth of sources written by migrants themselves.<sup>472</sup> Instead, historians must rely on company records and judicial archives. Although extensive and often detailed, these documents reflect very specific economic and political concerns. Haitians' activities appear only when the goals of the company and state were breached, giving a necessarily limited picture of the world migrants created outside of the workday.

Notwithstanding their limitations, records of production and repression may shed considerable light on migrants' social and economic activities on sugar plantations before, during, and after the period of heavy repatriations. They reveal a world in which Haitian men and women relaxed and socialized after work, engaged in small-scale commerce, sold sex, gambled, and engaged in other non-sugar producing activities on plantations as both providers and consumers. (The religious communities that Haitians formed with individuals of other nationalities is the subject of chapter six). The networks involving Haitians and individuals of other nationalities that emerged out of their extensive interactions dispel the notions that Haitians were isolated or that sugar companies were able to divide their workers effectively.

Samuel Martínez' study of material culture on a contemporary sugar plantation in the Dominican Republic explains the importance of leisure time and the consumption of non-utilitarian goods, even for impoverished workers. Leisure, he argues, "takes on an importance wholly beyond its utility as a time to recuperate the energy to work again" because it "is the only time the worker fully possesses him/herself, and becomes fleetingly 'sovereign.'"<sup>473</sup> Similarly, consumption of non-essential goods may be used for achieving personal dignity, "reclaiming individuality," and "gaining momentary relief from monotony and drudgery."<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," Table VII.

<sup>473</sup> Martínez, *Decency and Excess*, 12.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

There is abundant evidence that Haitian workers sought relief from monotony and drudgery through various means. On the evening of March 7, 1919, for instance, Haitian-born Ney Louis Charles was drinking an anisette and playing his violin in a café on the United Fruit Company's Preston plantation in Cuba. It was payday. During the evening, a Jamaican-born prostitute "asked him in English" to play a Haitian waltz. This was not a chance encounter; they knew each other very well. In fact, Charles and a Cuban-born member of the rural guard held a rivalry over her affections.<sup>475</sup> Charles' story is just one example of how Haitian workers relaxed outside of the workday with music, drinking, dancing and other activities. On an evening in May 1929, Haitian-born Luis Fis met with José Samuel, Salvador Pie, and José Pol Fisco outside the house of another Haitian, José Zayas. They had been paid for their labor earlier that day and were drinking late into the night.<sup>476</sup>

Ney Louis Charles' relationship with the Jamaican prostitute and the Cuban rural guardsman also highlights the way individuals from different nationalities interacted in the hours and spaces outside of sugar production. This is consistent with the findings of other studies of Caribbean migrants, which argue that migrants' "networks are based on quite another logic than nation-states, with their clearly demarcated borders, exclusive memberships based on birthrights, and strong ideology of shared common identity."<sup>477</sup> In another example of relationships that were not defined by national divisions, Haitians José Leyva and Rapido Luis coordinated with

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<sup>475</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 8-10.

<sup>476</sup> "Declaración de José Pol Fisco conocido por José Pie," May 7, 1929, "Declaración de Salvador Pie" Juzgado de Instrucción de Mayari, May 7, 1929, Juzgado de Instrucción de Mayari, APSATO 351/2576/37, 39.

<sup>477</sup> Fog-Olwig, *Caribbean Journeys*, 11.

two Afro-Cubans and a Barbadian to “invest their earnings in dances and *bachatas* they give in the colonia.”<sup>478</sup>

What for some was a reprieve from arduous work, others saw as an opportunity for financial gain. In Cuban plantations, as elsewhere in the Americas, the presence of a large agricultural workforce created demand for a range of goods and services readily filled by other inhabitants of plantations and even cities.<sup>479</sup> At the beginning of the sugar harvest of 1938, for instance, Haitian-born Tertulien Jutilien left his seasonal residence in Santiago de Cuba to “sell merchandise outside of the city.”<sup>480</sup> Among his wares were dolls, cornets, toy guns, earrings, gray socks, books, and toothbrushes.<sup>481</sup> Women and children were also active in this petty, informal commerce. In 1929, Haitian-born Rosa Pol sold “sweets” inside a *barracón* on the colonia Buena Vista in Palma Soriano.<sup>482</sup> These activities even occurred inside the centrales. One company administrator complained that there were people inside the centrales “that do not have any connection to work, and I have noticed many little children bringing packages and bottles of coffee with milk to the employees working.”<sup>483</sup> Through the informal commercial networks constituted by buyers and sellers, Haitians had contact with individuals of other nationalities. Jutilien lived with Maria Martinez, a woman originally from the Dominican

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<sup>478</sup> Guardia Rural, “Acta,” January 18, 1947, Archivo Provincial de Camaguey: Juzgado de Instrucción del Partido Judicial de Camaguey (hereafter APCJIPJC) 317/3919/2-3.

“Declaración de Félix Socarrás Téllez: Juzgado Municipal de Sibanicu,” January 27, 1947, APCJIPJC 317/3919/31; “Declaración de Ignacio Portal Rodriguez, Juzgado Municipal Sibanicu,” January 27, 1947, APCJIPJC 317/3919/30.

<sup>479</sup> Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 7; McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 142.

<sup>480</sup> “Declaración de testigo, Rafael Miller Leon,” March 12, 1938, Archivo Provincial de Santiago: Sala de Urgencia (hereafter APSSU) 28/286a/38.

<sup>481</sup> Cirilo Rodriguez L. Sgto. Esc. 39 de la Guardia Rural, Jefe del Puesto to Juez Municipal de Alto Songo, January 27, 1938, APSSU 28/286a/63.

<sup>482</sup> “Declaración de Rosa Pol, s.o.a.,” February 4, 1929, APSATO 336/2419/3.

<sup>483</sup> R.B. Wood, Administrador General to Eduardo Higaldo, Capt. Jefe Guardia Jurada, Chaparra, March 13, 1937, APLTCASMC 1/55/543/65.

Republic who was also “accustomed to working in the countryside during the *zafras*.”<sup>484</sup> Rosa Pol met Lidia Pelegrin Larduet, a Cuban-born woman. One day when Pol’s young daughter was attacked outside, both women rushed to her aid.<sup>485</sup> William Stokes, an individual from the United States living in rural Cuba, recalled that one “could usually buy boxes of *boniato* from Haitians.”<sup>486</sup> On the colonia San Carlos #1 in Santa Cruz del Sur, Haitian-born Benito Luis purchased his cigarettes from a store run by a Jamaican-born merchant, Ignacio Montes.<sup>487</sup>

Buying and selling sex on plantations was another economic activity in which Haitian-born men and women engaged. In Palma Soriano two Haitian-born individuals, Bertina Nicolasa and José Nicolás, worked as a prostitute and pimp respectively.<sup>488</sup> Like sugar production and petty commerce, the network of prostitutes, their brokers, and their customers cut across national lines. On the colonia Pennsylvania, Haitian-born José Leyva, along with another Haitian, a Barbadian, and two Cubans supplemented their work by “bringing women from other places to exercise prostitution so that they could appropriate the products that said women obtain.”<sup>489</sup> In Leyva’s house were two Cuban-born women, Clemencia Pimentel Menendez and Marcela Martínez Rosell, who were “engaging in prostitution under [his] direction.”<sup>490</sup> At times, inter-ethnic love triangles occurred, such as the above-mentioned conflict between Ney Louis Charles and the Cuban rural guard over a Jamaican woman.<sup>491</sup> Alberto Luis and Juan Cumber, a Haitian

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<sup>484</sup> “Declaración de testigo, Rafael Miller Leon,” March 12, 1938, APSSU 28/286a/38.

<sup>485</sup> “Declaración de Lidia Pelegrin Larduet,” February 4, 1929, APSATO 336/2419/4.

<sup>486</sup> Enrique Cirules, *Conversación*, 176.

<sup>487</sup> “Testimonio del Acta de Denuncia,” January 4, 1943, APCTU 33/18/1.

<sup>488</sup> “Información del <<Cuartel Moncada>>: Detención por ejercicio de la prostitución,” *Diario de Cuba*, August, 16, 1928.

<sup>489</sup> Inocente G. Pichardo Quintanal, Cabo del Escuadron 31 de la Guardia Rural to Juez de Instrucción de Camaguey, January 19, 1947, APCJIPJC 317/3919/22.

<sup>490</sup> Guardia Rural, “Acta,” January 18, 1947, APCJIPJC 317/3919/2-3.

<sup>491</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 7-10.

and Jamaican respectively, held a rivalry over an Afro-Cuban woman named Maria, who lived on their colonia and worked during the yearly harvests as a prostitute.<sup>492</sup>

Haitian migrants also gambled in various forms on sugar plantations, including buying and selling lottery tickets. One observer hyperbolically declared that “there is no human being with more love for gambling than the Haitian.”<sup>493</sup> On the colonia Demajagual in Camaguey, Haitian-born Antonio Luis was known as an “individual who does not work and when he does only dedicates himself to selling lottery tickets...and gambling.”<sup>494</sup> Besides selling lottery tickets, Haitians also bought them in large numbers. In 1937, observers blamed the widespread deportation of Haitian laborers for the “overwhelming” number of unsold lottery tickets in Guantánamo.<sup>495</sup> Despite the inevitable drain on the majority of Haitians’ already low wages, there are reasons gambling could be appealing to workers in such harsh conditions, for “gambling suspends compliance not only with the mathematical but also with the political and social orthodoxies governing everyday life.”<sup>496</sup>

Haitians were not the only individuals on Cuban soil who gambled. Gambling was common among all social classes and all regions in Republican Cuba.<sup>497</sup> In fact, Haitians, Cubans, and individuals of other nationalities gambled together on sugar plantations, buttressing arguments that gambling is a “significant social practice,” and “a form of conviviality both

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<sup>492</sup> “Declaración del Acusado Alberto Luis (soa),” July 14, 1942, APCTU 25/1, Pieza #1/12.

<sup>493</sup> “Cómo ocurrió el hecho sangriento de la colonia ‘Montada,’” *El Camagüeyano*, June 4, 1925.

<sup>494</sup> [Untitled Statement by R. Ayala, Augusto Porro, Francisco Garcia, Guardias Rurales], February 24, 1936, APCTU 4/15/2.

<sup>495</sup> “Los haitianos y la lotería nacional,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 06, 1937.

<sup>496</sup> Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels*, 11. See also DaMatta and Soárez, *Águilas, burros e borboleta*, 104.

<sup>497</sup> Sáenz Rovner, *The Cuban Connection*.

anchored in and revelatory of its broader cultural context.”<sup>498</sup> In Ciego de Avila in 1942, Haitian-born rural laborer Alberto Luis bought lottery tickets from Luis Woi Tung, a Chinese-born individual who lived on the same sugar plantation.<sup>499</sup> As a result, Luis often borrowed money from Juan Cumber, a Jamaican-born rural worker who had “on many occasions...given him nickels and dimes so that he could pay his bills.”<sup>500</sup> Similarly, one day in 1928 in San Germán, Haitians José Ramón, José Manuel, and Antonio Segundo were gambling with a Dominican named José Martínez and Gabino Quial, a Cuban.<sup>501</sup> Gambling was so common in sugar *barracones* that “gamblers from the cities” made “incursions in the colonias” to play. Among them was Antonio Fadrugas, a white middle-class Cuban who gambled with Adolfo Estévez Cardenas, a “black” of unknown nationality in the colonia Montada in Morón, Camaguey.<sup>502</sup>

Haitians also used their leisure time to reproduce their labor by preparing food, washing clothes, and performing other domestic duties. In the colonia Fontanales number 3, Lucia Pradela, a married Haitian woman, performed domestic labor in her house.<sup>503</sup> Domestic labor was probably not the only work such women performed. In 1929, the above-mentioned Rosa Pol told authorities that she worked in her house, though she also sold food in the *barracones*.<sup>504</sup> Nor was all such labor performed by women. During the dead season of 1926 on the colonia La Isabel, a group of Haitian men joined forces to cook, clean, and gather food. Simon Pie and José

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<sup>498</sup> Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels*, 7.

<sup>499</sup> “Acta Num. 1448 de la Policía Nacional, Sección de Ciego de Avila,” July 13, 1942, APCTU 25/1, Pieza #1/1.

<sup>500</sup> “Declaración de Juan Cumber (soa),” July 14, 1942, APCTU 25/1, Pieza #1/10.

<sup>501</sup> “Detención por juego al prohibido,” *Diario de Cuba*, August 23, 1928.

<sup>502</sup> “Cómo ocurrió el hecho sangriento de la colonia ‘Montada,’” *El Camagüeyano*, June 4, 1925.

<sup>503</sup> “Declaración de Lucia Pradela (soa),” July 17, 1942, APCTU 25/1, Pieza #1/44.

<sup>504</sup> “Declaración de Rosa Pol, s.o.a.,” February 4, 1929, APSATO 336/2419/3.

Luis, two Haitians who worked with oxen, left “from the barracón...where they lived and worked, to the store on the colonia to buy soap.” At that point, they separated and divided their work. Pie traveled “to the ravine to wash his clothing” while “Luis returned to the aforementioned barracón to make lunch for both” as well as for Luis’ father who “had gone to look for boniato” on a distant colonia. Even such close-knit cooperation among Haitians did not prevent them from forming relationships with people of other nationalities. When Simon Pie was injured, Obdulio Celasio, an individual from Curaçao, alerted Pie’s companions and aided them in seeking medical attention.<sup>505</sup> In another case, in 1924, Cuban-born Eliodoro Hechavarría cooked in a small restaurant on the colonia Barrancas where Haitian-born José Joan ate.<sup>506</sup>

At times, relaxing Haitians could be harassed by other company employees, fueled by alcohol and racism. Everett Brown described an instance of “enjoying the fun” and having “excitement” on the United Fruit Company property in 1919. A group of individuals Brown identified as Haitians (see discussion above), “had their hammocks all slung” in a cane car. They “were waiting to be transported to Preston” and “resting for their trip.” Soon, an engineer “from an outside camp” who was “gloriously drunk...took a gun away from a guard” and beseeched the Haitians to get out of the car. “They would not get off the car so he climbed on and began to punch every black head he saw” before he was pulled out by other employees.<sup>507</sup>

Encroachments on Haitians’ efforts to take advantage of their leisure time, exert control over their labor, and diversify their economic activities did not only come from errant company employees. Company and state representatives acting in official capacity to maintain the

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<sup>505</sup> Sub-Inspector de la Policia Judicial to Juez de Instruccion de Victoria de Las Tunas, July 24, 1926, APLTJVLT 97/1347/19-20.

<sup>506</sup> “Sucesos de la provincia: Reyerta y lesiones,” *Diario de Cuba*, October 17, 1925.

<sup>507</sup> Everett C. Brown to Ethel Brown. 1-Sep-[?] Probably 1919, UFECB, Box 1, Folder 2-Cuba.

economic interests of the former and enforce the laws of the latter were at odds with Haitians who performed such activities. At times, sugar companies tolerated gambling and prostitution on plantations in order to retain workers, even as state officials cracked down on them, questioning the extent to which Cuban state institutions acted on behalf of sugar companies. Company tolerance evaporated, however, when Haitians' labor and leisure strategies conflicted with their economic interests or desire to control their laborers. As a result, conflicts broke out between workers and representatives of companies and the state over the terms of labor and leisure.

*El Camagueyano* declared very bluntly in 1924 that “in a colonia in the interior with no women and only a little gambling from time to time, you will probably not find any workers.”<sup>508</sup> In the Central Baguanos and elsewhere, rural guardsmen even accepted bribes from known gamblers in exchange for the right to play.<sup>509</sup> Yet other state officials were less obliging. Undercover police officers arrested men and women from different nationalities for illegal gambling or engaging in prostitution.<sup>510</sup> In the realm of gambling, Haitians and other workers often opposed police attempts to stop their games, leading to physical confrontations. In 1942, Julian Castillo, a Haitian-born individual who sold lottery tickets for a living, was approached by a police officer. Rather than surrender his list of numbers, Castillo “resisted it, not wanting to accompany [the guard].”<sup>511</sup> Similarly, undercover agents sought to arrest Haitian-born Antonio López on the assumption that he and another “were dedicated to making bets on the terminals”

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<sup>508</sup> “Cómo ocurrió el hecho sangriento de la colonia ‘Montada,’” *El Camagueyano*, June 4, 1925.

<sup>509</sup> “Declaración de Manuel Fusalba,” March 11, 1913, ANCASXX 8/1/1. Juez de Instrucción, Holguín to Presidente de la Audiencia. Santiago de Cuba, June 30, 1922, ANCASXX 68/2/1.

<sup>510</sup> “Soldados vestidos de paisano prestan buen servicio en el campo,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, January 12, 1928.

<sup>511</sup> “Acta 263-42 de la Policía Municipal de Esmeralda,” May 7, 1942, APCTU 17/32/1.



on the colonia Ambición, an illegal practice involving making side bets on the outcome of the official national lottery. López responded with violence, insults and assertions of his masculinity. In addition to “brandishing the machete he was carrying,” he told the guard “not to touch him that he was no woman and that if they touched him he would kill one of them.” At that moment, agents showed him their identification cards, to which López responded by thrusting his machete in their faces and telling them they could “wipe their asses” with the identification.<sup>512</sup>

Rather than physically resisting arrest, the Haitian men and women accused of prostitution responded by claiming other occupations. Cuban-born Marcela Martínez Rosel denied being a prostitute to authorities. Instead, she claimed to work within her house as the “cousin [prima hermana] of José Leiva,” the Haitian-born individual accused of making money off of her sex.<sup>513</sup> Clemencia Pimentel Menendez, another accused, similarly declared that Leiva “was a friend of [hers] for a very long time.”<sup>514</sup> Men and women also asserted that the men only engaged in honorable work and did not need to sell women’s sex for money. Rather than depending on the sex work of Victoria Dominguez, Haitian-born Rápido Luis claimed that he “maintains her with all of the products of his work, which is cutting cane and other jobs in the colonias.”<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> “Testimonio: Acta por Infraccion Ley Loteria,” July 24, 1942, “Declaración de Apolonio Reyna Lazcano,” July 27, 1942, APCTU 22/8/1, 15. Special thanks to Orlando Rivero-Valdés for explaining the concept of betting on the terminals to me.

<sup>513</sup> “Declaración del Testigo: Marcela Martínez Rosel, Juzgado de Instrucción, Camaguey,” January 19, 1947, APCJIPC 317/3919/7.

<sup>514</sup> “Declaración del Testigo: Clemencia Pimentel Menendez, Juzgado de Instrucción de Camaguey,” January 19, 1947, APCJIPC 317/3919/8.

<sup>515</sup> “Comparecencia de Rápido Luis, soa, Juzgado de Instrucción, Camaguey,” January 19, 1947, APCJIPC 317/3919/14.

Despite some employers' tolerance of activities like gambling and selling sex, Haitians faced opposition when their efforts to relax or diversify their economic activities conflicted with company goals of productivity. In 1929, Haitian-born Juan Bautista defied United Fruit Company orders to travel to a distant field to cut cane. In his own words, he "had drunk some cups of liquor, which made him a little drunk." As a result, "he did not want to go and work and was in the *barracón* looking for a way to go and find food, because the animals or some unknown person, ate what he had made."<sup>516</sup> As guards approached him, a verbal and physical fight broke out. A Jamaican cook reported that "Bautista was talking a lot and saying that he wouldn't work in the non-company fields."<sup>517</sup> The officer claimed that Bautista had reached for his knife while resisting arrest "with an aggressive attitude," requiring him to "use force."<sup>518</sup>

Wandering merchants were accused by both urban shopkeepers and sugar company officials of undercutting prices of permanent stores.<sup>519</sup> They were often physically harassed by rural guards and expelled from sugar plantations. According to a complaint by a group of wandering merchants, companies used the most "reprehensible measures" to stop them. Typically "the *Guarda Jurado* [private company guards] arrives at the place where the vendor is, which is always a public place, before telling them that they cannot continue there because it is prohibited by 'the Company.'" When vendors asserted their right to sell by pointing out that "it's not private property...the guarda jurado scatters the merchandise, mistreats him in words and deeds and then accuses him of disobedience and assault." In 1924 on the Central Miranda,

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<sup>516</sup> "Comparecencia del Acusado Juan Batista s.o.a.," May 28, 1929, ANCASXX 29/1/13.

<sup>517</sup> "Declaración de José Brown," May 29, 1929, ANCASXX 29/1/16.

<sup>518</sup> "Declaración de Emilio Puche Suarez," May 29, 1929, ANCASXX 29/1/14.

<sup>519</sup> "El comercio de Mayarí produjo una queja contra los vendedores ambulantes," *Diario de Cuba*, February 21, 1928; "La denuncia de los vendedores ambulantes," *Diario de Cuba*, August 29, 1924.

Salvador Bhar, a Cuban-born wandering merchant “was attacked brutally by a *Guardia Jurado*” merely for selling goods on company premises.<sup>520</sup>

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

In contrast to statements by Cuban journalists and sugar company administrators, Haitian laborers on Cuban sugar plantations were neither relegated to the lowest position in Cuba’s labor hierarchy nor isolated from individuals of other nationalities. Although most Haitian immigrants cut cane, they also worked as labor recruiters, ox-drivers, and other positions within the centrales. In all of these activities, they were part of a heterogeneous workforce that was never fully segregated along national lines, despite companies’ efforts to the contrary. Although Haitians rarely participated in labor unions, they developed individual and collective strategies to make their working conditions more tolerable. While some of these strategies involved taking actions during work hours, many others occurred during breaks in the workday. The myth of Haitians’ isolation is further disproved by analyzing the social and economic worlds they constructed outside the direct gaze of company and state. Despite periodic attempts by state and company officials to stop them, Haitians actively sought to take advantage of their leisure hours and diversify their economic activities. This included drinking, relaxing, playing music, dancing, engaging in prostitution, gambling, petty commerce, and other activities with workers of different nationalities.

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<sup>520</sup> “La denuncia de los vendedores ambulantes,” *Diario de Cuba*, August 29, 1924.

## 5.0 HAITIAN LABORERS AND COFFEE IN CUBA

On January 27, 1932, Haitian-born Belisario Pol was injured while cutting cane for the Fidelity Sugar Company in Holguín, Cuba. Two months later he failed to appear before local courts and could not be found. Sugar company guards did not know where he was since Pol had “left for the coffee fields of Guantánamo,” 85 miles to the southeast.<sup>521</sup> Pol’s movements between sugar and coffee production were not unique. Other Haitians in eastern Cuba engaged in various aspects of planting, picking, and processing coffee. Their stories challenge scholars to analyze Haitians’ actions in Cuba through a wider optic than the one built around just the sugar industry.

Belisario Pol’s decision to pick coffee was almost certainly influenced by his previous experiences harvesting it in Haiti, a country whose economy has been dominated by the crop since the colonial period. Coffee production flourished in Saint Domingue alongside sugar, indigo, and other crops. After the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), peasants’ ability to grow coffee on small plots of land with relatively small capital requirements meant that it could be produced even after the demise of large-scale plantations.<sup>522</sup> In 1917, at the height of the migratory movement between Haiti and Cuba, *Haiti: Commerciale, Industrielle et Agricole*, a Port-au-Prince newspaper specializing in economic affairs described coffee as “if not our only, at

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<sup>521</sup> “Declaración de Felipe M. Rodriguez,” March 27, 1932, APHJPIH 301/5544/29.

<sup>522</sup> Girault, *El comercio del café*.

least our principal article of export,” and the basis of “our entire economic edifice.”<sup>523</sup> Indeed, coffee represented almost 80% of Haiti’s agricultural exports in 1924-25 and remained the country’s top export crop even as agricultural output diversified in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>524</sup>

The fact that Belisario Pol utilized coffee-growing skills from Haiti to produce the crop in Cuba represents one small instance in a larger history in which Cuban coffee production was affected by the events and actions of individuals within Haiti. The first period of major growth in the Cuban coffee industry occurred during and after the Haitian Revolution. Thousands of planters and slaves left the revolutionary events in Saint Domingue and settled in eastern Cuba, bringing technical knowledge of large-scale coffee production with them. In 1790, before the revolution started, Cuba exported 7,400 quintiles of coffee. After 1804, production increased exponentially and peaked in 1833, when exports reached 641,589 quintiles.<sup>525</sup> After 1833, coffee production decreased markedly in Cuba and planters could not even satisfy domestic consumption levels. As a result Cuba began to import coffee both legally and clandestinely from Haiti and other parts of the Americas. However, Cuban coffee enjoyed a brief resurgence in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, largely as a result of Haitian migrants’ participation in its production. In 1902, 27 million pounds of coffee were imported into Cuba. Over the next decades, production increased and was satisfying a larger share of domestic demand. By 1928, however, only about 12 million pounds of coffee entered Cuba from abroad.<sup>526</sup>

Needless to say, the production of coffee is hardly unique to Haiti and Cuba. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, coffee has been one of the most valuable and widely traded goods in the world,

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<sup>523</sup> “La baisse du café et la situation économique,” *Haiti: Commerciale, Industrielle et Agricole*, December 01, 1917.

<sup>524</sup> United Nations, *Mission to Haiti*, 214.

<sup>525</sup> Pérez de la Riva, *El café*, 8, 51, 74, 88.

<sup>526</sup> Arredondo, *El café*, 192-3.

especially in Latin America where it has been “the most ubiquitous of exports” and second only to petroleum in its value.<sup>527</sup> As a result, coffee production, trade, and labor in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the wider world have been the subject of numerous historical monographs, edited volumes, and comparative works. These studies have traditionally focused on countries and regions for which coffee is the strategic, or even primary export crop, such as Brazil, Colombia, and parts of Central America.<sup>528</sup> Historiographical debates in this field revolve around the impact of coffee production on larger-scale processes like the growth of capitalism, the stability of political and state institutions, the development of infrastructure, landholding patterns, and class formation.<sup>529</sup>

Despite its presence in the soils of eastern Cuba, coffee production is severely understudied even in the country’s national historiography. The few existing works focus almost entirely on the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>530</sup> In fact, the only analyses of the Cuban coffee industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are Alberto Arredondo’s 1941 *El Café en Cuba: Vida y pasión de una riqueza nacional* and Francisco Pérez de la Riva’s 1944 classic *El Café: Historia de su cultivo y explotación en Cuba*.<sup>531</sup> Instead, Cuban historians have traditionally focused on sugar, the crop whose importance to Cuban history since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century is illustrated by a well-known slogan from the Republican period, “Sin Azúcar, No Hay País” (Without Sugar, There is no

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<sup>527</sup> Topik, “Coffee Anyone?,” 227.

<sup>528</sup> See for instance Topik and Wells, *The Second Conquest*; Roseberry, Gudmundson, and Samper Kutschbach, *Coffee, Society, and Power*; Clarence-Smith and Topik, *The Global Coffee Economy*; Font, *Coffee and Transformation*.

<sup>529</sup> For a concise, critical, and in-depth discussion of these debates see Topik, “Coffee Anyone?,” 237-8, 42-61.

<sup>530</sup> Van Norman, “Shade Grown Slavery”; Meriño Fuentes and Perera Díaz, *Un café para la microhistoria*; Singleton, “Slavery and Spatial Dialectics.”

<sup>531</sup> Arredondo, *El café*; Pérez de la Riva, *El café*.

Country).<sup>532</sup> With the exception of the texts from the 1940s, what little we know about Cuban coffee production in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century actually comes from anthropologists who have studied Haitian descendants in post-revolutionary Cuba.<sup>533</sup>

The trajectory of Cuban historiography has affected perceptions of Haitians in at least two ways. Haitians' participation in the coffee industry becomes invisible because it falls outside the scope of studies that are concerned primarily with the sugar industry, ultimately buttressing assumptions that they were all sugar cane cutters. Those who have studied Haitians in coffee fields tend to portray coffee production as wholly more advantageous to workers than sugar. They argue that Haitians received higher wages, had better working conditions, and more harmonious social relationships picking coffee than they did cutting sugar cane. In sugar production, cane cutters were organized in groups and paid according to the output of the collective, often leading to conflict. In contrast, the individualistic nature of coffee picking created a situation in which workers did not have to divide lump payments. This increased potential for higher wages and reduced tension amongst workers.<sup>534</sup> This image of the coffee industry reflects a strand of Cuban thought dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that characterized coffee labor as "less rigorous" than sugar.<sup>535</sup> It also mirrors a body of scholarship praising coffee production as a source of political stability, harmony, and national development.<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> García Rodríguez, *Entre haciendas y plantaciones*; Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio I*; Santamaría García, *Sin azúcar no hay país*; McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*.

<sup>533</sup> James, Millet, and Alarcón, *El Vodú en Cuba*, 77; Guanche and Moreno, *Caidije*, 26-7; Pedro Díaz, "Guanamaca," 25-6; Gómez Navia, "Lo haitiano en lo cubano," 14; Carr, "'Omnipotent and Omnipresent?'," 266; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism," 608.

<sup>534</sup> Guanche and Moreno, *Caidije*, 26-7; Ortiz, "Prólogo," xii-xiii; Pedro Díaz, "Guanamaca," 26; Carr, "'Omnipotent and Omnipresent?'," 266.

<sup>535</sup> Van Norman, "Shade Grown Slavery", iii; Ortiz, "Prólogo," xii; Pérez de la Riva, *El café*, 62.

<sup>536</sup> Steven C. Topik criticizes these arguments in Topik, "Coffee," 71-74.

Recent scholarly works on Latin American coffee production and Cuban agricultural history raise further questions for exploring the nature of the Cuban coffee industry and the experiences of Haitians within it. First, scholarship on coffee is moving away from studying “the areas with the greatest production” in favor of “local studies of areas of small coffee production.” As Steven Topik notes, however, this should not prevent scholars from using comparative methods when analyzing these local, smaller-scale economies.<sup>537</sup> Recognizing the local effects of coffee production and analyzing them comparatively meshes neatly with a growing group of scholars who seek to broaden Cuba’s economic history by moving away from the singular focus on sugar to include coffee, tobacco, mining, and urban industries.<sup>538</sup> Some within this group have sought to trace the lateral relationships between these alternative products and Cuban sugar production.<sup>539</sup> Finally, scholars of coffee production in Latin America have challenged whether coffee production is inherently more harmonious than other agricultural systems. In addition to the labor intensity and poverty widely associated with coffee, they have reconstructed the mechanisms of labor extraction, coercion, and discipline that functioned within the rural family unit, especially as they were experienced by women and children.<sup>540</sup>

This chapter builds on these works by analyzing Haitians’ labor conditions in the Cuban coffee industry and tracing how it affected Cuba’s policies on migration and trade. Many Haitians circulated annually between the Cuban sugar harvest and the coffee fields of both Haiti and Cuba, while others settled in the latter permanently. Migrants’ experience picking and

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<sup>537</sup> Topik, “Coffee Anyone?,” 241.

<sup>538</sup> Pérez de la Riva, *El café*. Meriño Fuentes and Perera Díaz, *Un café para la microhistoria*, 1; Fernández Prieto, *Cuba agrícola*, 19-20; Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery*.

<sup>539</sup> García Álvarez, “Las economías locales en el Oriente de Cuba,” 219.

<sup>540</sup> Meriño Fuentes and Perera Díaz, *Un café para la microhistoria*, 135-42; Stolcke, *Coffee Planters, Workers and Wives*, xv-xvi, 23-29; Stolcke, “The Labors of Coffee in Latin America,” 65-67; Dore, “Patriarchy from above, Patriarchy from Below,” 209-12.



processing coffee in Haiti translated directly to rural Cuba, where the same variety of the crop was grown and processing techniques were identical. Some Haitians managed to rent coffee-producing land and turned to coffee as a source of wages during sugar's off-season. Nevertheless, work conditions on coffee farms were not detached from the Cuban sugar industry. Coffee wages were set in direct relation to those offered on sugar plantations and fluctuated significantly accordingly. Coffee production required immense and intense labor expenditures, at times unpaid, from Haitian men, women, and children. Recovering the labor contributions of entire households forces us to reconsider characterizations of coffee as a more individualistic or sanguine alternative to sugar work.

Haitians' participation in Cuban coffee production had larger effects in Cuba. Their presence in the coffee industry affected local articulations of Cuban nationalism and the implementation of migration and trade policies. By the late 1920s, Cuban coffee imports decreased as production approached the point of meeting domestic demand---right at the moment when the world sugar market tanked. Beginning in 1928, and throughout the 1930s, the Cuban government began organized deportation drives of immigrants, especially Haitians. Although these policies were set largely in accordance with the world sugar market and the growing xenophobic nationalist climate in Cuba, Haitians' role in the coffee industry was widely recognized, which altered nationalist debates about labor and coffee as well as the implementation of migration and trade policies in certain Cuban locales. In some years, as sugar laborers faced deportation, Haitian coffee workers' importance to the Cuban economy allowed them to stay and work in the country. Instead, planters petitioned to block coffee imports from Haiti and elsewhere. In other years, coffee workers were detained for long periods of time in

inhumane quarters before being deported---allowing planters to experiment with an all-Cuban workforce.

## 5.1 HAITIAN LABORERS AND COFFEE PRODUCTION

In 1915, José Carlo Luis, a Haitian-born laborer, traveled to the *Finca Santa Rita* in Palma Soriano “accompanied by his two sons and a nephew with the object of gathering coffee.”<sup>541</sup> Their actions were common in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Although the majority of Haitians in Cuba were recruited by sugar companies to work for a single sugar harvest and return home, many chose to stay in Cuba. Among those who remained, some were able to secure work on sugar plantations during the *tiempo muerto* (dead season), when sugar was not harvested, jobs were fewer and wages lower. Since the Cuban coffee harvest usually began in September and ended in time for the January sugar *zafra* (harvest), many laborers were able to participate in both.<sup>542</sup>

Haitians’ participation in Cuban coffee production was so significant that in 1928, Santiago’s *Diario de Cuba* declared that “some many thousands of Haitians...dedicate themselves to weeding the coffee fields, cutting grass, etc. but especially...the collection of said fruit, where men, women, and children are employed.” The article’s headline said it all: “All the farms use Haitians for Gathering Coffee.”<sup>543</sup> By the late 1920s, when coffee imports declined significantly, an editorialist in Santiago de Cuba rhetorically asked: “To whom is owed the fact

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<sup>541</sup> “Comparecencia del Acusado José Carlo Luis: Juzgado Municipal de Palma Soriano,” September 27, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/5.

<sup>542</sup> Guanache and Moreno, *Caidije*, 26; Pedro Díaz, “Guanamaca,” 25-6.

<sup>543</sup> “Todas las fincas utilizan a los haitianos para la recogida de café,” *Diario de Cuba*, August 03, 1928.

that Oriente is developing large coffee farms, finding itself at the point of supplying the national demand? Well it is due to the Haitians.’’<sup>544</sup>

During the period of coffee’s resurgence in Cuba, Palma Soriano, a small city in Oriente province, was the country’s highest producing area.<sup>545</sup> According to the 1919 census, the city had 7,634 inhabitants who were neither Cuban, Spanish, Chinese, African, nor from the United States, representing about 15% of the total population.<sup>546</sup> By 1931, on the eve of the deportation of immigrants from Cuban soil, that number jumped to 9,256—still proportionally about 15% of the total population.<sup>547</sup> In 1943, after a period in which many Haitians were deported and others changed their citizenship, the number of black, non-Cubans in Palma Soriano was 2,572, representing only 3% of the population.<sup>548</sup> Individual stories from Haitian men, women, and children reflect the larger patterns of Haitians’ movements between the sugar and coffee producing areas of Cuba. Many took the wages they earned from sugar work and subsequently moved to a coffee producing area, suggesting that Haitians may have been agents in transferring profits from sugar into the coffee industry. For instance, Toussaint Pierre arrived in Cuba through the United Fruit Company’s private port of Antilla right in time for the 1921 sugar *zafra*. Although he likely signed a one-year contract obligating him to return to Haiti on a company ship, Pierre took whatever wages he earned from the company and settled permanently in Juan Baron, a coffee-growing zone of Palma Soriano, Cuba.<sup>549</sup> Similarly, Anais Nelson left Haiti in

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<sup>544</sup> “¡El Haitiano es el único inmigrante necesario en Cuba!: Notas del momento” *Diario de Cuba*, August. 23, 1928.

<sup>545</sup> “Estadística de la Producción de Café en 1926,” 1927, Enclosure to letter from L. Lanier Winslow, Chargé d’Affaires ad interim to Secretary of State, July 6, 1927, USNA RG 59 837.61333/2

<sup>546</sup> Cuba, *Census of the Republic of Cuba 1919*, 434.

<sup>547</sup> Cuba, *Memorias inéditas del censo de 1931*, 216.

<sup>548</sup> Cuba, *Informe general del censo de 1943*, 860-1, 924.

<sup>549</sup> Tuassain Pierre #152, APSRECTC 370/2.

1922 and arrived in Banes, Cuba, the site of a United Fruit Company's sugar plantation. After working a single sugar harvest, he moved to the coffee growing region of Palmarito de Cauto in Palma Soriano where he remained.<sup>550</sup> Credena Sevyá had an almost identical story. He arrived in Santiago de Cuba in January 1915. He worked one sugar harvest in the Central Santa Lucía before moving to Palmarito de Cauto.<sup>551</sup>

Haitians' large-scale participation in the Cuban coffee industry reveals that, like other migrants, they employed skills from their homeland in Cuba.<sup>552</sup> Although coffee is picked and processed in distinct ways throughout the Americas, such processes were identical in Haiti and Cuba.<sup>553</sup> Cuba and Haiti, like other coffee producers in the Americas, produced the *coffea arabica* variety of the crop.<sup>554</sup> After coffee cherries were harvested, workers in both countries employed the dry method of processing. This means that coffee cherries were dried in the sun before their three outer layers (pulp, silver skin, and parchment) were removed all at one time with a mortar and pestle or other blunt tool.<sup>555</sup> Sometimes unshelled coffee cherries were sold to merchants who stored them and processed them with machinery. Coffee experts agreed that "the types of coffee beans of Haiti are very similar to those of Cuba."<sup>556</sup> This explains why, according to a Cuban journalist, Haitians were "the best arms" to work in the coffee industry.<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> "Anais Nelson (Rafael Calderón) #53," July 14, 1937, APSRECTC 375/1.

<sup>551</sup> "Credena Sevyá (Juan Fis) #54," August 2, 1937, APSRECTC 375/1.

<sup>552</sup> Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*, 7.

<sup>553</sup> Roseberry, "Introduction," 2,5; Arredondo, *El café en Cuba*, 94-5; Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, 132; Girault, *El comercio del café*, 73,83; Pérez de la Riva, *El café*, 226.

<sup>554</sup> Topik, "Coffee," 73; Girault, *El comercio del café*, 119; Pérez de la Riva, *El Café*, 1.

<sup>555</sup> Roseberry, "Introduction," 13; Girault, *El comercio del café*, 73, 148-50; Pérez de la Riva, *El café*, 262.

<sup>556</sup> Sr. Juez de Instrucción de Guantánamo from Secretario, Secretaría de Gobernación, Habana, March 5, 1923, ANCASXX 57/16 (Primera Pieza)/148-150.

<sup>557</sup> "La inmensa riqueza cafetalera de Yateras," *Diario de Cuba*, August 4, 1928.

One of the most striking aspects of Haitians' labor in the Cuban coffee industry was their ability to secure access to land. In both the Cuban coffee and sugar industries, some landowners ceded small plots of land to immigrant laborers so that they would grow foodstuffs and remain during their respective harvests.<sup>558</sup> In the coffee industry, Haitians' access to land went beyond the small plots for growing foodstuffs. Unlike the sugar *colonos* (small farmers), who were "predominantly white," some Haitians managed to carve out some autonomy by becoming coffee-producing *colonos*.<sup>559</sup> In 1933, Haitian migrant José Caridad Menendes entered into a contract with Octavio Boue Frias, a Cuban landholder, "for the planting of coffee for two years."<sup>560</sup> During that period, Caridad agreed to maintain the field and harvest the coffee, which he would remit to Boue. "Upon the expiration of the contract," Boue was required "to pay the sum of seventy pesos, official money."<sup>561</sup> Caridad was not the only Haitian who grew coffee on a parcel of land in Cuba. In the region of Guantánamo, Tiburcio Fis "had leased a certain amount of land" within "the coffee area of Bayate" before his death in 1929.<sup>562</sup> Some actually purchased land. In the same period, Haitian-born Andrés Pol "bought the coffee farm called 'Luisa de Plats' situated between Bayate and Monte Rus."<sup>563</sup>

If some Haitians managed to rent coffee-producing land in Cuba, the majority picked it for a wage. Previous studies argue that Haitians received higher wages in coffee than in sugar for two reasons. First, the rate of pay for labor was higher for coffee than sugar. Second, coffee

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<sup>558</sup> Carr, "'Omnipotent and Omnipresent?'," 277-80; "Todas las fincas utilizan a los haitianos para la recogida de Café," *Diario de Cuba*, August 3, 1928; Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 13.

<sup>559</sup> McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 31.

<sup>560</sup> "Declaración de Octavio Boue Frias," July, 24, 1934, Archivo Provincial de Santiago: Tribunal de Urgencia (hereafter APSTU) 1/2/6.

<sup>561</sup> "Comparecencia del Acusado José Caridad Melendres," July 24, 1934, APSTU 1/2/7.

<sup>562</sup> "Muerte horrible de un haitiano en Bayate," *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 15, 1929..

<sup>563</sup> "Se va aclarando el crimen de campesino haitiano Andrés Pol," *La Voz del Pueblo*, June 27, 1929.

workers were paid according to their individual yields, instead of group output.<sup>564</sup> These characterizations fail to take two important factors into account: the relationship between the coffee and sugar industries and the ways that Haitian families organized and divided labor in each sphere.

Both coffee and sugar wages fluctuated according to world prices, individual workers' productivity, and specific employers. In addition, wage rates in the sugar industry directly affected those in the coffee sector. Cane cutters received the highest wages when sugar prices were high. Coffee employers were forced to match them if they wished to compete. In 1926, a U.S. official in Cienfuegos noted that "ordinary [coffee] laborers are paid according to the price of sugar."<sup>565</sup> This is especially apparent during World War I when sugar's profitability and fieldworkers' wages reached an all-time high. Coffee growers did not benefit from high sugar prices but were still forced to compete with the wage rates of the sugar industry. A group of coffee-growers in Guantánamo sent a representative to the central government in 1917 to complain about high wages:

the current European War has made life enormously more expensive and caused the wages of *braceros* to increase. Cultivations like sugar cane...can perfectly weather the increase in production costs, though the phenomenon for us is that production expenses increase in cost while the price of coffee has diminished considerably in the Market, to the point of offering a price per *quintal* that does not even cover the cost.<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Carr, "Omnipotent and Omnipresent?", 265-6; Guanche and Moreno, *Caidije*, 26-7; Pedro Díaz, "Guanamaca," 25-6.

<sup>565</sup> Edwin J. Pond, Consular Clerk, Cienfuegos, "Commercial Coffee Growing," April 09, 1926, USNA RG59 837.61333/1

<sup>566</sup> "Los cosecheros de café," *La Voz del Pueblo*, September 25, 1917.

Since coffee growers in Oriente competed for labor in the country's top sugar-producing region, coffee wages there were higher than in any other part of the country.<sup>567</sup>

For individual Haitians, the question was not whether to harvest coffee or cut cane, but how to combine both activities to obtain the highest possible compensation. In the coffee fields, wage laborers were paid according to the number of 28-pound cans they could fill with coffee beans during a workday. Official sources estimated a worker's daily yield at 5.85 cans.<sup>568</sup> In 1928, coffee workers in Oriente received between 20 and 25 cents per can.<sup>569</sup> This means that average daily wages ranged between \$1.17 and \$1.46 during the year's coffee harvest. Those who moved to the sugar fields in time for the 1929 sugar harvest received an average of \$1.50 per day. Though wages for harvesting coffee and cutting sugar cane were close, they were both significantly higher than what an individual would make on a sugar plantation during the *tiempo muerto*. In other words, the Haitian laborer who picked coffee for \$1.46 per day made more money than the one who stayed on the sugar plantation, where field wages during the dead season of 1929 averaged \$1.05 per day.<sup>570</sup>

Although harvesting coffee was not inherently more remunerative than cutting sugar cane, work was organized differently. In Cuba, like other parts of the Americas, picking and processing coffee were not carried out by a single individual, but with the help of the entire

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<sup>567</sup> "Estadística de la producción de Café en 1926," 1927, Enclosure to letter from L. Lanier Winslow, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim to Secretary of State, July 6, 1927, USNA RG 59 837.61333/2

<sup>568</sup> Latter-day Cuban anthropologists estimate this to be much higher at 8 to 12 cans. Pedro Díaz, "Guanamaca," 26.

<sup>569</sup> "Comenzó la recogida en la zona cafetalera de Guantánamo," *Diario de Cuba*, August 17, 1928; "Todas las fincas utilizan a los haitianos para la recogida de café," *Diario de Cuba*, August 03, 1928.

<sup>570</sup> All wage rates are calculated from work accident cases in APHJPIH.

family.<sup>571</sup> The fact that coffee may be processed much later than it is picked allowed many Haitian families to combine work in the sugar and coffee industries. While men cut cane during the sugar harvest, women were known to de-shell and process coffee inside the *barracones* on sugar plantations. Dalia Timitoc Borrero, the daughter of a Haitian father and Cuban mother, who grew up near Guantánamo, talks about her sister “going at the mortar and pestle, piling the coffee” while the family lived on a sugar plantation.<sup>572</sup> In 1936, Haitian laborer Alberto Fiz and his mother lived on a sugar plantation in Camagüey. Among their possessions was “a coffee mill.”<sup>573</sup>

Haitian women’s participation in coffee production was not limited to processing picked coffee during the sugar harvest; they were in the fields along with Haitian men and children. Cuban journalists specifically described both Haitian and Cuban coffee laborers as “workers of both sexes,” including children.<sup>574</sup> Timitoc Borrero recalls the coffee fields outside of Guantanamo in the 1930s as places where adult women and men were active picking during the harvest. “Almost always, those who came to harvest coffee were the women who didn’t have a husband to help them raise their children.” She continues, “when you approached a *barracón* there were almost no big people, what you saw most were children.”<sup>575</sup> It wasn’t just women who brought children to *cafetales*. Kinship networks appear even among male laborers. Recall

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<sup>571</sup> Dore, "Patriarchy from above, Patriarchy from Below," 231; Stolcke, "The Hidden Charm of Family Labor," 65-6.

<sup>572</sup> Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 77.

<sup>573</sup> “un molino de café” - [No Title on Page], Acta and Witness Testimony compiled by Gregorio Rivera Gonzalez, Cabo del Esc. 41 de la Guardia Rural y Jefe del Puesto, February 5, 1936, APCTU 4/8/2.

<sup>574</sup> “La recogida de café en este término,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 26, 1933; “Ha despertado notable entusiasmo entre los trabajadores el inicio de la recogida de café en Oriente,” *Diario de Cuba*, October 9, 1937; “Todas las fincas utilizan a los haitianos para la recogida de café,” *Diario de Cuba*, August 03, 1928.

<sup>575</sup> Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 23-5.



that Haitian-born José Carlo Luis arrived at the *finca Santa Rita* in Palma Soriano “accompanied by his two sons and a nephew.”<sup>576</sup>

The increased autonomy of the coffee *colono* and the extra money of the coffee picker both came at the expense of immense amounts of labor, both paid and unpaid, by the entire family. Although renting or purchasing land permitted a certain degree of autonomy, it did not decrease Haitians’ labor expenditures. In his 1941 study of Cuban coffee, Alberto Arredondo referred to coffee *colonos* as being “alongside the harvester—the group who suffers most from the wealth of coffee.” He described the *colono*’s work as “exhausting” because they often “weeded the fields, hung small cords, prepared the seedlings, and planted the coffee.” They also “maintained the shade trees,...constructed a hut, and made a small *batey*.”<sup>577</sup> It is no wonder that observers of coffee farms mentioned that *colonos* were accompanied by “their offspring.”<sup>578</sup> In published newspaper advertisements, landholders seeking coffee-growing tenants specifically requested “a person with family.”<sup>579</sup>

The labor of Haitian women and children on Cuban coffee farms carried its own risks and offered few rewards. In addition to picking and processing coffee, Haitian women and children performed extra labor before the official workday began in order to supplement the low wages they received. Timitoc Borrero explained that “the coffee we harvest from the trees [for the landowner] hardly pays the bills of the store.” As a result, she and her mother woke up even before the normal harvest hours to pick extra coffee that had fallen on the ground in order to sell

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<sup>576</sup> Comparecencia del Acusado José Carlo Luis. Juzgado Municipal de Palma Soriano, September 27, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/5.

<sup>577</sup> Arredondo, *El café en Cuba*, 175-6.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.

<sup>579</sup> “Solicitud,” *El Cubano Libre*, November 14, 1916.

and supplement their wages.<sup>580</sup> Children did not always receive a cash wage at all. Sometimes, instead of fieldwork, they supervised younger siblings while their parents harvested.<sup>581</sup> In other moments they guarded fields for local landowners in exchange for food.<sup>582</sup> The labor of the entire family was frequently necessary for a small-holder to make a profit or a wage laborer to survive. This questions previous assertions that coffee workers received higher wages than in sugar. Even if laborers were paid on an individual basis, their wages must be analyzed in terms of the household.

Factoring entire families into the situation also challenges the notion that social relationships were more harmonious on Cuban coffee farms. Some types of labor made women and children vulnerable to punishments from landowners. When women and children picked up coffee off the ground before the workday started, they could be accused of theft. “On Sundays,” recalled Timitoc Borrero, “the owners of the *cafetales* grab their horse and go for a tour of the farm to see who was stealing coffee.”<sup>583</sup>

The fact that work was organized within the household meant that conflicts over labor were not absent, just largely invisible to historians because they occurred privately. Timitoc Borrero described moments when her parents stayed up later than the children, crying, talking, and arguing about ways to improve their lives. Once she heard her mother “talking with papa; I don’t know, I hate to hear them lamenting so much, it seems to me that it is about having to move from one place to another, without fixed destination.” At another moment, her parents had to choose whether or not to move while her father tried to recover from a cane cutting injury.

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<sup>580</sup> Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 36.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

Timitoc Borrero's mother claimed "that as soon as he is better, they'll leave; and papa asked her to where; but it seemed like he was crying and she answered that she did not know."<sup>584</sup>

Clearly Haitian families' ability to earn extra money in the coffee industry during sugar's *tiempo muerto* had very real drawbacks. As E.P. Thompson points out, even when "real wages advanced" they often did so "at the cost of longer hours and a greater intensity of labour so that the breadwinner was 'worn out' before the age of forty. In statistical terms, this reveals an upward curve. To the families concerned it might feel like immiseration."<sup>585</sup> Thompson's description is echoed almost exactly by Dalia Timitoc Borrero's recounting of the mental and physical toll of constant movement and year-round physical labor on her parents. "They are tired of moving from one place to another...with all of us always following."<sup>586</sup> This was clear even to observers of the coffee industry. In 1941, Alberto Arredondo declared that "the life of the harvester, has been the miserable life of the nomad who is forced to leave on long and risky annual journeys to earn a few cents."<sup>587</sup> For Haitians, picking coffee was not benign labor, nor was it inherently more profitable than cutting sugar cane. But it did afford them certain advantages when the entire migratory movement was halted in the early 1930s and the Cuban state began to repatriate Haitians.

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<sup>584</sup> Ibid., 36, 77, 81-2.

<sup>585</sup> Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 211.

<sup>586</sup> Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 78.

<sup>587</sup> Arredondo, *El café en Cuba*, 94.

## 5.2 REGULATING THE BORDER ON COFFEE GROUNDS

Haitians' participation in the Cuban coffee industry was so significant that it affected local manifestations of Cuban migration and trade policies. This is especially apparent when the migratory movement began to face crises in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. The worldwide depression that began in 1929 hit the Cuban sugar industry hard by lowering prices right when technological inputs and long-term efforts to increase productivity were beginning to pay off. Sugar harvests became significantly shorter, wages declined, fewer workers were needed, and the Cuban government stopped allowing migrants to enter after 1931. Combined with this, labor unions, with the exception of those affiliated with the Communist party, agitated for the passage of the Law for the Nationalization of Labor, which required half the employees in all companies to be Cuban citizens. Throughout the 1930s, approximately 38,500 Haitians were forcibly deported from Cuban soil.<sup>588</sup>

Haitian coffee workers were not immune to Cuba's xenophobic nationalism or the effects of plunging commodity prices. But in the Cuban coffee fields, these elements played out differently than they did on sugar plantations. Cuban journalists commonly distinguished between sugar, a product associated with foreign domination, and coffee, "the most Cuban industry in our *patria*."<sup>589</sup> On the surface, coffee's nationalist image was undermined by the significant presence of Haitian workers in the industry and the prevalence of coffee imports in Cuba. This contradiction was not lost on Cubans, though it did not produce a wholesale rejection of foreign workers, even amongst self-proclaimed nationalists. In the late 1920s and 1930s, debates about Haitian migrants often involved questions about coffee production and imports, a

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<sup>588</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism," 599.

<sup>589</sup> "El Secretario de Agricultura y el problema cafetalero," *Diario de Cuba*, October 20, 1937; "Los cafetaleros de Oriente," *La Independencia*, September 03, 1915.

not entirely surprising fact since import policies are often linked to issues of immigration.<sup>590</sup> Many Cuban landowners, framing their claims in nationalist terms, opposed foreign coffee imports while supporting Haitian immigration. When the migratory movement of Haitians to Cuba was halted, Cuban landowners tied to the coffee industry made nationalist arguments in favor of Haitians. In their minds, the massive increase in Cuban coffee production was due to Haitians' labor.<sup>591</sup> The industry's troubles, in turn, were the result of coffee imports from Haiti and elsewhere. They sought to restrict the entrance of Haitian coffee rather than Haitian immigrants.

Since at least the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, an active coffee trade, both legal and clandestine, emerged between both countries. Merchants and smugglers were quick to take advantage of Cuban demand to the great chagrin of Cuban landowners. Traveling alongside the Haitian laborers who migrated to Cuba were smugglers who brought coffee into the island. "[W]hatever smuggling goes on," wrote one U.S. official in Haiti, "is out of Haiti, mainly coffee and laborers."<sup>592</sup> Cuban producers complained against this competition. In 1916, *El Cubano Libre* published a letter by "several landowners" complaining of a merchant's "departure for the neighboring Republic of Haiti," with the goal of bringing "coffee from said point, through fraudulent means."<sup>593</sup> This was hardly an isolated case. In November 1920, a U.S. official stationed in the Aux Cayes Department of Haiti's southern peninsula declared:

the greater part of all the coffee from the Port-à-Piment section goes out of Haiti without payment of duty, and presumably into Cuba without payment of duty. To the smuggler

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<sup>590</sup> Engerman, "Changing Laws and Regulations and Their Impact on Migration," 93.

<sup>591</sup> "¡El haitiano es el único inmigrante necesario en Cuba!: Notas del momento" *Diario de Cuba*, August 23, 1928.

<sup>592</sup> Harold H. Utley, District Commander to Chief of the Gendarmerie, September 1, 1921, USNA RG127 E176 Box 1 Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan 1918-Sep 1921.

<sup>593</sup> "¿Contrabando de café?," *El Cubano Libre*, October 25, 1916.

there would be[,] if this is a fact, a saving of three cents per pound at this end, and eleven cents at the other end.<sup>594</sup>

Coffee smuggling was not limited to Haiti's southern peninsula, nor was it a haphazard process. A well-organized coffee smuggling network stretched from Cap-Haitien, in Northern Haiti to eastern Cuba, to mention one example. In January 1923, "el Patrón Toledo...went to Cap-Haitien" aboard the *T.B. Gain*, a Cuban ship. There, he picked up 434 bags of coffee "from another ship" before returning to the Cuban port of Caimanera, near Guantánamo. Upon arrival, Toledo presented false documents claiming that he had come from Jamaica. He then passed the contraband to three Cubans who owned coffee farms in the area. They loaded the Haitian product onto a train in Guantanamo and sent it to merchants operating in Santiago as if it were locally produced coffee. Authorities estimated Cuban government combined losses for this and similar infractions at \$9,920.24.<sup>595</sup> At times, Cuban and foreign coffee was physically mixed to avoid detection.<sup>596</sup>

Landowners' long-standing opposition to the importation of foreign coffee was couched in nationalist terms, even though they continued to depend on Haitian workers. The immigration crisis of 1928 showed how both issues were linked. In July 1928, the Haitian government suspended emigration to Cuba, allegedly because Haitians were being mistreated at the hands of Cuban officials.<sup>597</sup> Despite support for the emigration ban amongst some Cubans, observers

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<sup>594</sup> J.A. Rossell, Department Commander, Department of Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie, November 6, 1920, USNA RG127 E176 Box 1, Folder: [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>595</sup> Sr. Juez de Instrucción de Guantánamo from Secretario, Secretaría de Gobernación, Habana, March 5, 1923, ANCASXX 57/16 (Primera Pieza)/148-150.

<sup>596</sup> Pérez de la Riva, *El café*, 260.

<sup>597</sup> Green to Gross, July 19, 1928, USNA RG59 837.5538/9

predicted ruin for the Cuban coffee and sugar harvests.<sup>598</sup> As during previous bans, sugar companies and their representatives in the United States exerted pressure on the Haitian and Cuban governments to resolve the issue quickly. Cuban coffee growers also opposed the Haitian government's ban on migration. "If there are no Haitians, half of the coffee harvest will be lost in the fields."<sup>599</sup> Coffee growers' support for Haitian labor was coupled with their rejection of Haitian, and all other foreign, coffee imports. Right before the two governments began negotiations, the *Block Agrícola de Oriente*, an agricultural organization based in eastern Cuba, requested increased protection for Cuban coffee. Specifically, this group asked their government to "establish an embargo, over the ports of our Republic, for a minimum period of six months beginning with the first of October of this year, prohibiting the entrance during these six months, of foreign coffee." The idea was to allow Cuban coffee growers to sell their coffee within Cuba before "imports come in accordance with the necessities to satisfy [domestic demand]." Pressure was also placed on the government to put in a stronger tariff on coffee imports. "This" they declared "will be our contribution to the Economic Independence of our Country."<sup>600</sup>

Their concerns were pertinent, for Haitian authorities tried to use the migration crisis to exact tariff concessions from the Cuban government. Even after "the Cuban Government [had] satisfied his objections regarding Haitians who have emigrated to Cuba," Haitian president Louis Borno told a U.S. official in Haiti that he did "not intend to lift the suspension of emigration until an agreement shall be reached with the Cuban Government...on certain other questions as well."

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<sup>598</sup> "La inmensa riqueza cafetalera de Yateras," *Diario de Cuba*, August 4, 1928; "Sigue amenazante el problema de la inmigración haitiana," *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 28, 1928; "Todas las fincas utilizan a los haitianos para la recogida de café," *Diario de Cuba*, August 03, 1928.

<sup>599</sup> "Todas las fincas utilizan a los haitianos para la recogida de café," *Diario de Cuba*, August 03, 1928.

<sup>600</sup> "En Palma Soriano se interesan por el auge de la producción de café," *Diario de Cuba*, August 08, 1928.

His goal was to press for “the reduction of Cuban taxes against certain Haitian products, such as coffee, limes and other fruits,” something that producers within Haiti had been requesting for years.<sup>601</sup> In November and December 1928, letters were exchanged between Cuban and Haitian officials regarding the emigration ban. The Cuban government made guarantees for the proper treatment of Haitian citizens on Cuban soil. The two governments also agreed on the necessity of a bi-lateral treaty regarding labor migration and Haitian imports like coffee, though no specific agreements were reached at that time.<sup>602</sup> Perhaps the lack of a concrete agreement was due to the petitions of Cuban coffee growers, although my sources are not conclusive on this point. In short, while the political strength of sugar interests overturned the ban, coffee producers in both places played an important part in shaping these debates.

Cuban coffee growers and Haitian laborers also shaped the 1930s repatriation drives, which were linked to the fortunes of the sugar industry. Even though approximately 8,000 Haitians were expelled from Cuban soil during 1933 and 1934, some managed to obtain government permission to remain picking coffee.<sup>603</sup> In July 1934, on the eve of the coffee harvest, landowners in the coffee-growing regions of Guantánamo and Yateras successfully petitioned the government “not to carry out any more repatriations of Haitians.”<sup>604</sup> Despite the success of coffee growers’ petitions in some regions, Haitians linked to the production of coffee seem to have acted cautiously in the face of the repatriation threats. For example, that year,

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<sup>601</sup> C. Gross to Secretary of State, August 1, 1928, USNA RG59 837.5538/12. Summary of article in *Le Nouvelliste* from May 30, 1923 in G.H. Scott, “Memorandum for the Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti,” June 1, 1923, USNA RG127 E166 and 170, Box 1, Folder: Reports, Intelligence to AHC 1923.

<sup>602</sup> USNA RG59 838.021/4 – “Correspondance Echangée avec La Légation de Cuba relativement à l’émigration des Travailleurs haitiens” in *Republique d’Haiti: Bulletin Officiel du Department Des Relations Exterieures* – Num. XIII.

<sup>603</sup> McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba,” 245.

<sup>604</sup> “Suspendida la repatriación haitiana,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 20, 1934.



Haitian-born coffee *colono* José Caridad sought to liquidate his assets by leaving a coffee contract early and making contacts with the Communist party, the only organization to defend immigrants' rights to stay in Cuba. Caridad declared that since "they were carrying out the gathering of Haitians to embark them for their country, [he] tried to hand over the land to [his landlord]." <sup>605</sup> Caridad was also in possession of a copy of the current issue of *Bandera Roja* (Red Flag), a Communist newspaper whose front page carried an article under the heading: "In Oriente They are Hunting Haitians." <sup>606</sup>

While the repatriation of Haitians continued throughout the 1930s, coffee growers continued to emphasize the importance of Haitian workers. In 1938, coffee producers again petitioned the government to delay the repatriations, an indication that large numbers of Haitians remained in Oriente. In the early part of the 1938 coffee harvest, *La Voz del Pueblo* in Guantánamo published an article voicing strong opposition to Haitians' presence in Cuban coffee fields. The author presciently remarked that

day and night we see many Haitians heading to the *cafetales* where they think they won't be picked up, because the owners of *cafetales* have influence to avoid it; but there is no influence strong enough now, since the Government is committed to embarking 50,000 Haitians. <sup>607</sup>

The author correctly predicted coffee-growers' attempts to delay the repatriations in 1938 and the government's rejection of them. As in 1934, the *Asamblea Cafetaleros* held a meeting where "they agreed to elevate an energetic protest to the Secretary [of] Labor and other authorities with

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<sup>605</sup> Octavio Boué Frias to Jefe de Puesto, Bueycito, July 23, 1934, APSTU 1/2/4.

"Comparacencia del acusado: José Caridad Melendres," July 24, 1934, APSTU 1/2/7.

<sup>606</sup> "En Oriente cazan haitianos," *La Bandera Roja*, January 05, 1934, enclosed in APSTU 1/2/14.

<sup>607</sup> "La recogida de haitianos," *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 24, 1938.

the goal of suspending the re-embarkation of Haitians [in] those zones.”<sup>608</sup> The Municipal Alcalde of Jamaica, a town near Guantanamo, explained the full possible effects to the Secretary of Labor. The “rounding up of Antilleans at the moment will lead to the loss of eighty percent of the current coffee harvest because there are not enough natives to substitute for them.” He predicted “possible alterations of public order since mature coffee is lost in the countryside making it impossible for harvesters to cover their obligations.”<sup>609</sup>

Frequently, growers did not question the principle of deportations, just their timing. In a very typical argument, the *Asociación de Bayate* told the Secretary of Labor, “We do not protest the re-embarkation of Antilleans, we are seeking a stay until the 15<sup>th</sup> of December otherwise the collection of coffee would be totally lost.”<sup>610</sup> This time, the government did not heed coffee growers’ pleas. In October 1938 in Guantánamo and Yateras, the places that had successfully blocked repatriation in 1934, the military “was removing many Haitians from the *cafetales* hoping that the Secretary of Labor would continue to back them.”<sup>611</sup>

Cuban coffee growers’ inability to protect Haitian workers, as they had done four years earlier, was largely the result of new regulations of the coffee industry by the Cuban government. As indicated above, coffee interests had petitioned for the protection of the Cuban coffee industry beginning in the late 1920s, which included the defense of Haitian laborers.<sup>612</sup> However, during the 1930s the industry became fully protected by the national government,

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<sup>608</sup> Dr. Pérez Andre, Gobernador Provincial to Secretario de Trabajo, Habana. October 26, [1938], ANCDR 702/21/2.

<sup>609</sup> Tamames, Alcalde MPAL, Jamaica to Secretario de Trabajo, La Habana, October 28, 1938. ANCDR 702/21/6.

<sup>610</sup> La Asociación de Bayate to Secretario del Trabajo, La Habana, October 28, 1938, ANCDR 702/21/7. The only coffee-growing group who did not oppose the repatriation of Haitians that year was in Palma Soriano.

<sup>611</sup> “Malestar por la actitud de varios alcaldes,” Newspaper clipping probably from *El Pais* with byline October 31, 1938. Actual publication date unknown. ANCDR 702/21/27.

<sup>612</sup> “El bajo precio del café,” *Diario de Cuba*, February 27, 1930.

which set minimum coffee workers' wages and domestic prices. At that point, officials believed that Haitians could be replaced with Cubans. Haitians' coffee-related exemptions from deportation disappeared.

The Cuban government's attempts to regulate coffee occurred almost a decade after coffee growers initially requested protection. It was not until 1934 that the Office of Coffee and Cacao and the better-known Cuban Institute for the Stabilization of Coffee (ICE-Café) were created. The latter hardly functioned until 1936.<sup>613</sup> At the same time, regulating the coffee industry was a complex process fraught with many false starts and failures.<sup>614</sup> The strong competition Cuban coffee faced on the international market had persuaded Cubans that the "aspiration of the Cuban coffee-grower should consist in producing enough for domestic consumption."<sup>615</sup> Between 1935 and July 1938, the Cuban government attempted to raise the price of Cuban coffee on the domestic market. This involved setting price controls on processed and unprocessed coffee, placing high tariffs on coffee imports, and obliging growers to export a fixed percentage from every harvest. It was only in March 1937 that a successful formula for determining the quantity of Cuban coffee to be sent for export was put in place. The final result was that the domestic price of coffee in Cuba ranged between \$18.00 and \$20.00 per *quintal*. This was \$6.00 to \$7.00 higher than Colombia, the country with the next most expensive coffee in the region. It was over \$10.00 higher than the equivalent product from Haiti.<sup>616</sup>

The increase of Cuban coffee prices permitted the government to implement a minimum wage law for coffee harvesters without bringing ruin to their employers. In November 1937, the government decreed that coffee harvesters should receive 15 cents per can of coffee, amounting

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<sup>613</sup> Pérez de la Riva, *El café*, 233, 36, 39.

<sup>614</sup> Arredondo, *El café en Cuba*, 64, 73.

<sup>615</sup> "El bajo precio del café," *Diario de Cuba*, February 27, 1930.

<sup>616</sup> Arredondo, *El café en Cuba*, 62-4,67-8,71-5,113.

to a daily wage of a little more than 80 cents—an amount significantly lower than pre-depression levels.<sup>617</sup> In the minds of many, raising wages for picking coffee would permit Cubans to make a living on coffee farms and replace Haitians. It is not a coincidence that all of these interventions in the Cuban coffee economy took place right before the Cuban government rejected petitions to protect Haitians in the coffee industry from deportation. The health of the Cuban coffee industry---it was believed---no longer depended upon their labor.

In 1934, Haitians' coffee-growing acumen helped them to remain in Cuba just as their countrymen in the sugar regions were being deported. In 1938, their importance to the coffee industry did not prevent them from being deported any longer, but did make the process of repatriation more difficult for them. The plans to replace Haitian immigrant laborers with Cubans by guaranteeing a minimum wage started a debate. Did Haitians dominate coffee production because of their skills? Or were they the only ones willing to accept the industry's low wages? One journalist summed it up succinctly: "some coffee harvesters in Oriente [were] protesting the [repatriation] measure and asserting that [Haitians] are indispensable for carrying out the labors of the coffee harvest...Is it that among our many thousands of unemployed there do not exist enough workers capable of carrying out this work? Or is it that they don't want to pay the wages in accordance with the law?"<sup>618</sup>

When the time came to determine the answer to this question, officials in charge of repatriation chose to err on the side of caution at the great expense of Haitians' comfort, health,

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<sup>617</sup> "El Secretario de Agricultura y el problema cafetalero," *Diario de Cuba*. October 20, 1937. "Serán mejorados en los salarios todos los obreros del café," *Diario de Cuba*, October 13, 1937; "El Dr. García ha sido enviado por la Comisión de Salario Mínimo para que investigue cuanto perciben los obreros que recolectan el café," *Diario de Cuba*, September 09, 1937; "Jornal mínimo de 82 cts. diarios a los obreros de la industria del café," *Diario de Cuba*, October 27, 1937; Arredondo, *El café en Cuba*, 94-6.

<sup>618</sup> "Delictuosa la oposición al reembarque de haitianos," Newspaper Clipping. n.d. probably from *La Información*. ANCDR 702/21/27.

and well-being. Instead of being deported quickly, Haitians were detained on Cuban soil for a period of time to ensure a safety net for Cuban coffee growers. During the 1938 coffee harvest, *La Voz del Pueblo* noted:

The Secretary of Labor appears to be aware that the Cuban is not an addict of this work and to prevent a disaster has ordered that the Haitians to be repatriated be concentrated in camps, so that in the cases when Cuban hands are lacking for the coffee harvest, the coffee growers could ask for the workers they need among the re-concentrated Haitians and the government would concede them.<sup>619</sup>

Besides a limitation on Haitians' ability to move freely, conditions in these camps were inhumane. One official admitted that there were "big difficulties with the water service" with "delays up to two days on many occasions." Without water, under the hot Caribbean sun, the detained Haitians agitated against their conditions. Cuban authorities complained of "disorders in the camp due to the lack of this liquid."<sup>620</sup> During the harvest, coffee growers and officials argued whether or not "*antillanos* already in concentration camps [in] Santiago de Cuba should be newly returned to the fields."<sup>621</sup> It appears that they never were. Between 1938 and 1939, 5,700 Haitians were deported from Cuba.<sup>622</sup> Despite this, some Haitians managed to stay in Cuba, though they often put their coffee-growing activities on hold. The Haitian-born father of Dalia Timitoc Borrero chose to hide from authorities. All the children in her family were given strict orders.

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<sup>619</sup> "La repatriación de antillanos," *La Voz del Pueblo*. October 28, 1938.

<sup>620</sup> Secretario del Trabajo from Angel Pino y Aguila, 2do Tte. De Caballeria E. Constitucional, Delegado Sec. del Trabajo, December 16, 1938, ANCDR 702/21/32.

<sup>621</sup> Secretario de Trabajo, Havana from Juan Masso Garzón. Pdte. Ejecutivo Mpal de Caficultores, November 12, 1938, ANCDR 702/21/30.

<sup>622</sup> McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 2.

If someone knocks on the door, not to open it, if they ask for papa, [say] that they already picked him up, like the other Haitians and he should be in Haiti. Poor papa lived in hiding, without having time to plant a single *vianda* or anything, the time only permitted him to be hidden and we lived in suspense: Papa hidden and Mama with a sharpened machete, because she said that she would kill the one who knocked on the door to take papa to Haiti.<sup>623</sup>

The inability of Haitians to work in the Cuban coffee industry due to repatriation and self-concealment helps explain the dramatic drop in coffee production in Oriente province between 1937 and 1939. In the two-year period, coffee production in Oriente decreased from 604 thousand to 465 thousand pounds. In Palma Soriano alone, production fell approximately 36%, from 251 thousand to 163 thousand pounds.<sup>624</sup> By 1940, the waves of mass deportation had come to an end, though Haitians' presence on Cuban coffee farms remained significant. In Guantánamo in 1951, a labor force of "more than 60 workers" picking coffee for two Cuban landowners was still composed of "mostly Haitians."<sup>625</sup> Ethnographic studies conducted in Cuba show first- and second-generation Haitians' active participation in coffee picking in Oriente as late the 1970s.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 43.

<sup>624</sup> Arredondo, *El café en Cuba*, 192.

<sup>625</sup> "Acta firmado por P. Figueroa Vilató, Guardia Rural, Andres Lachais Otamendi, Denunciante, y Pedro Gainza Terrero, Testigo," October 15, 1951, AP Santiago: Audiencia Territorial de Oriente, 354/2610/1.

<sup>626</sup> Pedro Díaz, "Guanamaca."

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

The majority of Haitians who migrated to Cuba during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were recruited by sugar companies. But their economic activities were not limited to sugar production. Haitians played a significant role shaping Cuba's expanding coffee industry by drawing from the agricultural techniques they used in Haiti and even investing sugar wages in the coffee industry. Although labor in the coffee industry was often combined with work on sugar plantations, the two activities were very different. In the former, Haitians had more success securing land and becoming *colonos*. At the same time, differences in the age and gender divisions of labor meant that Haitian women and children joined men in the coffee fields, though they did not always receive wages for their work. Coffee provided a certain degree of autonomy for Haitian laborers and the potential for higher wages, particularly during the sugar dead season, though both of these came at the cost of tedious and physically demanding labor by all members of the family unit. Finally, Haitians' importance to the coffee industry provided them with staunch defenders during the repatriation drives of the 1930s. Cuban coffee growers successfully delayed the deportation of Haitians from their fields in favor of restricting imports and regulating the industry. When protectionist measures were fully consolidated in 1938, Haitian coffee pickers were deported in larger numbers, but their presence in the coffee fields of eastern Cuba continued to be noticeable well beyond the 1930s.

## 6.0 RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES AND REPRESSION

“True, Christianity divided the village into two—the people of the church and the people of the world—but the boundary between them had very many crossings.”---Chinua Achebe, *The Education of a British-Protected Child*<sup>627</sup>

On the night of September 23, 1915, Haitian-born laborer José Carlo Luis “was unable to sleep” in the Cuban coffee farm where he had just arrived to work. He claimed that in the “early morning he [had] heard the sound of dragging chains and some ghosts [had] appeared, speaking words to him that he could not understand.” In response, Carlo Luis “jumped from his hammock and traveled to the town of San Luis” in search of the rural guard station. He merely wanted the “guards to accompany him to the farm in order to get his family out.”<sup>628</sup> Instead, they accused Martin Santos, the Cuban-born owner of the farm, of practicing what Cubans at the time labeled *brujería* (witchcraft). Upon hearing the charges, Santos was incensed, asking the rural guardsmen “to look at the entire house...in order to demonstrate that what was denounced was

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<sup>627</sup> Achebe, *The Education of a British-Protected Child*, 12.

<sup>628</sup> “Comparecencia del Acusado José Carlo Luis: Juzgado Municipal de Palma Soriano,” September 27, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/5.



not true.” “Feeling that his reputation as an honorable man was harmed” Santos asked Police to bring suit against José Carlo Luis “for false denunciation.”<sup>629</sup>

The rural guardsmen found no physical evidence to implicate Santos, so they began their journey back to San Luis with José Carlo Luis in tow, in order to charge him for making a “false denunciation.”<sup>630</sup> Carlos Luis refused to leave, however. It was not the impending legal charges against him but fears for the safety of his relatives. He insisted that the rural guards “bring his two sons and nephew [too], resisting with this motive to continue the journey.” In the ensuing misunderstanding, based partially on linguistic differences, a fight broke out between Carlo Luis and the guards over whether or not to proceed.<sup>631</sup> He was later charged, not for false denunciation, but for attacking the rural guardsmen.<sup>632</sup>

The case of José Carlo Luis, Martin Santos, and the alleged ghosts turns conventional wisdom about the politics of religious beliefs and repression in Republican Cuba on its head. But none of the actors involved dismissed the case as being preposterous. The Cuban rural guardsmen responded with promptness to the complaints of the Haitian worker. The Cuban landowner reacted with quasi-panic at the charges of *brujería* and went to great lengths to defend himself. The fact that a black, Haitian agricultural worker’s testimony led to a police investigation of a white, Cuban-born landowner’s practices of *brujería* questions previous scholarship that has interpreted religious repression and denunciation in 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba strictly as a function of anti-black or anti-Haitian racism. Furthermore, the Haitian accuser’s

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<sup>629</sup> “Denuncia” signed by Agripino Jardines, Eleusipe Mesa, y Castillo, September 25, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/1.

<sup>630</sup> “Declaración de Martin Santos y Pérez,” September 25, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/4; Agripino Jardines and Eleusipe Mesa, “Denuncia,” September 25, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/1.

<sup>631</sup> “Comparecencia del Acusado José Carlo Luis: Juzgado Municipal de Palma Soriano,” September 27, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/5.

<sup>632</sup> “Auto de Procesamiento: Santiago de Cuba, Auto Juez: Sr. Rolando Ramos,” October 1, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/10.

belief in the reality of the ghosts and the reaction of the rural guardsmen questions divisions between believers and those who sought to repress them. The case represents but one of a number of religious denunciations that occurred in rural Cuba during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These cases received little attention from the Cuban press and have been ignored by previous scholars. One goal of this chapter is to analyze these cases to better understand how Haitians' and Cubans' overlapping religious beliefs shaped their interactions of ritual practice and repression.

## 6.1 AFRICAN RELIGIONS IN THE AMERICAS

The spiritual practices of Africa and the African Diaspora have long been denigrated for their apparent incompatibility with Christianity and Western concepts of Civilization. Only in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did some anthropologists begin to interpret them as authentic religious practices. An early wave of scholarship, often associated with Melville Herskovits, treated diasporic religions as African cultural retentions that survived the horrors of the Middle Passage and slavery in the Americas.<sup>633</sup> Since then, historians and anthropologists have employed a number of concepts like transculturation, creolization, hybridization, and ethnogenesis to argue that many aspects of African religions actually developed in the New World. They argue that slaves from different parts of Africa combined their religious beliefs with elements of European and Indigenous spirituality in response to the violence of slavery, not in spite of it.<sup>634</sup> Throughout the Americas, different African religions were made and remade, which later

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<sup>633</sup> Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, 7.

<sup>634</sup> Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture*, 44; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, xvii.

received names like Candomblé in Brazil, Vodou in Haiti, Obeah in Jamaica, Santería in Cuba, and many others in these and other countries. Recently, scholars have moved beyond debates about the origins of such religions and other New World cultures. They note that processes like ethnogenesis occurred within the heterogeneous societies of Africa, Europe, and the Americas even before these populations came into contact with one another, challenging notions of originary cultures. Instead of seeking the African or New World origins of spiritual practices, scholars now analyze the ways that notions of “Africa” are constructed, remade, and employed in religious and other cultural practices in local settings throughout the Atlantic.<sup>635</sup>

Despite the very real differences that developed as African slaves dispersed through the Western hemisphere, scholars point out the overarching structural commonalities in religious cosmologies and ritual practices. African-derived religions are marked by the existence of a spiritual hierarchy. At the top, there is a single god inhabiting a spiritual realm not of the Earth. Below are a host of spirits that may include individuals’ ancestors. Each of these is associated with different aspects of life and death, over which they may exert some control, and have their own demands, traits, and idiosyncrasies. Many of them have been coupled with Catholic saints, leading to scholarly debates as to whether practitioners consider spirits and their saint counterparts as separate entities or different “faces” of the same being.<sup>636</sup> Practitioners “serve” these spirits by performing ritual acts that include feeding them with fruits, vegetables, animals, or other goods. Unlike the supreme god at the top of the hierarchy, spirits may communicate with people on earth by speaking through their practitioners during ceremonies involving ritual possession. Among practitioners, a hierarchy also exists that differentiates between the priests

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<sup>635</sup> Sidbury and Cañizares-Esguerra, “Mapping Ethnogenesis,”; Palmié, “Introduction,” 13-4; Ferreira da Silva, “Out of Africa?,” 40; Barnes, “Introduction,” 7.

<sup>636</sup> Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle*, 199; Desmangles, *The Faces of the Gods*, 98, 138, 43.

and priestesses who have undergone processes of initiation and the religious practitioners they lead.<sup>637</sup>

Unlike other world religions such as Catholicism, ritual practices are not dictated by rigid concepts of centralized orthodoxy.<sup>638</sup> With the significant exception of ethnographic literature, which may influence practitioners' rituals, there are no codified handbooks or sacred texts.<sup>639</sup> Ritual practices are carried out according to oral traditions that are passed down through spiritual leaders. As a result, the content of these different religious traditions is open and fluid. Within individual traditions, rituals, objects, and deities have undergone transformations in form and content to retain meaning for their followers, whether slaves or contemporary workers.<sup>640</sup> As Patrick Bellegarde-Smith notes: "it is the religion that is likely to change, while the theology, though not static, may remain true to itself."<sup>641</sup> The fluidity of religious content and the fact that it transforms to reflect the changing needs of practitioners makes these religions particularly potent vehicles of community formation, repositories for communal memory and history, and mechanisms of coping and adaptation in harsh and unstable living conditions.<sup>642</sup> For instance, in anthropological research conducted in Haiti and Haitian communities in the United States, Karen McCarthy Brown has observed subtle changes in the dispositions of specific *lwás* (spirits). Ogou, the *lwa* associated with militarism and politics in Haiti, manifests a slightly different

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<sup>637</sup> Noel, *Black Religion*, 11. See also Dodson, *Sacred Spaces*, chapter 2.

<sup>638</sup> This is not to deny the numerous local variations in Catholic practice and belief throughout the world. Nor does it stop some practitioners of African-descended religions from holding very rigid beliefs about what is proper. Greer and Mills, "A Catholic Atlantic," 5-6.

<sup>639</sup> Brown, *Santería Enthroned*, 11.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10; Brown, "Systematic Remembering, Systematic Forgetting," 66; Dayan, "Vodoun, or the Voice of the Gods," 16.

<sup>641</sup> Bellegarde-Smith, "Introduction," 4.

<sup>642</sup> Brown, *Mama Lola*, 15, 44-7, 221; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, xvii; McAlister, *Rara!*, 4-5; Dubois, "Vodou and History," 98; Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 5-14.

personality in the United States, where his characteristic tirades are coupled with tears of rage. “Immigrant life in New York,” she concludes, “has revealed another dimension of his anger.”<sup>643</sup> Such changes have motivated scholars to view religious communities and their ritual practices from specific periods and places as an entry point for analyzing the lives and perspectives of practitioners, especially subaltern populations whose visions of themselves and their history do not appear in traditional historical sources.<sup>644</sup>

The historiography of African-derived religions in Republican Cuba interprets religious beliefs, practices, and repression largely along racial and national lines. Scholars have detailed both top-down and popular forms of racially-charged religious discrimination against Afro-Cuban practitioners. Immediately after Cuba became nominally independent in 1902, journalists and social scientists condemned African-based religious practices as signs of barbarism, national atavism and criminality. In his 1906 text, *Los negros brujos*, Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz applied the criminological theories of Cesare Lombroso to the study of Afro-Cuban religious practitioners in Cuba.<sup>645</sup> Many other voices in Cuban society believed that African religious practices would have to disappear before the Cuban nation, and especially Afro-Cubans within it, could reach the ranks of “civilization” and earn the right to self-government and citizenship. As social scientists identified the putative social ills of African religious practice, police broke up rituals, which they labeled *brujería* (witchcraft), and arrested their participants throughout Cuba. Although the Cuban constitution guaranteed freedom of religion, practitioners

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<sup>643</sup> Brown, "Systematic Remembering, Systematic Forgetting," 71, 83-4.

<sup>644</sup> Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 5-14; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, xix-xx.

<sup>645</sup> Ortiz, *Hampa Afro-Cubana*.

were arrested on the rationale that they were guilty of illicit association or breaking sanitary measures, though convictions were not always forthcoming.<sup>646</sup>

The efforts of journalists, social scientists, and state officials were linked to popular forms of discrimination as well. Scholars of race and religion in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba have studied the existence of highly sensationalized *brujería* scares that normally involved the (alleged) ritual murder of children. In the first of dozens cases that occurred in the Republican period, a four-year old girl named Zoila was reported missing from her home near Havana. Newspapers quickly spread word of the disappeared girl along with sensationalized rumors that she may have been the victim of a ritual murder perpetrated for healing purposes. Zoila's body was eventually found in a state of decomposition with internal organs missing, increasing public outrage at the alleged work of the brujos. Numerous Afro-Cubans known to be practitioners of African religions were arrested. Two received the death penalty.<sup>647</sup> The case of Zoila was a boon to Cuban journalists, who quickly established a specific type of reporting "genre" for discussions of *brujería* scares, making them critical actors in spreading these rumors, shaping public perceptions of African religions, and urging state repression.<sup>648</sup>

Scholars interpret these cases and their journalistic treatment as a major vehicle for spreading anti-black racism and raising anxieties about blacks' citizenship in a country that identified itself as being racially egalitarian.<sup>649</sup> "By implying that any white person, particularly small children, could be the victim of a brujo," Aline Helg writes, the press "stressed the threat

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<sup>646</sup> Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 227-8; Bronfman, *Measures of Equality*, 21, 101; Bronfman, "'En Plena Libertad'," 553.

<sup>647</sup> Bronfman, "'En Plena Libertad'," 549-50; Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 109-14.

<sup>648</sup> Román, *Governing Spirits*, 18.

<sup>649</sup> Bronfman, "'En Plena Libertad'," 554; Román, *Governing Spirits*, 4-5.

that the latter represented to innocent human beings and to the institution of the family. It brought the ‘black threat’ into white Cuban homes.”<sup>650</sup>

Scholarship on race and religion in republican Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America has identified a shift in elite visions of Indigenous and African-derived culture and religious practices that occurred between the early 1920s and the 1950s.<sup>651</sup> In the context of increased political and economic domination by the U.S. state and sugar companies, many nationalist voices within Cuba began to promote Afro-Cuban religious and other cultural practices as authentic antidotes to foreign control. This created a new interest in distilled forms of Afro-Cuban culture as a sign of national authenticity and a contribution to the country’s folklore. In 1921, Fernando Ortiz’ “Los cabildos afrocubanos,” published in the *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, challenged readers to conceptualize these colonial-era organizations where African religion and culture flourished as part of “our national folklore” that required preservation, albeit in modified form.<sup>652</sup>

In Cuba, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, official tolerance of religious practices in the name of folklore were coupled with strict definitions as to what counted as authentic ritual practice and what was deemed inappropriate for national culture.<sup>653</sup> In Cuba, intellectuals’ valorization of *afrocubanismo* did not prevent sectors of rural society from denouncing practitioners of *brujería* or judicial authorities from persecuting them, especially Haitians, who

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<sup>650</sup> Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 18.

<sup>651</sup> Bronfman, *Measures of Equality*, 111-4; Moore, "Representations of Afrocuban Expressive Culture," 41; Wirtz, *Ritual, Discourse, and Community*, 60-8. For other examples in the Americas, see Largey, *Vodou Nation*, 23; de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizo*, 45; Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*, 166-72.

<sup>652</sup> Ortiz, “Los cabildos afrocubanos,” *Revista Bimestre Cubana* 16:1 (Jan-Feb 1921) reprinted in Ortiz, *Los cabildos*, 24.

<sup>653</sup> Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 190; Román, *Governing Spirits*, 14, 21.

were often excluded from national revalorizations of African-descended culture in Cuba.<sup>654</sup> If journalistic treatment of *brujería* scares followed specific narrative tropes, the identities of those accused changed in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Though early on, the prototypical brujo was African-born, by the late 1910s and 1920s many were identified as Haitian and Jamaican migrants.”<sup>655</sup> For instance, less than one year after Ortiz’ essay on cabildos appeared, a sensational *brujería* scare involving a Haitian occurred in Camagüey. In 1922, a young woman reported that someone had kidnapped her four-year old daughter. Police officers and neighbors believed the girl had been taken in order for her body and internal organs to be used in an act of ritual cannibalism. A group of Haitians from the area who were known religious practitioners were quickly arrested. Newspapers in Camagüey and Havana produced sensationalized reports of the case, stoking a public furor that only increased when the young child’s mutilated body was found. Eventually, the child’s mother confessed responsibility for the crime, admitting that she had accidentally killed the child before staging the corpse and blaming it on *brujos*. Despite this, some were still convinced that Haitian immigrants were somehow involved.<sup>656</sup>

The popular, judicial, and scientific opposition to African religions in republican Cuba has led scholars to argue that religion served as a major site of discrimination and racism against Haitian migrants, as it did in their other migratory destinations.<sup>657</sup> Some even argue that Haitians purposefully cultivated a reputation for supernatural power in order to insulate themselves from Cubans. Barry Carr notes “the layers of discrimination that enveloped Haitian

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<sup>654</sup> Chomsky, “Barbados or Canada?,” 440.

<sup>655</sup> Román, *Governing Spirits*, 19.

<sup>656</sup> A more detailed account of the case appears in McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba,” 166-9. For a fictionalized and highly racist account of one of these cases involving Afro-Cubans, see José Heriberto López, “Instintos regresivos,” *Cuba Contemporánea*, June-July-August 1927.

<sup>657</sup> Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 279; Zanetti, *La república*, 248; McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba,” 172.



immigrants provided them with a powerful way of asserting their difference and securing respect---a respect born out of the awe and even fear with which Cubans viewed them...Haitians knew how to exploit their sinister reputation to heighten the cultural separation between themselves and the Cuban-born population.”<sup>658</sup>

Finally, contemporary anthropologists have outlined the ways that Santería, Vodú (the label given to the religion practiced amongst Haitian descendants in Cuba), and other practices have gained a modicum of respectability and popularity in contemporary Cuba. Since the 1990s, both official and popular acceptance of African-descended religious practices have become common. Not only do these rituals appeal to a more racially diverse audience, including foreign tourists, they are supported and even co-opted by the state’s official revolutionary multiculturalism.<sup>659</sup> Grete Viddal argues that Haitian descendants are able to forge links in contemporary Cuba through folkloric dance and “open-to-the-public Vodú ceremonies” allowing them “to challenge marginalization, build cultural capital, and cultivate regional pride.”<sup>660</sup> This chapter shows that Haitians’ use of religion to create communities with Cubans is not an entirely new phenomenon.

The case of José Carlo Luis, along with recent scholarship on African religions in Haiti and Cuba, suggest that the local dynamics of ritual practice, belief, and repression in eastern Cuba did not occur strictly along racial or national lines. First, scholars have demonstrated that religious communities may produce parallel or alternative judicial, political, and social orders that do not necessarily conform to the contours of the larger society in which they function. In other words, we cannot deduce the “existence and composition” of religious communities from

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<sup>658</sup> Carr, "Identity, Class, and Nation," 95. See also Sklodowska, *Espectors y espejismos*, 70-2.

<sup>659</sup> Routon, *Hidden Powers of State*, 4-8.

<sup>660</sup> Viddal, "Haitian Migration," 93.

other social relationships.<sup>661</sup> Second, contemporary anthropological research in Cuba, Haiti, and the United States demonstrates that individuals engage in ritual practices and borrow content from spiritual traditions normally conceptualized as separate. This may take the form of individuals who participate in, for instance, both Santería and Spiritism in Cuba.<sup>662</sup> However, it may also entail a change in an individual's religious identification. For instance, Karen Richman has found that many Haitian migrants in the United States convert to Pentecostalism. Although this represents a strategic move to claim religious respectability in their host country, it does not signify a rejection of their old visions of the world, since many perceive aspects of Pentecostal worship through the lens of magic.<sup>663</sup>

Such observations have led many scholars to charge that categories like Vodou, Santería, and others are highly problematic, especially in historical analyses. These labels were not always employed by religious practitioners and give a false sense of coherence to a host of heterogeneous and de-centralized forms of religious practices. In some cases, such reified labels were constructed by individuals who sought to identify them as social pathologies or to repress them using state power. Recognizing the heterogeneity of religious practices, even within traditions like "Vodou" allows scholars to differentiate between religion and magic, as practitioners in many different contexts do.<sup>664</sup>

In 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Haiti, such distinctions heavily shaped state efforts to repress what they called *sortilèges* (spells). As Kate Ramsey argues, religious practitioners interpreted

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<sup>661</sup> Wirtz, *Ritual, Discourse, and Community*, ix [quote]; Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 2-3; Laguerre, *Voodoo and Politics in Haiti*, 19; Fernández Robaina, *Cuba: Personalidades en el debate racial*, 187; Routon, *Hidden Powers of State*, 6.

<sup>662</sup> Wirtz, *Ritual, Discourse, and Community*, 30-2, 40-1; Dodson, *Sacred Spaces*, 13, 169.

<sup>663</sup> Richman, "A More Powerful Sorcerer," 31.

<sup>664</sup> Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 115; Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 61; Richman, *Migration and Vodou*, 17-9.

these laws as confirmation of the “existence and supernatural efficacy” of malicious magic. As a result, enforcement of laws was often driven by local actors who directed them at alleged practitioners of magic, not those who were believed to be practicing legitimate religion. This is apparent when reports of ritual murder were sensationalized in 19<sup>th</sup> century Haiti in cases that appear similar to the above-mentioned *brujeria* scares from Cuba. Even the “public furor” expressed by Haitians in a well-known case involving accusations of ritual murder for religious practices, may have been motivated “at least in part, *from* popular spiritual convictions, not in spite of them.”<sup>665</sup>

This chapter draws on this recent scholarship to reconstruct the dynamics of religious practice, belief, and repression amongst Haitians and Cubans in eastern Cuba during the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As in other parts of this dissertation, reconstructing the religious communities that Haitians and Cubans formed faces severe limitations from source materials. Contemporary scholars have successfully conducted ethnographic research among Cuba’s religious practitioners, though one cannot assume that the religious communities from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century functioned in similar ways. Instead, historians must rely on Cuban newspapers, police reports, and judicial records, which were written by the very individuals who belittled these religious faiths and sought to destroy them. Sources from this “scandalously partial archive” make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to discern ritual content and meanings.<sup>666</sup> However, the cases serve as a form of what anthropologists often refer to as “telling moments” that may be analyzed for what they say about the individuals who participated in ritual practices, the symbols they employed in their altars, and the dynamics of religious

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<sup>665</sup> Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 71, 85-6.

<sup>666</sup> Román, *Governing Spirits*, 34.

denunciation in the countryside.<sup>667</sup> Ultimately, these documents provide only signposts, albeit very helpful ones, in the religious world created by Haitians and Cubans.

I argue that religious beliefs, practices, and repression did not strictly break down along racial and national lines in eastern Cuba. At the level of local religious communities, distinctions between Haitians and Cubans blurred, challenging the notion of Haitians' cultural isolation in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba. Haitians and Cubans participated in a variety of ritual practices together, thus creating their own religious communities and forms of memory. These new communities probably emerged through Haitians' and Cubans' efforts to establish correspondence between specific spirits in their respective spiritual hierarchies.

At the local level, religious repression was often different from the image conveyed in the Cuban press. Journalists placed the most emphasis on the *brujería* cases that conformed to their racial and nationalist visions, often embellishing details to buttress their arguments. These sensationalized cases, which hit the national spotlight, occurred alongside others that received considerably less attention because they could not be distilled into a clean racial argument for the Cuban press. In other words, at the local level, narratives about African magic and religion were shaped by believers and practitioners themselves, less by newspaper characterizations. Both Haitians and Cubans implicated a diverse array of individuals in practices of *brujería*, including Cubans, Haitians, and people from the United States. While some accusations were motivated by a cynical abuse of the judicial system, others indicated an intense belief in the magico-religious powers of the accused. Just as some Cubans feared the powers of Haitians, the latter interpreted Cuban rituals through their own understandings of specific religious and magical practices. This fuller exploration of religious practice and denunciation in Cuba suggests that

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<sup>667</sup> For a reflection on "telling moments," see Wirtz, *Ritual, Discourse, and Community*, 1-19.

tidy national distinctions, as well as those between believers/ practitioners and denouncers do not accurately depict local relationships.

## 6.2 HAITIANS, CUBANS, AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN EASTERN CUBA

In addition to their skills picking coffee and cutting sugar cane, the Haitian agricultural laborers who traveled to Cuba during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought their religious traditions with them. Dalia Timitoc Borrero, the Cuban-born daughter of a Haitian man and Cuban woman, recalled Haitian spiritual leaders on the coffee farm where she grew up in the 1930s. One of them was Santiago Fiz, whose religious practices and the discussions surrounding them, served as a vehicle for cementing community and collective memory.<sup>668</sup> Fiz used religious songs and ceremonies to invoke previous generations of his family members and their role in the Haitian Revolution. “While he sang...he beat the ground with a stick like they did in Haiti[,] calling to his ancestors.” He told Borrero that the songs were also sung by his family members during “the war of the Haitians against the French.”<sup>669</sup>

The religious communities that practitioners formed in eastern Cuba during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not constituted strictly along national lines.<sup>670</sup> Like the religious divisions that Chinua Achebe described of his childhood in Nigeria in the epigraph to this chapter, there were “very many crossings” between Haitian and Afro-Cuban religious

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<sup>668</sup> Wirtz argues that day-to-day discussions of rituals, not just what transpires at ceremonies, produces cohesion amongst religious practitioners. Wirtz, *Ritual, Discourse, and Community*, xiii-xiv, 2-3, 26.

<sup>669</sup> Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 37-8.

<sup>670</sup> Marc McLeod briefly acknowledges Haitians’ and Cubans’ tendency to practice religion together. McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba,” 191, 94.

practitioners in the period.<sup>671</sup> In 1928, on a farm called ‘*El Reposo*’ in Guantánamo, a funeral and dance were held for a deceased Haitian. Among the individuals in attendance were “five or six Cubans” and “about 30 Haitians,” showing the heterogeneity of rural communities and the way they were strengthened through ritual events.<sup>672</sup> Dalia Timitoc Borrero recalled visiting a “spiritual center” in the community of La Caridad de los Indios, one of the few settlements of people who self-identified as descendants of indigenous Taino in post-conquest Cuba.<sup>673</sup> The center was run by an Indian woman named La Negra and was apparently very popular. When La Negra “had many sick people to heal” the above-mentioned Haitian, Santiago Fiz, worked as her assistant.<sup>674</sup> In 1944, Cuban Evelio Rojas and Haitian José Caridad Fis were practicing together “in the household of Señora Angela Perez Garcia” in Baracoa, in Eastern Cuba. Among their ritual items was “a packet” containing “two red scarves, one white one, a cross, a *detente*, a cigar, three white cloths, fifty playing cards, and the quantity of fifty cents in the following fractions, two pieces of twenty cents and one of ten cents.”<sup>675</sup>

Haitians often served as the religious leaders in these heterogeneous groups of practitioners. In 1936, in Yaguajay, Las Villas, police interrupted a large ceremony in which “more than one hundred people were surrounding Alberto Diaz, a Haitian” who was leading the ritual. Among his followers “figure[d] many women and some children.”<sup>676</sup> When it came to healing, Haitians’ services were even requested by white Cubans, suggesting that whites’

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<sup>671</sup> Achebe, *The Education of a British-Protected Child*, 12.

<sup>672</sup> “‘Ultimo Rezo’ que termina en una orgía tragica” *La Voz del Pueblo*, May 21, 1928.

<sup>673</sup> “Los indios de Yateras,” *Diario de Cuba*, February 2, 1930. See also Yaremko, “‘Obvious Indian.’”

<sup>674</sup> Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 38.

<sup>675</sup> “Acta del Guardia Rural,” Firmado por: L.E. Gilbert Garcia y Octavio Diaz Diaz, April 1, 1944, Archivo Provincial de Santiago: Juzgado Municipal de Baracoa (hereafter APSJMB) 198, 5.

<sup>676</sup> “En la finca ‘Camaján’ celebraban ritos brujos, mientras actuaba de santón, un haitiano Lombrosiano,” *Diario de Cuba*, May 31, 1936.

participation in African religious and healing rituals is not as recent a phenomenon as scholars have imagined. In 1936, Marcelino Ruguera Aguila, a white, Cuban-born individual living in rural Camagüey required the expertise of Benito Luis, a local Haitian healer. Ruguera Aguila's "youngest son of ten years had become sick and because of the sickness, a Haitian named Benito Luis, a neighbor, had offered to cure the boy with *brujerías*, herbs, and concoctions." Soon, the boy was healed and Luis received seventeen pesos in return for his services.<sup>677</sup>

Haitians' and Cubans' tendency to practice together may have been motivated by the magico-religious power and leadership often attributed to the former.<sup>678</sup> According to local lore in Maisí, the easternmost part of Cuba, Haitians held strong magical-religious powers. One popular story describes a moment in 1935 when a prized fighting rooster lost a cockfight (and with it his owner's large wager) to a disheveled bird belonging to a Haitian. Right before he could be killed, the moribund bird ran out of the cockpit and disappeared into the crowd. When the Cuban owner of the defeated rooster arrived home that night, he found that his father had been mysteriously injured with "a bloody wound in his neck" in the same spot as his defeated rooster. The Haitian's magical power was to blame. Haitians' powers became evident to Cuban muleteer Tomás Mateu, whose team of mules refused to walk past a cemetery in 1920. As he sought to turn the mules around, Mateu "felt [something] like a man suddenly mounted on the haunches of his horse" though nobody was there. The problem persisted every time Mateu passed the cemetery until he consulted "a Haitian *santero*" who "told him what he should do." After following the Haitian's instructions, the problem was solved. The fact that the Haitian was

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<sup>677</sup> Certification of Trial Record by José Patao Bravo, Secretario del Juzgado Municipal de San Jeronimo en Vertientes, January 19, 1937, APCJIPJC 304/3723/4.

<sup>678</sup> Lauren Derby makes a similar argument for Haitians in the Dominican Republic and others have argued that spiritual power is often attributed to the most marginalized individuals in society. Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money," 523; Wade, *Race and Ethnicity*, 93.

called a *santero*, or initiated leader of Cuban Santería, suggests that Haitians may have adopted Cuban religious practices or that Cubans may have subsumed Haitians' spiritual practices into their own existing systems.<sup>679</sup>

Identifying the specific religious traditions that Haitians and Cubans practiced together is impossible at this point. Available sources do not allow historians to discern what Haitians' and Cubans' rituals and healing practices actually looked like. With the exception of the recorded oral histories from Maisí and the memoirs of Timitoc Borrero, all of the known cases are available to historians only because they were recorded by authors bent on repressing African religious practices. Not only did journalists and state officials lump all forms of ritual practice into categories like *brujería* or *brujería haitiana*, they added adjectives like “satanic” or “Lombrosian” to their reports, thus associating these religions with devil worship and the criminological writings of Cesare Lombroso, making these sources extremely problematic for any attempt at reconstructing ritual content.<sup>680</sup> Despite these limitations, it is possible to combine details from judicial records with contemporary ethnographic studies to identify religious symbols that resonated with both Haitians and Cubans and tentatively approximate their overlapping meanings.

On the surface, Haitians' and Cubans' engagement in shared religious practices and ritual communities may seem counterintuitive. Recent scholarship has historicized labels such as Haitian Vodou and Cuban Santería to show that they were not always used by practitioners themselves and offer a false sense of homogeneity and consensus to ritual practices that were in

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<sup>679</sup> Matos, *Maisí*, 43-4, 53-4.

<sup>680</sup> For instance, see “En la finca ‘Camaján’ celebraban ritos brujos, mientras actuaba de santón, un haitiano Lombrosiano,” *Diario de Cuba*, May 31, 1936.



fact quite de-centralized and even contested.<sup>681</sup> In contemporary Santiago de Cuba, for instance, the religious rituals of individuals who self-identify as practitioners of Santería reflect “cross-pollination” and even “idiosyncratic” combinations of diverse religious elements, producing heterogeneity and local variations even within a single tradition. Furthermore, individual members of a community may attend the same ceremony and strongly disagree upon its authenticity or significance. What ultimately unites spiritual communities is “participation in a common dialogue” that emphasizes “religious propriety rather than shared belief.”<sup>682</sup> The dialogic aspect of belonging in a religious community is emphasized in Karen McCarthy Brown’s discussion of the relationship “between participant-observer and informant.” Ultimately, she argues “the only truth is the one in between.”<sup>683</sup>

One religious symbol that seemed to serve as a site of religious dialogue between Haitians and Cubans was the Virgin of Charity of Copper. In Guantánamo in 1928, when police raided a “center of Haitian *brujería*” in the *barracones* of the *Central* La Isabel and arrested a Haitian named Manuel García, they seized “a Virgin of Charity in pieces.”<sup>684</sup> Other ritual objects included “a plate containing wines and other potions for curing, lit candles, pieces of bowl, [and] stones known as thunderstones.” Negative newspaper coverage of the case noted that “most grave” was that García “dedicated himself to performing cures for many people, among them two fanatical women.” His followers’ nationalities are not given, but the journalist’s lament about García’s popularity, combined with the fact that they were not referred

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<sup>681</sup> Wirtz, *Ritual, Discourse, and Community*, chapter 3; Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 6.

<sup>682</sup> Wirtz, *Ritual, Discourse, and Community*, xiii, 3-5, 30, 32; Palmié, “Now You See It, Now You Don’t,” 90-1.

<sup>683</sup> Brown, *Mama Lola*, 12.

<sup>684</sup> “Detenido un curandero en Guantánamo,” *Diario de Cuba*, February 17, 1928.

to by labels like *haitiano* or *haitiana*, suggests that the two women, if not other followers, were likely Cubans.<sup>685</sup>

Although some of the Cubans' and Haitians' ritual co-practices may have revolved around the Virgin of Charity, the image may have held different meanings for them, which may or may not have been reconciled by practitioners. Cubans feel a deep veneration for the Virgin of Charity. Since reports of her miraculous appearance in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Virgin of Charity has held strong and varied meanings for many Cubans. At some moment during the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as a black slave and two indigenous brothers were canoeing in the Bay of Nipe, on the northeastern coast of Cuba, they encountered a small figure of the Virgin Mary. The image had brown skin and was accompanied by a sign declaring "I am the Virgin of Charity." Like other miraculous apparitions of the Madonna in colonial Latin America and the wider Atlantic, the Virgin of Charity served as a tool for spreading Catholicism among non-European and popular groups in Cuba. However, the Virgin's image was also a source of political empowerment and local identity formation for enslaved and popular groups who used her to frame their petitions to colonial authorities in terms of official Catholicism.<sup>686</sup> During Cuba's 19<sup>th</sup> century wars of independence, the Virgin of Charity became a national symbol for the rank and file soldiers, many of African descent, who called on her for protection. The brown color of her skin also became associated with dominant visions of Cuban nationalist discourses that touted the racial mixture of the island's population---making her a powerful symbol of national and racial inclusion.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> "Centro de brujería. Haitiano sorprendido por la guardia rural" *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 17, 1928.

<sup>686</sup> Díaz, *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves*, chapter 4.

<sup>687</sup> Portuondo Zuñiga, *La Virgen*, 26-7, 226; Gonzalez, *Afro-Cuban Theology*, 81-3.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Virgin of Charity became widely known amongst practitioners of African religions in Cuba as a counterpart to Ochún, the female spirit central to many ritual practices. According to ethnographic research from the past decades, like the Virgin Mary, Ochún serves as an intercessor for practitioners. She is often associated with fresh water, the experiences of women, childbirth, and the uterus.<sup>688</sup> But even within Cuba, Ochún has historically had many manifestations and competing personalities. Among these are *Ochún Fumiké*, who helps barren women conceive and “loves children.” Another face of Ochún is that of *Ochún Yeyé Moró* “the most happy, coquettish and dissolute of them all” who is “continually out partying,...Puts on makeup, looks at herself in the mirror, puts on perfume.” Finally, there is *Ochún Awé* who “does not resemble at all the exuberant woman of life and happiness” and is sometimes referred to as “Ochún with dirty clothing”<sup>689</sup>

Haitian migrants’ use of the Virgin of Charity, a potent religious and national symbol, may have been partially spurred by strategic motivations to appeal to Cubans. However, like other instances when Haitians have adopted religious rituals from other sources, migrants imbued the Virgin with their own meanings.<sup>690</sup> In 1925, Haitian-born rural worker Aurelio Castillo had a tattoo of the Virgin of Charity on his forearm. Beneath it was the year 1922 and the phrase, written in Spanish, “Remember La Caridad.”<sup>691</sup> Haitians were no strangers to the religious and political significances of the Virgin Mary. Haiti was the site of its own Marian apparitions, out of which emerged a combination of Catholic and Vodou religious practices, popular meanings, and political struggles.<sup>692</sup> Contemporary ethnographic work shows that in

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<sup>688</sup> Cros Sandoval, *Worldview, the Orichas, and Santería*, 238.

<sup>689</sup> Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún*, 70-2.

<sup>690</sup> Richman, "A More Powerful Sorcerer," 31.

<sup>691</sup> “Hoja Histórico-Penal del Penado: Aurelio Castillo,” March 25, 1925, ANPC 319/22.

<sup>692</sup> Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle*.

Haitian Vodou, the Virgin of Charity carries special significance as Lasyrenn (La Sirène), a mermaid figure often characterized within the larger family of female spirits called the Ezilies.<sup>693</sup> In a broad sense, many of Lasyrenn's characteristics are similar to those of Ochún. Like Ochún, Lasyrenn is associated with water, though her domain is the ocean, not fresh water. Lasyrenn is also considered "one of Vodou's most important female deities."<sup>694</sup> Lasyrenn also has multiple manifestations, each with their own personality. In some aspects, she is "a seductress," at other times she may be "fierce." "Those who offend 'Manbo' Lasirèn may be lured to a watery death. But those who serve her well are richly rewarded."<sup>695</sup> The fact that Ochún and Lasyrenn represent similar principles does not mean they should be conflated. It does suggest that in the context of the fluidity characteristic of African religions, the Virgin of Charity could serve as a space "in between" or a site of dialogue for devotees of both Ochún and Lasyrenn.

Lasyrenn may have also held a specific appeal to Haitian migrants in Cuba. Lasyrenn "was derived from the carved figures on the bows of the ships of European traders and slavers" signifying that the spirit "may have roots that connect, like nerves, to the deepest and most painful parts of the loss of homeland and the trauma of slavery."<sup>696</sup> Despite the very real differences between African slavery and the process of migration, it is easy to understand why Haitians invoked Lasyrenn, who calls them to the sea, during a difficult migration experience over water that led to harsh working conditions. Given the association between Lasyrenn, the ocean, the Virgin of Charity, and Cuba, it is not surprising that Haitians invoked the Virgin of

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<sup>693</sup> Brown, *Mama Lola*, 220-4.

<sup>694</sup> Christophe, "Rainbow over Water," 90.

<sup>695</sup> Cosentino, "Interleaf E," 148.

<sup>696</sup> Brown, *Mama Lola*, 223-4.

Charity for protection on their journeys to Cuba.<sup>697</sup> If many aspects of Vodou rituals are conceptualized as mini-dramas that help an individual cope with the complexities and difficulties of life, then Lasyrenn's association with either "watery death" or monetary rewards could also allegorize the gamble that a journey to Cuba entailed for rural Haitians.<sup>698</sup> The music of the Haitian peasantry articulated it unequivocally:

They sent me to Cuba  
To die there  
The Virgin of Charity says no  
I'm not afraid of dying, oh!<sup>699</sup>

In addition to protection, there are other reasons that Lasyrenn would appeal to migrants who temporarily or permanently left their existing religious and social networks in order to create new ones in Cuba. Namely, devotees to Lasyrenn may gain spiritual status without being initiated in a lengthy, formal, and possibly expensive process under the supervision of a recognized priest or priestess. "In many stories, people are captured by Lasyrenn and pulled under the water, down to Ginen....But as often as not such tales are strategies used by the poor and otherwise disenfranchised to gain access to the prestigious role of healer."<sup>700</sup> Perhaps this was the spiritual trajectory of Manuel Garcia, the above-mentioned Haitian religious leader who was known for "practicing cures" and whose altar contained an image of the Virgin of Charity.<sup>701</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> Fieldwork in contemporary Cuba by Julio Corbea confirms this. Corbea Calzado, "Historia de una familia haitiano-cubana," 70 n1.

<sup>698</sup> Brown, *Mama Lola*, 15, 57, 106; Cosentino, "Water Spirits," 148.

<sup>699</sup> Moral, *Le paysan haitien*, 70.

<sup>700</sup> Brown, *Mama Lola*, 224.

<sup>701</sup> "Centro de brujería. Haitiano sorprendido por la Guardia Rural," *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 17, 1928.

### 6.3 LOCAL DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS REPRESSION IN EASTERN CUBA

The networks and communities of African religious practice, healing, and magic that Haitians and Cubans created were not immune to repression from state authorities or denunciation by members of the popular sectors. Cuban journalists and social scientists interpreted ritual practice and its repression along a tidy division between the black believers who practiced *brujería* and the white or mixed-race individuals who denounced them.<sup>702</sup> They described these religious practices as primitive superstitions that had no place in a civilized society. Rituals were referred to as “absurd practices,” stripping them of any religious validity. In 1928, *Diario de Cuba*, a Santiago daily, applauded the lengthy prison stay given to a Haitian accused of “mistreating” a Cuban girl for ritual purposes because it would remind the convicted “that he lives in an era of civilization and progress.”<sup>703</sup> The ritual objects confiscated for destruction from a group of Haitian and Cuban practitioners were described as “artifacts appropriate for...a museum in Madagascar or Senegambia.”<sup>704</sup>

Although journalists claimed that sensational coverage of *brujería* scares was blind to race, newspapers of the period printed rumors they knew to be false and in the process heightened racist stereotypes associated with blackness.<sup>705</sup> In 1913, *La Voz del Pueblo*, a Guantánamo daily, declared that some people from the town of Jurisdicción had called the Police with “different versions about the death of a girl.” Some claimed that *brujos* “had taken out her

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<sup>702</sup> Román, *Governing Spirits*, 88-90.

<sup>703</sup> “Repugnante ultraje a una niña de cuatro años en Jurisdicción Arriba,” *Diario de Cuba*, March 18, 1928.

<sup>704</sup> “Centro de brujería. Haitiano sorprendido por la guardia rural,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 17, 1928.

<sup>705</sup> See Román for journalistic claims to race-neutral reporting. Román, *Governing Spirits*, 101-2.

heart and others that she had been cruelly raped by a black man.”<sup>706</sup> According to the very narrative presented by the newspaper, however, neither of these scenarios was even possible. In this case, a Cuban woman came home from working in the field to find her one-year-old child dead and her ten-year old screaming for help. According to one version of the story, an unknown black man had come into the house, grabbed the child from her caretaker’s arms and suffocated her before the screams of the other child sent him fleeing.<sup>707</sup> By opening the article with reiterations of racial stereotypes about blacks as rapists and savage cannibals, the journalist further embellished the already racist elements of the story.

By sensationalizing *brujería* scares and molding them into pre-existing racial and national narratives, Cuban journalists severely misrepresented local dynamics of belief, practice, and denunciation. Numerous cases involved accusations of *brujería* that could not be narrated through the established genres. These received little, if any, press coverage. In the cases that follow, as in other contexts of African religious repression, it is impossible to know exactly what happened from the available sources. Did these individuals actually seek to harm children? If so, was religion or sorcery really a motivating factor? Rather than trying to establish the veracity of these accusations, this section seeks to analyze the mechanics of religious denunciation in order to understand the role that popular sectors played in shaping religious repression in Cuba.<sup>708</sup>

Although many *brujería* scares had clear racist motivations, not all cases of religious denunciation in Cuba can be read just as vehicles of anti-black or anti-Haitian racism. Besides,

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<sup>706</sup> “Horrible infanticidio,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, September 8, 1913.

<sup>707</sup> “La brujería en Guantánamo,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, September 13, 1913.

<sup>708</sup> These goals and the subsequent analysis draw heavily upon Kate Ramsey’s research about anti-superstition campaigns in Haiti. Ramsey, “Legislating ‘Civilization’”; Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*.

some cases did not fit standard narratives easily; this may explain why newspapers gave them little coverage. One such case occurred near Mayari in March 1927. A 55-year old Haitian individual named Emeterio de Dios was passing by the small railroad crossing settlement known as *Chucho Zoilo* in Holguin, province of Oriente. De Dios was arrested by the police and charged with attempting to kidnap children. According to de Dios, he was “returning from Cueto” where he had traveled for work, when “he felt a pain and got off of his horse in front of a house.” Almost immediately, “the *señora* of that house wanted him to leave but the pain impeded it.” The woman fell upon him “with blows...tying him up and making the accusation.”<sup>709</sup> The woman and her neighbors had a different story to tell. Andres Ramos, a 37-year old Cuban peasant claimed that he “was returning from his work to the home of his stepdaughter, Castula Machado. He was already close to the house when he saw a *negro* getting off of his horse and grabbing Victoria Machado, the seven month old daughter of Castula by her little arm.” Immediately, he “yelled ‘run they are taking a little girl.’” Ramos and Castula Machado wrested the child from de Dios’ arms before two more neighbors arrived and helped to detain him.<sup>710</sup>

Certain aspects of the accusation against Emeterio de Dios carry the hallmarks of other child kidnapping scares of the period.<sup>711</sup> First, de Dios was known among some of the witnesses for practicing *brujería*. One of the neighbors who helped detain him declared that he knew “that Haitian from Tacajó and knows that he dedicates himself to being a healer and *brujería*.”<sup>712</sup> Second, residents of the district were already on edge because of pre-existing rumors of child

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<sup>709</sup> “Comparacencia del acusado Emeterio Fis conocido por Emeterio de Dios” March 12, 1927, ANCASXX 36/3/5.

<sup>710</sup> “Declaracion de Andres Ramos,” March 17, 1927, ANCASXX 36/3/19.

<sup>711</sup> See Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, 108-116.

<sup>712</sup> “Declaracion de Cruz Almaguer Lopez,” March 17, 1927, ANCASXX 36/3/21.



kidnappings in the area. Castula Machado, the mother of the alleged kidnapping victim said that she had heard that “about fifteen or twenty days ago in the *Central* Baguanos they had lost a three year old girl.” Machado claimed that she was afraid that “they wanted to do the same” to her child.<sup>713</sup> After Emeterio de Dios’ arrest, another individual claimed that someone had also tried to kidnap his young son.<sup>714</sup> Finally, like other such cases, actual evidence against Emeterio de Dios was flimsy and contradictory. The only person who claimed to see Emeterio de Dios grab the child was Andres Ramos, who was approaching the house from a neighboring field. Castula Machado, who was knitting inside when she heard Ramos scream, claimed that she “had had to take [her child from de Dios] with the help of some neighbors.”<sup>715</sup> The neighbors in question, on the other hand, claimed that they did not “see at the precise moments---in which the said Haitian took said girl, but did see when said Haitian had tried to flee.” They helped detain him though they never saw him holding the child.<sup>716</sup> Finally, witnesses claimed that Emeterio de Dios confessed his motives for kidnapping the child, though he did not speak Spanish. In his own testimony, which was obtained through an interpreter, de Dios denied all charges and did not mention any motive.<sup>717</sup> Despite this, Emeterio de Dios was arrested by police, convicted of kidnapping, and sentenced to 17 years and four months in jail. He died in prison at the Isle of Pines ten years later “as a consequence of fainting.”<sup>718</sup>

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<sup>713</sup> Witness testimony from Castula Machado signed by José Merecion, Sargento de la Policía Municipal de Mayari, March 9, 1927, ANCASXX 36/3/2.

<sup>714</sup> Flor Moreno, “Diligencia,” March 09, 1927, ANCASXX 36/3/3.

<sup>715</sup> Witness testimony from Castula Machado signed by José Merecion, Sargento de la Policía Municipal de Mayari, March 9, 1927, ANCASXX 36/3/2.

<sup>716</sup> “Declaracion de Cruz Almaguer Lopez,” March 17, 1927, ANCASXX 36/3/21.

<sup>717</sup> “Comparacencia del acusado Emeterio Fis conocido por Emeterio de Dios” March 12, 1927, ANCASXX 36/3/5.

<sup>718</sup> Juez de Instrucción de Secretario de Audiencia, “Causa seguida, por el delito de “Sustracción de menores’ contra Emeterio Fis,” August 17, 1927, ANCASXX 21/6/48.

If the kidnapping scare surrounding Emeterio de Dios was typical of similar cases in Republican Cuba, there was at least one major difference that may explain its absence from the press. According to his accusers, Emeterio de Dios was acting on behalf of a larger client. They believed that he “was trying to bring [the infant] to Preston to an American woman who...paid a lot of money for children that they brought to her.”<sup>719</sup> This single and significant detail does not fit into the standard tropes that Cuban newspapers used to describe the practice and repression of African religions. Unlike other kidnapping cases, this one does not appear to have received any treatment in the newspapers of eastern Cuba.

In contrast to Cuban journalists, who claimed that *brujería* was a symptom of national atavism and degeneracy, these Cubans accused an “American woman”, supposedly a bearer of “civilization” in the island, of *brujería*. Rumors like these may have resulted from the abrupt rural transformations engendered by the U.S. military and economic presence in Cuba. As Stephan Palmié notes, rather than “representing a mistaken interpolation of archaic fantasy into the rational script of agroindustrial labor relations,” such stories reflect the “sense of moral crisis unleashed by a predatory modernity.”<sup>720</sup> Not only did the de Dios case occur at a site where railroads crossed and laborers’ settlements formed, the U.S.-dominated sugar industry served as a reference point for the accusers’ rumors. Castula Machado’s fears of kidnapping were heightened by the fact that another child was rumored to have disappeared from within a sugar *central*. More significantly, she believed the threat against her own daughter to have been the result of a conspiracy between a U.S. woman living at the site of a large sugar plantation and one

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Juzgado Municipal de Isla de Pinos, Death Certificate, November 14, 1937, ANCASXX 21/6/126

<sup>719</sup> “Causa seguida, por el delito de ‘Sustracción de menores’ contra Emeterio Fis,” June 21, 1927, ANCASXX 21/6/7.

<sup>720</sup> Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists*, 66.

of the thousands of Haitian laborers who arrived in the area to work such plantations. The inclusion of the woman from the United States in Cuban residents' narratives about *brujería*-influenced kidnapping shows that fears of African religions may have emerged from rapid social change and dislocation, which included, but was not limited to a form of anti-black racism.

People of African-descent also made religious denunciations, further complicating simplistic narratives of religious denunciation and repression. There were numerous instances when Haitians made accusations of *brujería* in Cuba. For instance, in 1921, in the section of Guantánamo known as la Loma del Chivo, a Haitian named Benito Fis was accused of kidnapping and eating a child who lived in the area. The accuser and only witness was Eduardo Martínez, another Haitian who lived in close proximity to Fis and claimed to have seen the crime “through one of the gaps that exist in the wooden wall that separates the room of one and the other Haitian.” Even if racist beliefs made the story believable to Cuban authorities, it was probably not Martínez's main motivation in denouncing his neighbor. *El Cubano Libre* wondered why “Martínez, who declared to have been present at the consummation of the crime, did not do anything to prevent it, even when there had been screams.” The newspaper speculated that he lacked bravery or had arrived only after the child had been killed. They failed to ask whether Martínez had used the *brujería* denunciation as a pretext for resolving some other conflict with his neighbor.<sup>721</sup>

Accusing a neighbor of *brujería* or violence may have seemed like an easy way to exact revenge for previous rivalries. As in Haiti, moments of religious repression in Cuba were opportunities “for the settling of local accounts.”<sup>722</sup> Such was the case of a group of Cubans who

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<sup>721</sup> “Un haitiano salvaje asesinó a un niño, y se comió su cuerpo,” *El Cubano Libre*, October 20, 1921.

<sup>722</sup> Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 201.

accused Haitians of practicing *brujería* in the city of Guantánamo. In 1937, a Cuban denounced his two Haitian neighbors for “putting *brujerías* in the patio of their home.”<sup>723</sup> Cuban police, however, questioned the accuser’s story and its motives, especially when they found no evidence to substantiate the charges. They concluded “that the accuser...wants to live in the house that the accused inhabits...and that not finding a way for him to leave from said house, and knowing that he is a Haitian citizen, he made the denunciation in question so that he would be expelled for being pernicious.”<sup>724</sup> The Haitians were not prosecuted. In some cases, Haitians accused their close social relations of performing violent acts in the name of *brujería*. In 1928 in Camagüey, a Haitian woman named Rosa Olay was accused of *brujería* by her husband. He claimed that after “having given birth,” Olay placed “a jutía [tree rat] in the crib, in place of the child.” Although he never saw the infant, Olay’s husband claimed that “the unhappy creature was handed over to the *brujos* for practices of this sort.” Perhaps Olay performed an abortion or hid the child from her husband for other reasons. Regardless, his denunciation, which led to the incarceration of his wife, was probably motivated by something other than race.<sup>725</sup>

Not all religious denunciations can be attributed to cynical abuses of state power and the manipulation of popular stereotypes. Many, perhaps including some of those above, were made by individuals who earnestly believed in the magico-religious powers of the accused, which they sought to counteract using the power of the state. At times, the very journalists who treated African religions as mere superstition displayed a kernel of belief in the efficacy of religious practice. In 1913, for instance, *La Voz del Pueblo* reported on a Catalan immigrant named Viladiu. One night “an unknown woman approached him putting her hand on his left shoulder.”

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<sup>723</sup> Testimony of Hilario Asencio Sayan, January 25, 1937, APSSU 4/37/1.

<sup>724</sup> Antonio Bertran, Guardia Rural to Cuartel General “Silverio del Prado,” February 10, 1937, APSSU 4/37/11.

<sup>725</sup> “Haitiana capturada,” *Diario de Cuba*, February 11, 1928.

While staring into his eyes, she “uttered some unintelligible words making some cabalistic signs” before she “disappeared as if by enchantment.” Immediately afterward, Viladiu reported “having an inert and pained left arm” which did not improve with topical treatments. “Is this some *bruja* who wanted to bother the young Catalan?” the journalist wondered.<sup>726</sup>

What the writer at *La Voz del Pueblo* interpreted as a slim possibility, non-practicing individuals in local communities widely accepted. In 1915 Campechuela, in the present-day province of Granma, a Cuban family suffered a rash of illnesses that convinced them they had been victims of *brujería*. First, a young couple experienced “strange phenomena” which produced “inexplicable scenes in their home.” After a year of marriage, the wife became pregnant “without being bothered by a single symptom or related suffering until a few days before she was to give birth.” The young infant was “extremely gaunt” and “the mother became paralytic and totally oblivious, to the extent that she could not nurse the little girl.” At the same time, the woman’s husband and father both “suffered a strange illness” in which tumors formed on their bodies which “disappeared from night to morning.” The family was convinced that “it was nothing more than the work of someone in Campechuela who dedicates himself to practices of *brujería* and...wanted to cause harm to the family.” One family member wrote a letter to the press calling for “an investigation” to find and punish whoever was responsible.<sup>727</sup>

Among those who believed in the efficacy of *brujería* were religious practitioners who distinguished their service to the spirits from what they perceived as malicious magic. As Karen Richman argues, Haitian devotees distinguish religion from magic, though certain magical practices may be subsumed into Vodou rituals over time, placing religion and magic in a

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<sup>726</sup> “¿Brujería ó qué?” *La Voz del Pueblo*, July 12, 1913.

<sup>727</sup> “¿Caso de brujería?” *La Voz del Pueblo*, September 14, 1915. For a discussion about the way the Cuban press provided knowledge that aided state repression of unacceptable religious practices, see Román, *Governing Spirits*, 18.

perpetual dialectical relationship.<sup>728</sup> This means that for Haitians and many other practitioners of African religions, there is a category of very real and powerful rituals that are said to exist but are not normally employed when practitioners serve the spirits.

Haitians' distinction between religion and magic manifested itself in Cuba as well. In her memoirs, Dalia Timitoc Borrero recalled that Santiago Fiz, a known healer and religious practitioner, sang a song that clearly distinguished between the two.

They tell you that I am a *brujeiro*  
I am not a *brujeiro*, ná  
If I work it's with the moon  
With the moon and with the sun.<sup>729</sup>

Unlike Haitian laws, which explicitly banned specific types of ritual practices, Cuban statutes prosecuted them under different justifications. This did not prevent the Haitians who faced repression from Cuban police from claiming with earnestness that they were not practicing *brujería*. On January 1, 1920, Haitians Luis Polo and Basilio Simón were celebrating a religious ceremony, perhaps in honor of Haitian independence day, in a *barracón* in the *Central Céspedes* in Camagüey. Police “found them dancing with a lit flame in their hands as well as a bottle that appeared to contain rum, and additionally cards with which they did distinct ceremonies.”<sup>730</sup>

Both Polo and Simón declared that they “were not dancing *brujería*.”<sup>731</sup> What officials may have interpreted as an outright denial of any type of ritual practice, the defendants probably

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<sup>728</sup> Richman, *Migration and Vodou*, 17-8; Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 61; Román, *Governing Spirits*, 27, 40.

<sup>729</sup> Timitoc Borrero, *Montecafé*, 37-8.

<sup>730</sup> Cabo Esc. 32 de O.P. to Juez Municipal de Caunao [sic], January 1, 1920, APCJIPJC 303/3710/4.

<sup>731</sup> “Comparecencia de Basilio Simón,” and “Comparecencia de Luis Polo,” January 1, 1920, APCJIPJC 303/3710/6-7.

considered a clarification that they were not performing witchcraft or magic, just a religious dance.

Haitians' widespread distinction between religion and magic also motivated them to denounce people for practicing the latter in both Haiti and Cuba. In many periods in Haitian history, including the years of peak migration to Cuba, state-led campaigns to eliminate ritual practices, lumped diverse forms of magic with religious practices. Paradoxically, the enforcement of Haiti's laws against *sortilèges* (spells) was often shaped by popular sectors, many of whom were religious devotees who legally fell under the law's jurisdiction. These individuals petitioned state authorities to prosecute what they perceived as malicious magic, thus shaping the meanings of the law profoundly.<sup>732</sup> For rural Haitians, one threat of malicious magic was the kidnapping and murder of children by female sorcerers called *loup garou*. In the early 1940s, Alfred Métraux recorded rural Haitians' tales of kidnappings performed by *loup garou*. According to his informants, a *loup garou* approaches the house of its intended victim in the middle of the night hoping to trick the child's mother into giving her child to the sorcerer.

She calls the child's mother....then asks, 'Will you give me your child?' If then, drowsy and only half-awake, she still replies, 'Yes'---then that's that: the child is lost...The sorcerer can also appear in a dream to the mother and promise her a present in the same breath as mentioning the child's name. To accept the gift is tantamount to handing over the child.<sup>733</sup>

As in rural Haiti, Haitian migrants in Cuba called upon state authorities when they believed themselves to be the victim of malicious magic. Some of these cases bear remarkable similarities to the elements of the *loup garou* narratives in Haiti. In other words, some of the

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<sup>732</sup> Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 157.

<sup>733</sup> Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, 271-2, 303.

narratives of religious fear that circulated in rural Cuba were informed by beliefs from Haiti, not just Cuban newspapers. In September 1931, in Yateras, Guantánamo, an individual named Clemente Garcia (aka Creme Lopez), was accused by Haitians of attempting to kidnap a young girl in a case that appears to be a manifestation of a *loup garou* rumor in Cuba. According to his accusers, Lopez, whose nationality was not recorded in court documents, approached a Haitian woman named Elisa Poll, asking “how many children they had and the age of each one.” According to Poll, it was not just Lopez’s “suspicious attitude” that prevented her from answering the questions. It was also the “repeated cases...of *brujería* in the area,” she claimed, whose ceremonies “sometimes” required “children of a certain age.” Clearly, rumors of *brujeria* and child kidnapping circulated among Haitians, as they did among Cubans, even if their ideological underpinnings were quite different from those of the Cuban press. Poll’s fears were corroborated by the specific knowledge her brother-in-law, another Haitian named Martin Fis, claimed to possess. Fis declared that he knew that “for some time” Lopez was “dedicating himself to the kidnapping of children” for *brujeria*. Around midnight, Poll’s young daughter “let out strong screams that did not allow them to sleep, and being suspicious they got up.” At that moment, “a companion of Fis named Martin Poll who also lives there,” arrived at the house, “warning them that in the gap between the ground and the floor of the house [*sótano*] there was a lit flame.” When the residents of the house went to investigate, they found “Garcia [Lopez] under the site where the abovementioned girl sleeps.”<sup>734</sup> Lopez was initially charged with kidnapping, though his sentence was later overturned for lack of evidence.<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> “Auto en Causa numero 574 de 1931, October 15, 1931, ANCASXX 43/8/4.

<sup>735</sup> “A la Sala: Dr. Francisco Fernandez Plé. Abogado Fiscal,” March 7, 1932 and “Audiencia de Oriente: Secretaria Doctor Enrique Ferrer y Ferrer Secretario de la Audiencia de Oriente,” ANCASXX 43/8/21, 71.



Fears of malicious magic are likely what motivated José Carlo Luis, the Haitian whose story opened this chapter, to ask judicial authorities for help when he saw ghosts. In September 1915, Carlo Luis awoke in the middle of the night. According to his testimony, there was no doubt that his world was being altered by a malicious force. In the “early morning he heard the sound of dragging chains and some ghosts appeared, speaking words to him that he could not understand.” Did Carlo Luis see the ghost of a *loup garou* (a phenomenon also described by Métraux), who was asking permission to take his child? No wonder Carlo Luis’ insisted that rural guardsmen help him “get his family out” of harm’s way.<sup>736</sup>

#### 6.4 CONCLUSION

The racially charged narratives of African religious belief and repression that newspapers spread in Republican Cuba represent only one type of story. Newspaper reports represented the beliefs of many sectors of Cuban society and played a significant role in spreading racist ideologies. However, they failed to represent the heterogeneity of individual religious communities; nor did they have a monopoly over religious rumors in Cuba. Other competing narratives about these beliefs circulated as well, sometimes originating amongst believers themselves. By using judicial records as “telling moments,” it is possible to discern religious communities composed of Haitians, a diverse array of Cubans, and perhaps individuals of other nationalities. Although it is impossible to know exactly what caused these diverse religious communities to coalesce,

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<sup>736</sup> “Comparecencia del Acusado José Carlo Luis: Juzgado Municipal de Palma Soriano,” September 27, 1915, ANCASXX 43/6/5.

practitioners may have gathered around images of the saints that held meanings across spiritual traditions.

While their communities were not immune from denunciation and repression, these did not always take the form of the *brujeria* scares narrated by the press. Haitians' distinctions between magic and religion, as well as their experiences with state-led repression of religion, probably shaped the way anti-religious campaigns played out in Cuba. Individuals could denounce the magical practices of an individual without differing greatly in worldview of the accused or questioning their spiritual power.

## 7.0 LITERATE HAITIANS IN CUBAN CITIES

In 1942, Antoine Bervin was selected by Haitian president Elie Lescot to travel to Cuba on a “moral and cultural mission.” As Bervin, an individual hailing from Haiti’s political elite, understood it, the motivation for sending him was simple: “Over there, they wrongly imagine that all Haitians are cane cutters.” During his three-year stay in Havana, Bervin met with President Fulgencio Batista and members of the Cuban diplomatic corps. He triumphantly described the moment when he pressured the Cuban government to pay an indemnity to the mother of Félix Alphonse, a Haitian rural worker who had been murdered in Cuba over a decade earlier. Bervin’s interactions with living rural workers, however, were not always so smooth. One day he was visited by Frédéric Cole, whom he described as someone who showed “the ruggedness of the [Haitian] generals” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an oblique reference to Cole’s rural roots and dark skin. After questioning whether Bervin “was really a Haitian,” Cole made some “reflections” that were “very severe toward those who had represented Haiti in Havana” in previous years.<sup>737</sup> Although Bervin prided himself on representing all Haitians in Cuba, he explicitly sought to distance himself from the agricultural workers who were the majority of the Haitian-born population there. Literate Haitians in Cuba had sought to achieve similar goals during the preceding four decades.

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<sup>737</sup> Bervin, *Mission à La Havane*, 14, 36, 43-6. For the association between blackness and the Haitian army leaders of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century see Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 8.

The belief that Bervin sought to dispel---that all Haitians in Cuba were rural agricultural workers---was very prominent in the Cuban press of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Newspapers portrayed Haitian migrants as primitive, unskilled, illiterate workers who could only cut sugar cane and would bring diseases or race war into Cuba.<sup>738</sup> Neither the lettered Haitians in Cuban cities, nor their attempts to challenge Cubans' images of Haitians have been studied. The only Haitians in Cuba, besides rural workers, that have received any scholarly attention are consuls. Historians describe them as highly negligent officials who made few attempts to protect Haitian workers from abuses in Cuba. They were associated with corruption because they fleeced incoming migrants with unnecessary bureaucratic fees and rarely remitted their office's earnings to the Haitian central government. Finally, consuls were accused of accepting bribes from sugar companies, making them accomplices in the harsh work regimes to which Haitian agricultural laborers were subject.<sup>739</sup> Haitian consular failures are especially noticeable because of the overall effectiveness with which British consuls intervened on behalf of British West Indian immigrants in Cuba.<sup>740</sup>

The efforts of Bervin and other lettered Haitians in Cuba have parallels throughout the African Diaspora that have begun to receive significant treatment in recent scholarship. First, historians have studied class differentiation within black communities throughout the Atlantic. They have analyzed the social, political, and cultural activities of upwardly mobile, educated blacks. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these individuals often challenged racism in their respective societies by making claims to respectability and decency. However, their efforts to

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<sup>738</sup> Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba," 56.

<sup>739</sup> Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," 27; Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 111.

<sup>740</sup> Chailloux Laffita and Whitney, "British subjects y pichones en Cuba," 64.

bridge racial divides often reproduced class divisions between them and uneducated people of African descent.<sup>741</sup>

Others have examined these communities using transnational lenses. Some have shown that differences in social class created divisions within immigrant populations and allowed better-off individuals from a particular group to avoid the most virulent forms of anti-immigrant racism.<sup>742</sup> Others have reconstructed the transnational social, cultural, and political projects of middle class black communities throughout the Americas. Many of these efforts were justified using the idealistic language of pan-Americanism in order to avoid charges that activists were trying to subvert national sovereignty or the racial order of their respective societies.<sup>743</sup>

This chapter builds on this scholarship by reconstructing the community of lettered Haitians in the Cuban cities of Santiago and Guantánamo. Despite their small numbers, these Haitians played a significant role in the exchanges between Haiti and Cuba during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although they did not migrate seasonally like Haitian laborers, they maintained personal and intellectual links to their country of origin. They sought to shape discussions about Cuba in the Haitian press and organized politically to influence Haitian elections and political affairs. These individuals claimed to speak on behalf of all Haitians, though they distanced themselves publicly from agricultural workers.

The relationship between urban, literate Haitians and agricultural laborers, though difficult to reconstruct with precision, is partially revealed by the interactions between consuls and migrant workers. Workers' relationships to consuls varied widely. Some assertively made

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<sup>741</sup> Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*, 107; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 14; Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow*; Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, 2; Bristol, *Knights of the Razor*, 2-4.

<sup>742</sup> Crawford, "A Transnational World"; Stepick III, "The Refugees Nobody Wants," 57; Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 159-65; Zacaïre, "Conversation with Myrtha Désulmé," 148.

<sup>743</sup> Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier*, 9, 60, 71.

claims on their state officials while others avoided them outright. This continuum of migrant action was mirrored by a similarly wide spectrum of consular activities, which ranged from those who energetically sought to protect Haitians from breaches in Cuban law and others that manipulated immigration laws to line their own pockets at workers' expenses.

Despite their tenuous relationship with rural laborers, the urban communities of Haitians were large and organized enough to influence Haitian politics from Cuban soil. In 1915, they hosted Rosalvo Bobo, an exiled Haitian military leader who spoke out against the U.S. occupation of Haiti in hopes of returning to take the presidency there. Like other upwardly mobile people of African descent in the Americas, their ability to actively engage the support of Haitian rural laborers was quite limited. The most successful example appears to have been that of the Cuban branch of the *Union Patriotique*, an organization originally founded in Haiti to oppose the United States occupation of the country.

During the 1930s, the Cuban government repatriated over 38,000 Haitian workers in a period of xenophobic nationalism and low sugar prices. Haitian consuls offered little protection for migrant workers and some even took advantage of the repatriation drives for their own economic gain. Although some urban-based Haitians experienced popular anti-Haitianism in Santiago, they received a degree of support from the Cuban state that was not available to Haitian sugar workers and differed from the brief protection of coffee workers. This state support, along with their efforts to distance themselves from agricultural workers, allowed them to avoid the forced deportations of their sugar-working counterparts.

## 7.1 RACISM AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN CUBA: DEBATES IN THE HAITIAN PRESS

Among the approximately 200,000 Haitians who traveled to eastern Cuba during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were urban laborers and professionals who settled in Cuban cities like Santiago and Guantánamo. In 1919, there were 748 foreign-born adult males *de color* living in the city of Santiago de Cuba and 507 in the city of Guantánamo.<sup>744</sup> Haitians constituted an unknown but significant portion of them. In 1932, a Haitian newspaper estimated the “Haitian colony in Santiago de Cuba” to consist of “approximately 180 members.”<sup>745</sup> Between 1902 and 1959, approximately 100 Haitians residing in Guantánamo appear in the city’s marriage records. In both cities, Haitians worked as *jornaleros* (unspecified laborers), carpenters, masons, shoemakers, machinists, tailors, musicians, watchmakers, merchants, *empleados* (unspecified low-level office positions), lawyers, and consuls. Women worked within their homes, and in some cases, as seamstresses.<sup>746</sup>

Like their rural counterparts, the Haitians inhabiting Cuba’s cities developed social and commercial networks with individuals of other nationalities. In Guantánamo, between 1904 and 1930, almost half of the 49 marriages of Haitians involved a spouse of another nationality. Fourteen were with Cubans. Nine were between Haitians and individuals from Guadeloupe, St. Thomas, Jamaica, the United States, St. Christopher, and Tortola (in the Virgin Islands).<sup>747</sup> In

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<sup>744</sup> The term *de color* referred to people whom census-takers identified as “black, mixed and yellow.” Cuba, *Census of the Republic of Cuba 1919*, 454.

<sup>745</sup> “A propos d’un cable de Cuba,” *Haiti Journal*, February 29, 1932.

<sup>746</sup> Compiled from APSRECTC and APGREC.

<sup>747</sup> Compiled from APGREC.

1935, Louis Joseph Hibbert, the Haitian consul in Santiago, served as the godfather for a young Fidel Castro after marrying one of the boy's teachers.<sup>748</sup>

Regular steamship traffic carried people and goods between Haiti and the eastern regions of Cuba, facilitating the circulation of letters and printed materials between the countries and permitting lettered Haitians to remain in close contact with Haiti. For instance, in 1927, Francisco Duplisis traveled by steamship from Haiti to Santiago de Cuba "carrying in his power eighteen letters addressed to other people" there.<sup>749</sup> Newspapers from Haiti also circulated in Cuban cities. In a letter to the Port-au-Prince daily *Haiti Journal*, Edmond Jansème, the acting Haitian consul in Santiago, Cuba wrote "to remind you that our [Haitian] newspapers are read here."<sup>750</sup> During a 1932 earthquake in Santiago de Cuba, readers of *Haiti Journal* received updates from Haitians in Cuba who were affected.<sup>751</sup> "Despite the distance that separates it from you," one individual quipped to Haitian president Sténio Vincent in 1931, "the Colony [in Cuba] does not lose sight of you for even one minute."<sup>752</sup>

Literate Haitians closely followed political events in Cuba, including episodes of racial violence, even before migration to the country was legalized. In June 1912, the year before Cuban sugar companies were allowed to recruit Haitian laborers, readers of *L'Éclairneur* in Port-au-Prince were informed that "the situation is hardly bright in our neighbor's abode." The Cuban government's declaration of "a state of siege," the newspaper complained, means that "the Constitution does not procure any guarantee to political prisoners" and "the Government

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<sup>748</sup> Ugás Bustamante, *Haití*, 65; Ramonet, *Fidel Castro*, 58-9.

<sup>749</sup> Juez de Instrucción de Santiago de Cuba to Presidente de la Audiencia de Oriente, April 22, 1927, ANCASXX 30/1/1.

<sup>750</sup> "Les haitiens à Cuba," *Haiti Journal*, May 06, 1931.

<sup>751</sup> "A propos d'un cable de Cuba," *Haiti Journal* February 29, 1932.

<sup>752</sup> "La colonie haitienne à Cuba," *Haiti Journal*, January 19, 1931.



may execute them at their whim.” “We sincerely deplore this crisis.”<sup>753</sup> The Haitian newspaper was referring to the Cuban government’s repression of the *Partido Independiente de Color* (PIC), an all-black Cuban political party that had formed during the previous years. It was led by Pedro Ivonnet and Evaristo Estenoz and composed of Afro-Cuban military veterans who felt cheated from the fruits of military victory against Spain and the continued racism of independent Cuba. The party had been declared illegal before the 1912 elections because it violated the Morua law, which forbade the existence of any racially-defined political party. A 1912 armed protest by the PIC met with swift repression from the Cuban government. In Oriente province, unknown thousands of Afro-Cubans without affiliation to the party lost their lives from governmental and popular violence.<sup>754</sup>

In response to the anti-PIC violence, Haitians debated the nature of Cuban racism in their newspapers. The terms of these debates closely matched similar discussions occurring in Cuba. While *L’Eclairneur* expressed dismay about the Cuban government’s “state of siege” and the execution of Afro-Cuban prisoners with impunity, others described the events as only an aberration in a society that was otherwise racially harmonious. In response to the repression of the PIC, Haitian intellectual Dantès Bellegarde approached the Cuban *Chargé d’Affaires* in Port-au-Prince and inquired about “the origins of the movement and about the situation of blacks in Cuba.”<sup>755</sup> At the moment that Afro-Cubans were being murdered in Oriente province, the Cuban official told Bellegarde that

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<sup>753</sup> “Coup-d’oeil: La situation à Cuba,” *L’Éclairneur*, June 12, 1912.

<sup>754</sup> Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, chapter 7; Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 229-52; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 71-6.

<sup>755</sup> Bellegarde’s 1912 coverage and his conversation with the diplomat are referenced in Dantès Bellegarde, “Le problème noir à Cuba,” *Le Nouvelliste*, April 26, 1913.

no preoccupation of race dominates the spirit of Cuban leaders; no barrier separates the races; the law is equal for all, and the blacks have their place throughout,--in the assemblies where national interests are discussed, like the public schools where their children rub elbows with the descendants of the most authentic white families.<sup>756</sup>

The official's description of Cuba as a bastion of racial fraternity reflected a predominant strain of nationalist thought that emerged during Cuba's wars of independence. What contemporary scholars call "racial democracy" is succinctly described in the iconic statement of José Martí, the Cuban independence leader who envisioned post-independence Cuba as a republic "with all and for all."<sup>757</sup>

The following year, in 1913, Afro-Caribbean migration was legalized for the first time in Cuba, reviving long-standing, racially-charged debates about the economic needs of the country and its ideal racial composition. In February of that year, *Cuba Contemporánea*, a Havana monthly, published a systematic argument against the entry of Haitians and all other "blacks" into Cuba. The article used census data to warn that non-white immigration would cause blacks to overtake white Cubans numerically. The author implied that the Afro-Cuban leaders who opposed race-based immigration prohibitions were engaging in activities reminiscent of the PIC by trying to overwhelm the white majority. Finally, the piece argued that the entry of foreign blacks would derail Afro-Cubans' attempts to achieve cultural parity with Cuban whites because the former would inevitably mix with these immigrants who "are not...so susceptible to modify their crude nature."<sup>758</sup>

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<sup>756</sup> Dantès Bellegarde, "Le problème noir à Cuba," *Le Nouvelliste*, April 26, 1913.

<sup>757</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 27-8; Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 1; Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, chapter 2; Duno-Gottberg, *Solventando las diferencias*, 53-64.

<sup>758</sup> Carlos De Velasco, "El problema negro," *Cuba Contemporánea*, February 1913.

Literate Haitians in Port-au-Prince and Cuba commented on the anti-Haitian racism that permeated Cuban immigration debates, as they had during the repression of the PIC. In 1913, Dantès Bellegarde responded specifically to the editorial in *Cuba Contemporánea*, which he and other Haitians read in Port-au-Prince. In the pages of *Le Nouvelliste* and *Haiti Littéraire*, he reminded readers of the Cuban ideology of racial equality that had been introduced to him the previous year during the repression of the PIC. “I don’t know Cuba well enough to dare answer such reassuring affirmations,” he declared in response to the Cuban official’s rosy picture of racial democracy, “but an article in *Cuba Contemporánea*--...gives me some worry on this point.”<sup>759</sup>

Bellegarde’s simultaneous invocation of Cuban racial democracy and reporting of Cuban racism was a strategy that Afro-Cubans frequently employed in Cuba. Even after the failure of the PIC, Afro-Cubans commonly used the language of nationalist egalitarianism to claim rights, arguing that Martí’s vision remained unfulfilled.<sup>760</sup> Bellegarde was aware of Afro-Cubans’ political struggles and presented them to a Haitian audience. He complained that “some cultivated blacks” in Cuba who opposed a race-based immigration law in Cuba were criticized roundly by Cuban journalists. He also implied that the racism faced by Haitian immigrants and Afro-Cubans was largely the same. In so doing, he opposed the editorialist’s assertion that Afro-Cubans’ struggles for equality would suffer from black immigration. “But isn’t it humiliating,” Bellegarde rhetorically asked, “for the...blacks in Cuba to see access to their country blocked to men who have committed no other crime than having black skin?”<sup>761</sup> For Bellegarde, the Afro-

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<sup>759</sup> Dantès Bellegarde, “Le problème noir à Cuba,” *Le Nouvelliste*, April 26, 1913.

<sup>760</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 26-39.

<sup>761</sup> Dantès Bellegarde, “Le problème noir à Cuba,” *Le Nouvelliste*, April 26, 1913.

Cuban struggle for equality was inseparable from the desire of Haitians to defend their countrymen from racism and discrimination in Cuba.

During the next decade, Haitian laborers traveled to Cuba in increasing numbers and literate Haitians in Cuban cities continued to report on the racially charged anti-immigrant debates in Cuba. In 1922, for instance, the Haitian newspaper *Le Matin* published an open letter from “a group of Haitians” in Santiago de Cuba. They complained that “Cuban workers” roundly opposed Haitian immigration and often asked whether “Haiti” was “trying to plague the Republic of Cuba.”<sup>762</sup> After an extended visit to Cuba beginning in 1919, Haitian writer L elio Laville argued that: “Haitian emigration became proverbial in Cuba to the point that the most classless, and miserable, when they want to respond to an insolence, an injustice or to reclaim some right, will ask you with brazenness, ‘Do you think I am some Haitian?’”<sup>763</sup>

Not all lettered Haitians resident in Cuba were so critical of Cuban racial ideologies and practices, however. Some even defended Cuban race relations in Haitian newspapers using the same language as many Cubans. In 1933, Edmond Craig, a former Haitian consul who was still residing in Cuba, published a defense of Cuban society in *L’Autre Cloche*, the Haitian newspaper that had publicized Laville’s aforementioned text. First, Craig argued that any racial inequalities in Cuba were mere legacies of slavery that would soon disappear. He also alluded to the PIC in order to buttress his arguments.

If it had not been for the tactlessness of Evariste Stenoz [sic] and Ivonnet, the black Cuban today would not be just what he is now, but a probable aspirant to the Premiere Magistrate of the State, because once instructed, he will be rich, and that is the only

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<sup>762</sup> “L’ migration haitienne   Cuba,” *Le Matin*, January 30, 1922.

<sup>763</sup> Laville, *La traite des n gres*, 7.

difficulty preventing him from realizing the aspirations that are conceded to him as a citizen by the constitution of that country.<sup>764</sup>

Taking his cue from the immigration debates that had raged in Cuba during the previous decades, Craig denied that racism existed in Cuba or that Haitians faced discrimination on racial grounds. Like many Cubans, Craig criticized immigrant agricultural workers by decrying their lack of education and culture—sidestepping discussions of race. “The Haitian is viewed badly for his *deeds*,” Craig argued. “The Haitian emigrant,” he continued, “would not be so disdained, if he presented himself in Cuba differently, if his mentality were more unblocked.”<sup>765</sup> Through such statements, Craig reproduced a racial logic shared by individuals from both Haiti and Cuba. In both countries, it was common for wealthy, white or light-skinned individuals, including middle-class Afro-Cubans, to mask overt racism and racial inequalities by claiming that the black masses were unprepared for leadership or lacked education and civilization.<sup>766</sup>

Literate Haitian observers in Cuba debated the working conditions that migrant agricultural laborers faced with similarly divided conclusions. In 1922, Louis Callard, the Haitian consul at Jobabo, the site of a large sugar plantation in Cuba, published a series of negative descriptions of migrant laborers’ lives. He complained that in the Manati sugar mill, two Haitian laborers were forced to work without pay by the rural guard as punishment for “having refused to help transport a sick Jamaican to the hospital.”<sup>767</sup> He also denounced the health risks Haitians faced on sugar plantations after seeing “about fifty of our women and men

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<sup>764</sup> Edmond Craig, Ancien Consul à Cuba, “A propos de la brochure de M. Léo Laville,” *L’Autre Cloche*, May 19, 1933. Other Haitians made similar arguments about the positive effects of migration on rural Haitians’ habits. See R.C. Charlot, “Simple réflexions au sujet d’une Police municipale,” *Haiti Journal*, February 12, 1932.

<sup>765</sup> Edmond Craig, Ancien Consul à Cuba, “A propos de la brochure de M. Léo Laville,” *L’Autre Cloche*, May 19, 1933. Emphasis added.

<sup>766</sup> Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 125-6; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 154-5.

<sup>767</sup> “L’émigration haitienne à Cuba,” *Bleu et Rouge*, October 11, 1922.

stretched out under the sun and covered from head to foot by infected pustules, some more dead than alive, all without medical care, and nourished only barely by sugar cane.”<sup>768</sup>

Some Haitian observers interpreted agricultural work conditions in Cuba much more positively. In 1925, the Haitian League of Rights of Man and Citizen interviewed numerous Haitian consuls in Cuba regarding the treatment of migrants. While some officials spoke about the exploitation of Haitian workers in Cuba, others defended working conditions there. When asked for his “opinion about Haitian emigration to Cuba,” Emmanuel Nazon, a former consul in Cuba, told the League that migrants received “a material and moral profit” from their work in Cuba.<sup>769</sup> Others argued that migration to Cuba would instill rural Haitians with the values of civilization. “Our country dwellers, barefoot from their birth, illiterate, accustomed to sleeping on the ground, eating on the ground or squatting, upon arriving in Cuba are continually shoed, they sleep at least in a hammock, eat at a table, and learn, if not to read, at least to sign their names, often in Spanish and they go to the theatre.”<sup>770</sup> Others made similar arguments about the positive effects of migration on rural Haitians’ habits. One individual believed that return migrants would make the best police officers in Haiti since they would be influenced by Cuba’s own police force and its relationship to “a people in plain development of evolution.”<sup>771</sup>

Literate Haitians also sought to shape public discussions about migration in Cuba by contesting derogatory characterizations of Haitian immigrant laborers. They responded to the anti-Haitianism of the Cuban press, not by questioning its underlying logic, but rather by

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<sup>768</sup> “L’émigration haitienne à Cuba,” *Bleu et Rouge*, August 29, 1922.

<sup>769</sup> “Enquête de la Ligue des Droits de l’Homme sur notre émigration à Cuba: Interview de Monsieur Emm. Nazon,” *Le Nouvelliste*, May 26, 1925.

<sup>770</sup> Edmond Craig, Ancien Consul à Cuba, “A propos de la brochure de M. Lélío Laville,” *L’Autre Cloche*, May 19, 1933.

<sup>771</sup> R.C. Charlot, “Simple réflexions au sujet d’une Police municipale,” *Haiti Journal*, February 12, 1932.

showing themselves to be exceptions. In 1922, Louis Callard described his efforts to convince Cubans that not “all the inhabitants of Haiti are cast from the image of the rural Haitians...and possess the same degree of morality and intellect.” To this end, he carried “a phototype of Clément Magloire,” the light-skinned director of the Haitian daily *Le Matin*, which he once displayed to an unnamed Cuban woman hoping to change her entrenched idea that “there are no white Haitians.”<sup>772</sup> In so doing, they were employing a strategy that was common to middle-class Afro-Cubans and even members of the Cuban branch of Marcus Garvey’s U.N.I.A. Historian Tomas Fernández Robaina calls this “the individualist solution,” in which Cuban blacks sought to achieve “the same positions as white men, making them see that black men had adequate preparation, and knew how to act in a correct manner in society.”<sup>773</sup> The distance that literate, urban-dwelling Haitians in Cuba sought to create between themselves and their rural counterparts is revealed by their estimate that in 1932, the “Haitian colony in Santiago de Cuba” consisted of “approximately 180 members”—a statistic which ignored the tens of thousands of agricultural laborers who traveled to Cuba annually.<sup>774</sup>

There were moments when Haitians or Cubans publicly questioned negative stereotypes about rural Haitians. In an open letter to the Havana newspaper *El Mundo* in 1922, Camille J. Leon, the Haitian *Chargé d’Affaires* in Havana complained of the “unfavorable opinions and fears formulated by some of the newspapers,” especially “their almost hostile sentiments—against the entry into Cuba of Haitian workers judged *undesirable*.” “If [Haitians] were an ‘undesirable’ element,” he rhetorically asked, “how does one then explain the increase of sugar production in Cuba?” Leon even inverted known racial stereotypes about rural Haitians in Cuba

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<sup>772</sup> “L’émigration haitienne à Cuba,” *Bleu et Rouge*, October 21, 1922.

<sup>773</sup> Fernández Robaina, *Personalidades en el debate racial*, 170; Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, 72.

<sup>774</sup> “A propos d’un cable de Cuba,” *Haiti Journal*, February 29, 1932.

by declaring that migrant workers were recruited “because of their multiple qualities: resistance and high work yield, humility, morality, and natural inclination for country life.”<sup>775</sup> At times, Cubans openly agreed with such statements. In a conference paper delivered in Santiago de Cuba titled *Haiti bajo el imperialismo yankee*, Cuban journalist José Diego Grullon wrote: “It is an error...to believe that the Haitians are an uncultured people [*pueblo inculto.*]”<sup>776</sup>

In their efforts to subvert negative stereotypes about Haitian laborers, however, Leon and Grullon represented Haitian migrants as helpless victims of imperialism and the sugar companies. “Never, not even one time,” the Haitian official declared, “has a Haitian migrant worker left his country on his own account.”<sup>777</sup> Likewise, Grullon stated that Haitian migrants were helpless victims of their surroundings, “sadly tricked by the tentacles of capitalism.”<sup>778</sup> By falsely stating that Haitian immigrant laborers were moved against their will, Leon and Grullon implied that they were pawns of Cuban sugar companies. In effect, they were contributing to an exclusionary strain of Cuban thought that explained immigrant laborers’ presence in Cuba as the result of imperialism instead of their attempts to take control over their lives in the context of U.S. military and economic penetration in the Caribbean.<sup>779</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> “L’émigration haitienne à Cuba,” *Bleu et Rouge*, October 25, 1922.

<sup>776</sup> Grullon, “Haiti bajo el imperialismo yankee,” 8.

<sup>777</sup> “L’émigration haitienne à Cuba,” *Bleu et Rouge*, October 25, 1922.

<sup>778</sup> Grullon, “Haiti bajo el imperialismo yankee,” 8.

<sup>779</sup> Carr, “Identity, Class, and Nation,” 84; McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism,” 615.



## 7.2 OF CONSULS AND *COURTIERS*: HAITIANS' URBAN-RURAL NETWORKS IN CUBA

The relationship between urban-based, literate Haitians and Haitian agricultural workers in Cuba is difficult to discern. One way is by reconstructing the interactions between Haitian consuls and the agricultural workers they were entrusted to represent. During the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Haitian consuls worked in Havana and cities in the sugar-producing areas of Oriente and Camaguey---Santiago, Guantánamo, Jobabo, Puerto Padre, and Antilla. Over the course of this period, their duties included registering migrants as they entered Cuban ports, collecting passport fees on behalf of the Haitian government, and navigating Cuban official channels to protect migrants from all forms of illegal abuses in Cuba. Previous scholarship describes the Haitian consular staff in Cuba as totally negligent toward agricultural workers, corrupt in their dealings with the Haitian state, and unwilling to stand up to the sugar companies, giving Haitians little recourse to challenge their poor working and living conditions.<sup>780</sup>

The image of negligent consuls and non-petitioning migrant workers is oversimplified. Haitian agricultural workers interacted with their consuls in a variety of ways that ranged from collective petitioning to outright avoidance. One consul marveled at “the quantity of letters that arrive for me from all parts of Oriente!”--- indicating that illiterate workers in Cuba hired scribes to communicate with authorities, as they did in Haiti.<sup>781</sup> At other times, workers organized in order to press their consular officials. Fernand Hibbert declared that: “Often they group together

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<sup>780</sup> Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931,” 27; Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 111; Zanetti and Garcia, *United Fruit Company*, 247.

<sup>781</sup> “Enquête de la Ligue des Droits de l’Homme sur notre émigration à Cuba: Interview de Monsieur B. Danache,” *Le Nouvelliste*, May 13, 1925.

and do not fail to address their consuls and legation for the least misunderstanding.”<sup>782</sup> Not all Haitians in Cuba interacted with their consuls in this way. Some refused to call upon them at all. Louis Callard lamented that even basic information about the number of Haitians in his jurisdiction could not be determined with precision because migrants “never consented to come and register in my offices.”<sup>783</sup> At another moment, when asked whether he intervened on behalf of workers, he responded by rhetorically asking “And how could I do it when they have never addressed a complaint against anyone?”<sup>784</sup>

The range of Haitian workers’ responses to their consuls may be explained by both practical concerns as well as their deep-seated mistrust of the officials. This is reflected in the words of Nathan Borgella, a Haitian laborer who returned to Haiti in 1928 after working in Cuba for over a year. He told the Haitian opposition paper *Le Petit Impartial* that “since our means are generally restricted, we do not count on adjudication” from consuls. He also referred to “the consul” as “the first exploiter of Haitians!”<sup>785</sup>

The wide spectrum of agricultural workers’ interactions with consuls is matched by the different ways consuls functioned in Cuba, which included moments of active (though limited) support for workers, severe negligence, and outright exploitation. At least occasionally, Haitian consuls in Cuba intervened on behalf of migrant laborers when Cuban laws were disregarded, challenging categorical statements about their apathy. First, some consuls sought to protect incoming migrants from the abuses of Cuban port officials. For instance, in 1917, Haitian

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<sup>782</sup> “Enquête de la Ligue Haitienne pour la Defense des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen: Sur notre émigration: Interview de Monsieur F. Hibbert,” *Le Nouvelliste*, May 28, 1925.

<sup>783</sup> “L’émigration haitienne à Cuba,” *Bleu et Rouge*, August 29, 1922.

<sup>784</sup> “Enquête de la Ligue des Droits de l’Homme sur notre émigration à Cuba interview de Monsieur L. Callard (suite et fin)” *Le Nouvelliste*, May 16, 1925.

<sup>785</sup> “Le gouvernement de Mr. Borno refuse d’entendre un malheureux qu’on a maltraité à Cuba,” *Le Petit Impartial*, July 24, 1928.

consuls complained that upon entering the quarantine station in Santiago, migrants were being robbed by Cuban police who searched their bags under false pretexts.<sup>786</sup> Consuls also intervened on behalf of Haitians who were incarcerated in Cuba, even before migration was legalized. In 1911, the Haitian consul in Santiago wrote the Governor of Oriente to “make an appeal” for “clemency” and “liberty” for Apollon Pierre, who had been “detained in the prison of Santiago for five months” despite the fact that “his guilt...had not been proven.”<sup>787</sup> In 1912, the Haitian consul requested information about Simon Telismon Raphael who had been arrested in June of that year in Banes, Cuba, perhaps as part of the anti-PIC repression occurring at the time.<sup>788</sup> Consuls also sought to protect incarcerated migrants from poor prison conditions. In 1928, the Haitian minister in Havana complained to Cuban authorities that “all the Haitians in jail” in Ciego de Avila “are subject to true forced labor.” The incident was covered by the Havana newspaper *El País*, resulting in an official Cuban investigation of prison conditions in Camagüey.<sup>789</sup> Finally, consuls inquired about Haitians who died on Cuban soil. In January 1923, Edmond Laporte, the Haitian consul in Santiago, asked the Governor of Oriente for information about the death of Edgard Zéphyr, who “was killed by a cane car on December 31st of last year” before being “buried during the night by the Police.”<sup>790</sup>

Haitian consuls even intervened on behalf of workers for problems that occurred within the confines of sugar plantations. In December 1920, Louis Callard, the Haitian consul at Jobabo, traveled within the plantation owned by the Manati Sugar Company. He came across

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<sup>786</sup> Comandante de Caballería, Delegado de la Secretaria de Gobernación to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, September 26, 1917, APSGP 375/1/1.

<sup>787</sup> Consul d’Haiti to Gouverneur de Oriente, September 14, 1911, APSGP 785/37/61.

<sup>788</sup> Consul d’Haiti to Governor of Oriente, July 05, 1912, APSGP 374/14/1.

<sup>789</sup> José Rosado Aybar, Subsecretario, Secretaria de Gobernación to Jefe de la Policia Nacional, September 14, 1928, ANCSP 44/32/np.

<sup>790</sup> Edmond Laporte to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, January 12, 1923, APSGP 376/14/1.

two Haitian men cleaning the headquarters of the company's *Guarda Jurado* (private security force) without pay. The forced labor was a punishment meted out by the sugar company for refusing to transport another laborer to the hospital. Callard promptly headed to the office of Eduardo Diez de Ulzurrun, the company's top administrator, questioning the legality of both the charge and punishment. Diez de Ulzurrun claimed that forced labor was a common punishment on his and other plantations. When pressured, however, he promised the consul that Haitians would henceforth be sent to the municipal police in Las Tunas, instead of being subject to the plantation's private security forces and ad-hoc judicial system.<sup>791</sup>

Callard pressured companies to comply with Cuban laws again the following year. In the context of falling sugar prices and high unemployment, he addressed a letter to "Administrators of the Manati Sugar Company" because of the "very alarming and well-founded reports about the critical situation that Haitian workers face in Manati." He made reference to the contracts that laborers signed with the company to demand that unemployed laborers be returned home by the company. It was the company's "imperious duty," he said, "to repatriate all the *malheureux* that it made come from Haiti." It is clearly oversimplified to describe consuls as totally negligent of workers or obsequious to sugar companies. "These are human lives, in the hundreds, at stake," Callard wrote, "for which your company and I are responsible."<sup>792</sup>

Although consuls intervened on behalf of agricultural laborers, their support was limited to cases when Cuban laws were breached. They did not challenge any aspect of Haitians' labor or migration experience that was protected by the letter of the law, no matter how abusive. For instance, despite consuls' efforts to protect incoming immigrants from theft in Cuban ports, they did not question the unpopular quarantine policies for agricultural laborers, even though such

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<sup>791</sup> "L'émigration haitienne à Cuba," *Bleu et Rouge*, October 11, 1922.

<sup>792</sup> "L'émigration haitienne à Cuba," *Bleu et Rouge*, August 29, 1922.

policies were motivated by “prevailing racial ideologies in Cuba” as much as “scientific, medical, or public health interest.”<sup>793</sup> Some, including Callard, defended the practice in Haitian newspapers, invoking the rigidity of Cuban law and the Platt Amendment. “To avoid quarantine in Cuba,” he declared, “the emigrant has but one remedy: don’t go to Cuba.”<sup>794</sup>

Urban-based Haitians and consuls responded differently, however, when they were subject to Cuba’s quarantine policies, further highlighting the way public health concerns and consular protection were imbued with racial and class biases. In 1923, the steamship *Biskra* arrived in Santiago from Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The twenty passengers who planned to stay in the city were sent to quarantine. Among them was the wife of a Haitian consular official.<sup>795</sup> The implication that these passengers potentially carried the diseases associated with rural migrant laborers outraged them. “They began to protest...claiming that they were in perfect conditions of health.” During the exchange with the officials, “a scandal was produced” and many “lamented having come to Cuba to suffer quarantine.”<sup>796</sup> Such ideas were probably shared by the consuls themselves, whose deference for the law disappeared when lettered Haitians in Cuba were inconvenienced. Later the same year, Haitian official Marcel Latour was joined in Santiago by his family. When they arrived at the port from Haiti, they were sent to quarantine because Latour’s young son had not been vaccinated. Edmond Laporte, the Haitian Consul General in Cuba immediately requested the family’s release. “Mister Latour is not just anyone,” he

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<sup>793</sup> McLeod, “We Cubans,” 60.

<sup>794</sup> “Enquête de la Ligue des Droits de l’Homme sur notre émigration à Cuba: Interview de Monsieur L. Callard (suite et fin),” *Le Nouvelliste*, May 26, 1925.

<sup>795</sup> “Protesta de unos pasajeros,” *La Independencia*, January 11, 1923; “El vapor Biskra y la señora esposa de un ministro,” *La Independencia*, January 11, 1923.

<sup>796</sup> “Protesta de unos pasajeros,” *La Independencia*, January 11, 1923.

declared in a letter that achieved the family's release within 24 hours.<sup>797</sup> By challenging whether laws should be applied to all Haitians, the case suggests that consular representation in Cuba, like state services in Haiti, was heavily contingent on social position.

The limits of consular intervention are also apparent from the fact that consuls did not challenge work conditions, no matter how harsh, when laws were not explicitly broken. B. Danache, the acting Haitian consul in Santiago in 1925, made the point explicitly when asked whether "migrant laborers were mistreated in certain mills in Cuba." He responded that he had never received a "complaint relative to bad treatment" and merely helped laborers navigate legal channels after work accidents. Curiously, he then claimed that he didn't "call the murder of five Haitians that took place last December or January 'bad treatment'" because it was not a systematic part of company policy, but the result of extenuating circumstances. Although Danache filed a report about the murder, it is doubtful that he could have ever witnessed any of the "bad treatment" that was built into company labor policy since he received reports about "the sanitary state of Haitian workers" from United Fruit Company administrators.<sup>798</sup> Rather than forcing companies to follow laws and protect workers, officials like Danache contributed to their façade of legality by working with companies without investigating their labor practices. There is little doubt that some officials accepted bribes from the United Fruit Company.<sup>799</sup>

Some consuls seem to have acted only after being forced to do so. Haitian consul Emmanuel Nazon did not initially take action when Ney Louis Charles, a Haitian agricultural worker, was murdered by a Cuban official on the United Fruit Company plantation at Preston in

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<sup>797</sup> Edmond Laporte, Consul Général de la République d'Haiti to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, April, 25, 1923, Gobernador de Santiago de Cuba to Edmond Laporte, April 25, 1923, APSGP 376/1/1-2.

<sup>798</sup> "Enquête de la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme sur notre émigration à Cuba interview de Monsieur B. Danache (suite)" *Le Nouvelliste*, May, 16, 1925.

<sup>799</sup> Dossier for Elie Lescot, May 18, 1932, USNA RG127 E183, Box 2, Folder: Haitian Citizens.

1919. Nazon investigated the case only after L elio Laville, a Haitian writer visiting Cuba, penned an open letter to him demanding a response that was published in the Haitian daily *Le Matin*. Nazon’s subsequent visit to the Preston plantation was the “first time” he had entered the property, raising serious questions about the extent to which he could represent Haitian sugar workers effectively.<sup>800</sup>

Haitian consuls’ interventions on behalf of agricultural workers explain why some laborers petitioned officials. However, there were other aspects of the consular-worker relationship that were more exploitative, providing an explanation for many migrants’ avoidance of Haitian officials in Cuba. Nathan Borgella’s characterization of “the consul” as “the first exploiter of Haitians” probably referred to their actions in Cuban ports.<sup>801</sup> A 1920 Haitian law obligated migrants to enter ports where consuls were stationed and officially register in their offices. Such registration required migrants to pay a fee of \$2.00, which represented more than a sugar worker’s daily wages in most years. Consuls and ship captains devised ways to obtain even more money from incoming and outgoing migrants. Ship captains commonly collected migrants’ passports and gave them to the consulate. In some cases, “the passports are not at any time in the possession of the emigrant nor delivered to him by the consul.” When migrants sought to leave Cuba without their documents, they were required to “obtain a new passport” and pay the consul an additional \$2.00.<sup>802</sup> Indeed, before he became president of Haiti in 1941, Elie Lescot served as the Haitian consul in Antilla, Cuba during World War I. In addition to his

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<sup>800</sup> Laville, *La traite des n egres*, 7-9.

<sup>801</sup> “Le gouvernement de Mr. Borno refuse d’entendre un malheureux qu’on a maltrait     Cuba,” *Le Petit Impartial*, July 24, 1928.

<sup>802</sup> United States Senate, “United States Senate Inquiry 2,” 1365-6.

salary, Lescot reportedly “amassed a fortune of \$80,000 through immigration fees and bribes from the United Fruit Company.”<sup>803</sup>

Agricultural laborers’ avoidance of consuls and other Haitian urbanites may have also stemmed from their interactions with *courtiers*. *Courtiers* were non-laboring individuals who traveled throughout the rural and urban spaces of eastern Cuba devising various strategies for cheating individuals, especially agricultural laborers. One individual called them “Haitian parasites” while another said they were “the most pitiless exploiters of workers.”<sup>804</sup> *Courtiers’* specific techniques are best documented in the ports. When rural workers arrived in Cuban train stations, they were met by *courtiers* who approached the migrants “to serve as porters.” *Courtiers* then rushed migrants along and encouraged them to purchase steamship tickets for vessels that were not necessarily in port yet. They also facilitated migrants’ payments of \$2.00 to consuls for return passports. Finally, *courtiers* helped migrants convert their cash wages into checks in preparation for the journey home. In this process, *courtiers* received \$3.00 from steamship companies and “one or two percent...of the value of the check” as payment from migrants.<sup>805</sup>

Although *courtiers* were not technically consuls, their actions damaged the reputation of state officials in two ways. First, consuls were associated with *courtiers* because it was commonly believed that they worked together. Laville’s description of *courtiers’* actions in the port of Santiago said that they were “tolerated by the Police and the steamship companies.” In the process of buying return tickets, paying consular passport fees, and converting currency,

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<sup>803</sup> Dossier for Elie Lescot, May 18, 1932, USNA RG127 E183, Box 2, Folder: Haitian Citizens.

<sup>804</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, [first quote] 6. “Enquête de la Ligue Haitienne pour la Defense des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen: Sur notre émigration: Interview de Monsieur F. Hibbert,” *Le Nouvelliste*, May 28, 1925.

<sup>805</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 6. It is not clear from Laville’s text whether migrants were obligated by law or merely practical reasons to convert hard currency into checks.



Laville described *courtiers* as the individuals “that beat the bass drum,” indicating that they coordinated the bureaucratic demands to which returning migrants were subjected.<sup>806</sup> In addition, some *courtiers* claimed to be consular officials, making it extremely difficult for workers to know whom to trust. In 1935, a Haitian named Coclès Simon falsely claimed to be a “delegate of the [Haitian] consulate...in order to exploit unhappy Haitians in the countryside.” Simon was arrested by the Cuban police for his actions.<sup>807</sup> But his success at embezzling money from laborers using the guise of a state official suggests that a consul demanding money from migrant laborers was probably not that uncommon, even outside of Cuban ports. In the eyes of workers, consular legitimacy was certainly damaged when *courtiers* posed as state officials.

### 7.3 ROSALVO BOBO IN CUBA

Despite their tenuous and sometimes exploitative relationships with rural laborers, Haitians’ urban communities were large and influential enough to engage in political activism. Such activities, in turn, helped to blur the lines between Haiti and Cuba and allowed Haitian urban residents in Cuba to influence events in their home country. This is exemplified by Rosalvo Bobo’s visit to Santiago de Cuba in 1915. Bobo was a Haitian political and military leader who successfully marshaled peasant troops in Northern Haiti in 1915 in an attempt to overthrow President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam. When the latter was killed and Bobo was poised to take the presidency, U.S. Marines formally entered Haiti, beginning a two-decade military occupation of

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<sup>806</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 6.

<sup>807</sup> Louis Hibbert, Consul General de Haiti to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, January 5, 1935. APSGP 377/50/1.

the country. In response, Bobo fled to Cuba on August 30, 1915 where he remained until October 7, 1915.<sup>808</sup>

In Cuba, Bobo promoted himself as the rightful president of Haiti and sought to raise opposition to the U.S. occupation. Initially, this was a difficult task. Newspapers in Havana were critical of the exiled general and linked him with the practice of Vodou and the PIC, which many feared was resurging that year.<sup>809</sup> Police gathered intelligence on Bobo, which they compiled alongside information regarding “the elements of color” in Cuba.<sup>810</sup> However, Bobo was more successful with Cubans in Santiago because of his connections with literate Haitians in the city and his ability to distance himself from Haitian agricultural workers. Bobo’s interactions with the Haitian urban community in Cuba and his ability to highlight commonalities between Cuba and Haiti gave him enough space to organize in Cuba. Despite his relatively short stay in Cuba, Bobo’s presence served to cement the position of literate Haitians in Cuban society and Haitian politics.

Rosalvo Bobo’s connections with literate Haitians and Cubans in Oriente allowed him to deflect press criticisms and remain on the island. When a Havana newspaper described Bobo in negative terms, Haitian consular officials in Santiago defended him. The Haitian consul in Santiago wrote a letter to *La Tarde*, a Havana newspaper, “protest[ing] against the insinuations inspired by ill-will or crass ignorance about our illustrious co-citizen, Doctor Bobo.”<sup>811</sup> Bobo also took advantage of the Haitian communities in Santiago and Guantánamo to pursue his

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<sup>808</sup> Roger Gaillard offers the most thorough account of Bobo’s life and his political experiences leading up to the United States Occupation of Haiti. Gaillard, *Les blancs débarquent II*.

<sup>809</sup> Chomsky, “The Aftermath of Repression,” 10; Gaillard, *Les blancs débarquent II*, 219. For a counter-argument, see Fernández Soriano, “El exilio cubano.”

<sup>810</sup> Gobernador Provincial From Jefe de la Policía Especial, October 07, 1915, APSGP 786/3/15.

<sup>811</sup> *La Tarde*, October 06, 1915 cited in Gaillard, *Les blancs débarquent II*, 222.

political goals. On September 30th, in Santiago, he held “a meeting in which some 50 Haitians attended” in a house in whose “interior there are some rooms occupied by Haitians.”<sup>812</sup> Bobo’s connections with this urban community probably facilitated contacts with journalists, organizations, and prominent individuals in the city. On September 7th, for example, Bobo visited the office of the newspaper, *El Cubano Libre* “accompanied by...the ex-consul of Cuba in Gonaives (Haiti), Mr. Bernardino Rodriguez.”<sup>813</sup> A little over a week later, he attended a meeting of the *Circulo Obrero*, a labor union, where “he occupied a preferential place at the table” and spoke to Cuban workers “relative to the defense of the worker” in Haiti.<sup>814</sup> Bobo also traveled to Guantánamo and apparently considered the possibility of “establishing himself there.”<sup>815</sup>

Rosalvo Bobo’s self-presentation was consistent with the strategies that many Afro-Cubans and urban, literate Haitians used in Cuba. Instead of portraying himself as a Haitian military leader of African descent, Bobo introduced himself as a European-educated man of culture. In a public speech he delivered to Cuban journalists, Bobo detailed his studies of “medicine, law, the sciences, political economy, and diplomacy.” He also claimed to “easily speak French, English, German, Italian and Spanish.”<sup>816</sup> In September, both major newspapers

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<sup>812</sup> Letter to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente from Jefe de la Policía Especial, October 01, 1915, APSGP 786/3/1.

<sup>813</sup> “Bobo,” *El Cubano Libre*, September 07, 1915.

<sup>814</sup> “El Dr. Bobo en el ‘Circulo Obrero,” *El Cubano Libre*, September 17, 1915; “En el Circulo Obrero: Lo visitó el Dr. Bobo,” *La Independencia*, September 17, 1915.

<sup>815</sup> Coded Telegram to Secretario de Gobernación from the Gobernador de Oriente, October 04, 1915, APSGP 786/3/8, 10. Coded Telegram to Gobernador Civil, Santiago from Dr. Ros, Alcalde Municipal, Guantánamo, October 05, 1915, APSGP 786/3/11, 12. Telegram to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente from Jefe de Policía Especial, October 07, 1915, APSGP 786/3/15.

<sup>816</sup> “Los últimos sucesos políticos en Haiti,” *El Cubano Libre*, August 31, 1915.

in Santiago published identical portrait photographs of Bobo wearing a suit--presumably furnished by Bobo himself (See figure 5).<sup>817</sup>

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<sup>817</sup> "Un caudillo haitiano," *El Cubano Libre*, September 06, 1915; "El General Rosalvo Bobo," *La Independencia*, September 07, 1915.

# Un caudillo haitiano



General haitiano Dr. Sr. ROSALBO BOBO.

Figure 5 Image of Rosalvo Bobo in El Cubano Libre, 06-Sep-1915

Like other literate Haitians in Cuban cities, Bobo sought to distinguish himself from the Haitian agricultural laborers migrating to Cuba in large numbers. In fact, in his speeches, he claimed that he would find ways to keep Haitians within their own country. His presidential platform included “offering my compatriots a way to earn their daily subsistence as well as to foment small cultivations and attend to the raising of livestock.” Bobo lamented: “Haitians...avid to work, have to abandon my country to search for a livelihood in others.” If his plan were carried out, Bobo argued, Haiti’s peasantry would “become tranquil and satisfied without thinking about convulsions that only serve to pauperize the country.”<sup>818</sup> With such statements, Bobo simultaneously appealed to both Haitians and Cubans. For the former, he spoke of small, secure landholdings, better rural conditions, and an end to the militarism that was draining the Haitian countryside. For the latter, he dissociated himself from two of the prevailing negative associations about Haiti in Cuba, its unpopular migratory patterns and political instability.

The distance that Bobo placed between himself and Haitian immigrant agricultural laborers was critical for his success. Although he sidestepped much of Cuban racism, the same cannot be said of the Haitian migrant laborers who were coming to Cuba in growing numbers. While one paper called the exiled military leader “a distinguished guest,” a headline just a few weeks earlier had made reference to the legal arrival of 80 migrant workers as “The Haitian Invasion,” indicating that the illiterate laborers and not the cultured military leader were perceived as a foreign threat to stability.<sup>819</sup>

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<sup>818</sup> Nicolás Valverde, “Hablando con el Dr. Bobo,” *El Cubano Libre*, September 07, 1915.

<sup>819</sup> “El general Rosalvo Bobo,” *La Independencia*, September 07, 1915; “La invasión haitiana,” *El Cubano Libre*, August 05, 1915.

Rather than viewing Bobo as a military leader representing a primitive country who would cause a race war in Cuba, the major newspapers in Santiago accepted Bobo's self-presentation as a cosmopolitan individual steeped in European values. *El Cubano Libre* described him as a "man of ample culture and exquisite manners."<sup>820</sup> *La Independencia* raved about Bobo's "gentlemanliness and the grade of culture he possesses."<sup>821</sup> Eventually, both papers added an accent mark to Bobó, altering the pronunciation of his name from a Spanish word for fool into a benign surname.<sup>822</sup>

Bobo tempered his discussions of Haiti for a Cuban context in order to highlight the two countries' similar positions within the United States' Caribbean empire. In Haiti before the U.S. occupation, Rosalvo Bobo published explicit references to Haitians' blackness and the racism of the United States.<sup>823</sup> While in Cuba, he followed the lead of middle-class Afro-Cubans and avoided overt references to race. Instead, Bobo appealed to Cubans by employing the language of anti-imperialism. He referred to the United States Occupation of Haiti as a "horrendous political crime" and denounced the United States' actions in the Caribbean as "imperialism that wraps itself in the mantle of democracy."<sup>824</sup>

By portraying Haitian politics through the prism of U.S. imperialism, Bobo was making common cause with Cubans who also lived under U.S. imperial control. This was successful partially because newspapers had interpreted the United States' occupation of Haiti in light of the

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<sup>820</sup> "Bobo," *El Cubano Libre*, September 07, 1915.

<sup>821</sup> "El Dr. Rosalvo Bobo, en Santiago: Una entrevista tenida con él," *La Independencia*, August 31, 1915. See also Forment Rovira, *Crónicas De Santiago De Cuba II*, 249.

<sup>822</sup> "El Dr. Bobó se fue, se despidió à la..." *El Cubano Libre*, October 8, 1915; "En el Circulo Obrero: Ló visitó el Dr. Bobó," *La Independencia*, September 17, 1915; "Crónicas breves: Una entrevista con el doctor y general Rosalvo Bobó, ex-presidente de Haiti." *La Independencia*, September 14, 1915.

<sup>823</sup> Chomsky, "Migration and Resistance," 3.

<sup>824</sup> "Los últimos sucesos políticos en Haiti," *El Cubano Libre*, August 31, 1915.

experiences of Cuba and the larger Caribbean even before Bobo arrived. “It is believed that the United States will eventually establish in Haiti, little more or less than the same relations that exist between that nation and the Republic of Cuba. Some unknown analog to the Platt Amendment will be adopted,” asserted *El Cubano Libre*.<sup>825</sup> When the United States military formally occupied Haiti, Cuban newspapers reported: “they are establishing in [Haiti] a protectorate analogous to what exists in Santo Domingo.”<sup>826</sup>

After Bobo’s arrival, some Cubans thought he personified commonalities between Haiti, Cuba, and other parts of Latin America. “The case of general Bobo offers all the characteristics of the endemic disease of almost all the convulsive Republics of Hispanic America. He symbolizes the desire of a people tired of tyranny and brandishing the flag of reconquest of power, [who] triumphed...amidst a drama of blood and appalling sacrifices.” The article continues: “Cuba also knew these pains...even if they didn’t take such enormous proportions.” The article even implicitly compared Rosalvo Bobo to Mario Menocal, president of Cuba.<sup>827</sup>

On October 7, Bobo left Santiago on a steamer bound for Kingston, Jamaica. Santiago’s *El Cubano Libre* reported on his departure and described the “good welcome” Bobo had received from the city’s newspapers.<sup>828</sup> Despite periodic rumors in Haiti about his return, Bobo never achieved his goal of ruling the country. He died in Paris in December 1929, five years before U.S. troops left Haiti.<sup>829</sup> Although Bobo’s actions in Santiago did not result in profound political transformations in Haiti, they were significant for the Haitian community in the cities of Oriente,

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<sup>825</sup> “El mundo entero al día: La enmienda Platt en Haiti,” *El Cubano Libre*, August 09, 1915. See also “Una enmienda Platt para Haití,” *El Cubano Libre*, August 12, 1915.

<sup>826</sup> “Por diez años, los Estados Unidos asumen la dirección de Haití,” *El Cubano Libre*, August 25, 1915.

<sup>827</sup> “Bobo,” *El Cubano Libre*, September 07, 1915.

<sup>828</sup> “El Dr. Bobó se fue. Se despidió a la...,” *El Cubano Libre*, October 07, 1915.

<sup>829</sup> Gaillard, *Les blancs débarquent II*, 224-8; Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 121; “In Memoriam: Dr. Rosalvo Bobo,” *Le Pays*, December 02, 1930.



Cuba. Bobo was the highest profile Haitian visitor to Cuba during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Cuban press coverage that Bobo enjoyed in Cuba allowed his arguments, which mirrored those of the larger Haitian urban community, to gain publicity in Cuba. Bobo's claim to represent all Haitians at the same time that he distanced himself personally from the mass of agricultural workers migrating to Cuba lent credence to statements made by literate Haitians throughout the period. Furthermore, Bobo's ability to blur the political lines between Haitians and Cubans by conceptualizing them under an anti-imperialist framework laid the groundwork for future, and more successful forms of Haitian political organizing in Cuba.

#### 7.4 FROM PATRIOTIQUE TO PATRIOTICA

Roughly at the same time that Rosalvo Bobo arrived in Santiago de Cuba, a group of Haitian urbanites under the leadership of George Sylvain, a lawyer and former diplomat, founded *l'Union Patriotique* (UP-Haiti) in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.<sup>830</sup> The organization became particularly active in 1920. By 1921, it claimed a membership of "17,000 adherents, spread throughout all the important population centers" of the country. The group's stated goals were "to work to raise the restrictions placed by the United States of America on the plain exercise of independence and sovereignty of the Haitian nation." Unlike the military strategies of other anti-occupation movements, the UP-Haiti sought to achieve its goals through "pacific measures."<sup>831</sup>

From its founding, the *Union Patriotique's* activities spread beyond Haiti proper. The organization formed relationships with the NAACP and sent delegates throughout Europe and

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<sup>830</sup> "Union Patriotique," *Le Nouvelliste*, August 11, 1915; United States Senate, "Inquiry into Occupation 1," 44.

<sup>831</sup> "Union Patriotique," *Bulletin Mensuel de l'Union Patriotique*, No. 3, February 1921.

the Americas.<sup>832</sup> In Cuba, a branch of the *Union Patriotique* was formed in Santiago in 1926. The organization sought to keep members abreast of “the daily facts...of Haiti” and to achieve “the unification of all Haitians and the instruction of their children born in this territory in the languages of French and Spanish.” The UP-Cuba’s educational plans included creating “a primary and secondary course, obligatory French class, as well as Haitian civic instruction, History and Geography of Haiti and Cuba.”<sup>833</sup>

Haitians’ decision to open a branch of the opposition organization in Cuba highlights the size and significance of the lettered Haitian community in eastern Cuba. The organization also represented a clear emulation of one of Afro-Cubans’ most prominent political strategies. In Republican Cuba, it was common for middle-class Afro-Cubans to organize into allegedly apolitical organizations that were registered with the government as social clubs. These clubs provided an autonomous space to socialize, educate members of the community, or engage in cultural and religious activities.<sup>834</sup> Like Afro-Cuban clubs, the UP-Cuba registered with the government as a non-political organization. The UP-Cuba’s constitution forbade “discussions of party politics” during meetings.<sup>835</sup> It was even registered under the politically innocuous name of the Georges Sylvain Society for Recreation. They thus paid tribute to the UP-Haiti’s original founder while staying within the bounds of Cuban political norms. Official stationery, however, included *Unión Patriótica* on its letterhead (See figure 5).<sup>836</sup> In order to gain political allies and

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<sup>832</sup> Plummer, “The Afro-American Response,” 131-2; Hector, “Solidarité et luttes politiques”; McPherson, “Joseph Jolibois Fils,” 126-34.

<sup>833</sup> “Reglamento de la Sociedad de Recreo y De Instrucción ‘Georges Sylvain,’” December 04, 1926, APSGP 2566/4/16.

<sup>834</sup> de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 15, 37-8, 140; Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, 73-5.

<sup>835</sup> “Reglamento de la Sociedad de Recreo y De Instrucción ‘Georges Sylvain,’” December 04, 1926, APSGP 2566/4/16.

<sup>836</sup> “Reglamento de la Sociedad de Recreo y De Instrucción ‘Georges Sylvain,’” December 04, 1926, APSGP 2566/4/13-17.

avoid charges of racial or national exclusion, the UP-Cuba opened its ranks to “foreigners, particularly the children of hospitable Cuba.”<sup>837</sup>



Figure 6 Detail of letterhead for Union Patriótica Haitiana

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<sup>837</sup> “Reglamento de la Sociedad de Recreo y De Instrucción,” December 4, 1926, APSGP 2566/4/18.

The clearest example of the *Union Patriotique*'s adoption of Afro-Cuban political strategies in Cuba were their references to José Martí, Cuba's "Apostle" who perished on the battlefield during Cuba's independence wars. One open letter used his words as an epigraph. "Liberty is very dear, and one must resign oneself to live without it or decide to buy it at any price."<sup>838</sup> Martí was a "signifier of social unity" in the first decades of Republican Cuba, invoked or silenced by groups trying to achieve their vision of the Cuban nation.<sup>839</sup> In the case of the UP-Cuba, this interpretation of Martí's thought was one that tended toward trans-national solidarity and anti-imperialism. When the organization was criticized for their fundraising activities in Cuba (to be described below), the UP-Cuba's leaders referred to Martí's 1895 journey from New York to Cuba via Haiti.<sup>840</sup> They claimed: "we [Haitians] are doing that which Cuba did when its Apostle Martí crossed the lands preaching and receiving donations to liberate his country."<sup>841</sup> Through this analogy the UP-Cuba's project of raising money and consciousness in Cuba became equivalent to José Martí's similar actions in Haiti. Haiti's struggle against the United States occupation was related to Cuba's independence wars from Spain. In sum, Haitians' contributions to Cuban 19<sup>th</sup> century independence were touted at the same time that reciprocity was requested. Like Cuba's veterans of African-descent, Haitians were invoking their role in Cuba's independence struggle to claim an organizational space in Republican Cuba.<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>838</sup> "Carta Abierta a los Delegados haitianos a la Sexta Conferencia Panamericana" *Diario de Cuba*, February 10, 1928.

<sup>839</sup> Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí*, 3,7.

<sup>840</sup> This journey is chronicled in Martí, *Diarios*.

<sup>841</sup> Presidente, Vice-Presidente and Secretario General of the Union Patriotica Haitiana Georges Sylvain to José R. Barceló, Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, January 6, 1928 APSGP 2566/4/27-8.

<sup>842</sup> Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 182; Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, 180-8; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 39.

Unlike Rosalvo Bobo, who never built a popular movement in Cuba, the UP-Cuba enjoyed some support from Haitian agricultural workers. Of the 30 founding members, some had addresses that tied them directly to the Cuban sugar industry. Osner Prospere lived on the Central San German. Louis Millery lived in *barracones*, the concrete buildings for sugar fieldworkers.<sup>843</sup> The cross-class nature of the UP-Cuba's support is further indicated by the result of a collection it held for Joseph Jolibois fils, one of the *Union Patriotique's* well-known traveling representatives. Jolibois was the editor of the *Courrier Haitien*, a Haitian newspaper that was shut down by occupation officials because its incendiary rhetoric was at odds with U.S.-imposed censorship laws in Haiti. After leaving jail, Jolibois took his anti-imperial message to other parts of Latin America and the world.<sup>844</sup> From February to April 1928, members of the UP-Cuba circulated within Oriente and Camagüey to raise funds for Jolibois. The organization collected money ranging in increments from \$1.00 to \$46.00 in the spaces where Haitians lived and worked. Of the 27 collection sites listed in the newspaper, 21 were sugar *centrales* and *bateyes*, others were *colonias*, and a few were small rural towns. The collection yielded \$397.55 and was featured in the Santiago newspaper, *Diario de Cuba*.<sup>845</sup>

Popular support for the UP-Cuba may be explained by the fact that the organization dealt with the problems and issues faced by Haitian agricultural workers living in both Haiti and Cuba. During the U.S. occupation of Haiti, the organization famously criticized land expulsions in Haiti and called for rural development programs.<sup>846</sup> Joseph Jolibois fils, the recipient of the funds raised by the UP-Cuba, had been known in Haiti for trying to organize the lowest sectors of

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<sup>843</sup> "Lista de los Miembros Activos que formaron la Asamblea General...", December 04, 1926, APSGP 2566/4/11.

<sup>844</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 196; Hector, "Solidarité et luttes politiques."

<sup>845</sup> "Cerrada la suscripcion pro Union Patriotica haitiana: Resultado de la colecta," *Diario de Cuba*, August 09, 1928.

<sup>846</sup> "L'Union Nationaliste et le peuple haïtien," *Haiti Journal*, October 06, 1930.

Haitian society and for writing inflammatory editorials against the United States. He was often incarcerated as a result.<sup>847</sup> Members of the UP-Cuba also criticized the harsh conditions facing Haitian agricultural workers in Cuba. After a large group of Haitians was forcefully expelled from Cuban soil in 1928, an open letter was sent to the consul in Santiago demanding information. It was signed: "President of the Haitian Patriotic Association in Cuba." Other members of the UP-Cuba transmitted copies to mainstream and radical newspapers in Haiti; both published it.<sup>848</sup>

Despite their official apolitical stance, the UP-Cuba remained active in Haitian political affairs. During the 6<sup>th</sup> Pan-American conference, held in Havana in January 1928, members of the UP-Cuba wrote an open letter to the official Haitian delegates. It was published in *Diario de Cuba* and asked them to join the chorus of voices who opposed the United States' imperial activities in the Americas. The UP-Cuba made claims on the conference delegates "as the citizens of the Republic of Haiti that we are." The Union also invoked the memory of the Haitian Revolution to oppose the United States' presence in Haiti. Haitian delegates were urged to "pull from the talons of the American eagle our liberty and our independence that our grandfathers bequeathed us at the price of a million sacrifices, and that they have signed over to us in their blood."<sup>849</sup>

Despite the emphasis on the Haitian Revolution, the brand of nationalism the letter espoused was tailored to the Cuban political context. Public pronouncements highlighted aspects

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<sup>847</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 196, 219; Hector, "Solidarité et luttes politiques."

<sup>848</sup> "L'Affaire des émigrants haitiens à Cuba," *Le Petit Impartial*, July 18, 1928; "Nos compatriotes sont-ils chassés de Cuba?" *Le Nouvelliste*, July 13, 1928.

<sup>849</sup> "Carta abierta a los delegados haitianos a la Sexta Conferencia Panamericana" *Diario de Cuba*, February 10, 1928.

of both Haitian and Cuban nationalism, as well as the larger issues of anti-imperialism and Pan-American solidarity.

We would feel very happy if these phrases...could stir up your patriotic sentiments and unconditionally place you on these worthy delegations that have denounced out loud, without any fear, the imminent danger that threatens the rights of Latin American peoples by the incessant Yankee interventions at the whims of Wall Street and in the name of Civilization.<sup>850</sup>

Like other lettered activists in the African Diaspora, Haitian members of the UP-Cuba framed their claims using the language of pan-Americanism to avoid charges that they were trying to subvert the racial order or Cuban national sovereignty.<sup>851</sup>

Like Rosalvo Bobo, there were times when the UP-Cuba treaded a thin line amongst Cuban observers and even the Cuban government, especially when Haitian agricultural laborers were involved. Before the UP-Cuba officially began raising money on sugar plantations, they had to defend themselves from “seeming revolting” or “undesirable” to the Cuban government—two epithets often attached to Haitian agricultural laborers.<sup>852</sup> Cuban Secret Police interrupted a UP-Cuba meeting on January 2, 1928 and expelled Manuel Milanes, a Haitian-born individual with Cuban citizenship, for unknown reasons, which the UP-Cuba described as “unjustified things.”<sup>853</sup> Later in the same month, Pierre Hudicourt a member of the Haitian branch of the

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<sup>850</sup> Ibid.

<sup>851</sup> Polyné, *From Douglass to Duvalier*, 9, 60, 71.

<sup>852</sup> Presidente, Vice-Presidente and Secretario General of the Union Patriotica Haitiana Georges Sylvain to José R. Barceló, Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, January 6, 1928, APSGP 2566/4/27-8.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid.; Corbea Calzado, "Historia de una familia haitiano-cubana," 66-7.

*Union Patriotique*, and Dantès Bellegarde, a longtime critic of Haitians' working conditions in Cuba, were barred from entering Cuba for the 6<sup>th</sup> Pan-American conference.<sup>854</sup>

The *Union Patriotique's* final political project was an attempt to cultivate support amongst Haitians in Cuba and the Dominican Republic for the 1930 Haitian election. After fifteen years of military occupation and puppet presidents appointed by the United States, the 1930 contest promised to be the first free election in occupied Haiti and a sign that U.S. troops would be leaving in the not-too-distant future.<sup>855</sup>

We must insist...that the Haitians currently in Cuba and Santo Domingo will need only to register at their respective legations so that elector cards are emitted in their favor, [and] that they will reclaim them at the moment of their arrival in Haiti for their vote. This will assure us a formidable majority.<sup>856</sup>

It is unknown whether Haitians in either country participated in the 1930 election. Regardless, the “formidable majority” that the UP sought to build was achieved. Sténio Vincent, the nationalist candidate and one-time member of the UP-Haiti, was elected in the first presidential election of the occupation. Joseph Jolibois fils, the beneficiary of the UP-Cuba's fundraising activities, won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>857</sup> After the election, Lamothe Azar, Vice-President of the UP-Cuba, traveled back to Haiti to represent “the Haitian colony in Cuba” in order to establish links with the new administration and assert the importance of the Cuba-based

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<sup>854</sup> “Cubans Bar Haitian,” *New York Times*, January 13, 1928; Cook, “Dantes Bellegarde,” 130-1.

<sup>855</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 107.

<sup>856</sup> Letter to Perceval Thoby from Georges Séjourné, September 15, 1929, NYKFHCA 3/16.

<sup>857</sup> “Monsieur J. Jolibois Fils à ses electeurs,” *Haiti Journal*, October 17, 1930; “Le Nouveau Secrétaire d’État des Finances et des Travaux-Publics,” *Le Pays*, November 29, 1930.



Haitian community. During the meeting, Azar also petitioned President Vincent “for the prompt amelioration” of living and working conditions for Haitians in Cuba.<sup>858</sup>

## 7.5 THE ERA OF REPATRIATIONS

At the very moment that representatives of the UP-Cuba were asking for improved working conditions for Haitians in Cuba, the Cuban government began deporting Haitians and other immigrant workers in large numbers. The repatriations of the 1930s were caused by a massive decline in world sugar prices and a rise in xenophobic nationalism among Cuban workers. Cuban soldiers traversed the rural areas of Oriente and Camagüey, forcefully rounded up Haitian agricultural laborers, and brought them to ports for debarkation.<sup>859</sup>

As previous chapters show, not all Haitians on Cuban soil were affected by the repatriation drives in the same way. Although some urban Haitians faced popular anti-Haitian racism from neighbors, they were afforded protection from the Cuban state, which permitted them to remain in the cities of eastern Cuba. Like their agricultural counterparts, urban-based Haitians experienced Cuban xenophobia during the 1930s. In 1937 in the city of Guantánamo, a Cuban denounced his two Haitian neighbors using the stereotypes associated with agricultural workers. He claimed that the two Haitian urbanites were “going to advise their fellow countrymen not to go cut cane unless they increased wages.” The accusation of worker radicalism was embellished with every Haitian stereotype available. First, the accuser made references to Haitian Vodou by claiming that his neighbors were “putting *brujerías* [witchcrafts]

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<sup>858</sup> “La colonie haitienne à Cuba,” *Haiti Journal*, January 19, 1931.

<sup>859</sup> The best description of this occurs in James, Millet, and Alarcón, *El Vodú en Cuba*, 56-68.

in the patio of their home.” He also drew upon the notion that Haitians would start a race war in Cuba by claiming that “said Haitians spoke badly of Cubans, saying that if Batista had done in Haiti what he did on September 4, they would have lit Guantánamo on fire and started a war against the government.”<sup>860</sup>

Cuban police, however, questioned the accuser’s story and its motives, indicating the degree of state protection that literate Haitians received. After speaking to the accused Haitians, a Cuban official decided that “it is not certain” that the individuals “speak badly of Cubans, nor that they wanted to sabotage the cutting of sugar cane.” “What is certain in this case,” the officer decided, “is that the accuser...wants to live in the house that the accused inhabits...and that not finding a way for him to leave from said house, and knowing that he is a Haitian citizen, he made the denunciation in question so that he would be expelled for being pernicious.”<sup>861</sup>

The protection of the Cuban Police and literate Haitians’ long battle to distance themselves from agricultural workers probably permitted Haitians (and other non-white foreigners) to remain in Cuba’s urban spaces during and after the repatriations. As mentioned above, there were 748 foreign-born adult males *de color* living in Santiago de Cuba in 1919 and 507 in Guantánamo. In 1943, after a decade of repatriations, this figure increased to 1,027 in Santiago and 900 in Guantánamo.<sup>862</sup> Indeed, literate Haitians continued to create organizations in Cuba after the repatriations, such as the *Union Haitiana* in Cueto and the *Union Club Haitien*

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<sup>860</sup> Testimony of Hilario Asencio Sayan, January 25, 1937, APSSU 4/37/1.

<sup>861</sup> Antonio Bertran, Guardia Rural to Cuartel General “Silverio del Prado,” February 10, 1937, APSSU 4/37/11.

<sup>862</sup> Both figures include what census-takers described as blacks, yellows, and *mestizos*. Cuba, *Census of the Republic of Cuba 1919*, 454. Cuba, *Informe General Del Censo De 1943*, 922-5.

in Morón, Camagüey, founded in 1942 and 1943 respectively.<sup>863</sup> Urban-based Haitians continued to register marriages officially in Guantánamo in the 1930s and 1940s as well.<sup>864</sup>

Some Haitian consuls took advantage of Cuba's anti-immigrant nationalism and the deportation drives to gain significant money from desperate agricultural workers and the steamship companies transporting them. Not only was Haitian consular protection minimal for migrants facing deportation, consuls were known for protecting only those workers who paid them. As Haitians were being deported in Santiago in the 1930s, Haitian consuls "issued certificates...to some elements so that they would not be repatriated," but only in exchange "for certain amounts of money." There were also rumors that steamship companies were paying consuls a cash amount for every deported Haitian on their vessels.<sup>865</sup>

Evidence also suggests that Haitian agricultural laborers became increasingly frustrated with their consuls. In 1933, a Haitian named Juan José traveled to the home of the Haitian consul in Santiago. Upon arrival, José brandished a knife, which he used to threaten the life of the consul if the latter did not give him 600 pesos in reparation for an unknown grievance.<sup>866</sup>

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<sup>863</sup> Documents relating to the foundation of the *Union Haitiana*, June 28, 1942, APSGP 2667/5/2-5; "Acta de Constitución," signed by José Manuel Nieve and JnBaptiste Poiderin, September 26, 1943, Archivo Provincial de Camagüey: Registro de Asociaciones (hereafter APCRA) 125/1/2. Special thanks to Frances Sullivan for bringing the former organization to my attention.

<sup>864</sup> Compiled from APGREC.

<sup>865</sup> Lieutenant Angel Pino Aguila to Secretario de Trabajo in Havana, October 27, 1938, ANCDR 702/21/4.

<sup>866</sup> "Estuvo a punto de ser muerto a puñaladas el consul de Haití," *Diario de Cuba*, March 03, 1933.

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

In addition to the many thousands of Haitians who worked in Cuban sugar plantations and coffee farms, there was a small group of literate, Haitian urbanites who settled in Cuban cities like Santiago and Guantánamo. These individuals maintained strong social and commercial networks with Cubans. They also maintained close communication with Haitian affairs through letters and newspapers, which circulated between the two countries. Despite their small number, these literate Haitians in Cuba conveyed the details about Cuban racial politics and working conditions to a larger Haitian audience by contributing letters and articles to Haitian newspapers. They also organized on various occasions to protest U.S. imperial policies in Haiti—most notably in 1915 to host Rosalvo Bobo and again throughout the late 1920s, when they formed a Cuban branch of *l'Union Patriotique*.

Although this literate group communicated with Haitian newspapers and Cubans on behalf of agricultural laborers, they also sought to distance themselves from these individuals in order to avoid the dominant strands of anti-Haitian racism in Cuba. Their actual relationships with Haitian agricultural workers, which are revealed by analyzing the interactions of consuls, *courtiers*, and agricultural workers, were similarly tenuous and sometimes hostile—though much more complex than previous historians have argued. During the 1930s, the number of Haitian agricultural workers in Cuba diminished as a result of widespread repatriations. At times literate Haitians were the target of anti-Haitian racism by Cubans, though they received a degree of protection that was not available to sugar workers, allowing them to remain in Cuba. Some Haitian consuls took advantage of the situation to demand money from migrants in exchange for protection, creating more friction in an already fragile relationship.

## 8.0 RETURN MIGRANTS IN HAITI

In the summer of 1928, after a year of working on Cuban sugar plantations, Nathan Borgella and other Haitian-born individuals were apprehended by Cuban police. Two people were killed as they protested. The Haitians in question had entered Cuba legally and had committed no crime. Nevertheless, they were being deported. Borgella and the other individuals were forced onto a steamer, which dropped them off in Petit-Goâve, Haiti, miles away from Borgella's original point of origin. Upon returning, "he traveled to the capital on foot, having nothing to eat but a can of sardines and two small pieces of bread." After arriving in Port-au-Prince, Borgella took his story to the newspaper *Le Petit Impartial* in order to "officially bring it to the attention of the Haitian government."<sup>867</sup>

Borgella's experiences of expulsion from Cuba and his movements between rural and urban Haiti were shared by tens of thousands of Haitians between 1928 and 1940. From 1913 to 1931, when Haitians migrated legally to Cuba, it was common for many to return home at the end of the Cuban sugar harvest. Almost 20% of the Haitians who migrated to Cuba annually during the 1920s had already entered the country, suggesting that many thousands of migrants returned to Haiti each year before migrating again.<sup>868</sup> Flows of return migrants increased dramatically beginning in 1928 and throughout the 1930s due to decreasing sugar

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<sup>867</sup> "Le gouvernement de Mr. Borno refuse d'entendre un malheureux qu'on a maltraité à Cuba," *Le Petit Impartial*, July 24, 1928.

<sup>868</sup> Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900-1931," table vii.

wages and organized repatriation drives in Cuba. In 1928, as the case of Borgella indicates, the Cuban government forcefully repatriated over 2,000 Haitians from the country. Those numbers would increase dramatically in subsequent years.

Other immigrants in Cuba were similarly affected, as were Haitians in other places. During the 1930s, British West Indian and Spanish immigrants also left Cuba voluntarily and through coercion, though in smaller numbers than Haitians.<sup>869</sup> Haitians in other migratory destinations suffered as well. In 1937, Raphael Trujillo, the dictator of the Dominican Republic, ordered the massacre of over 10,000 Haitians that inhabited the borderlands between the two countries.<sup>870</sup> Migration also slowed on a global scale. The year 1940 marked the end of a peak period of human migration across the earth in which hundreds of millions of people had traveled short and long distances beginning in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>871</sup>

In Haiti, some greeted the return of migrants from Cuba with high expectations, believing that the influx of experienced agricultural workers would be a boon to the country's economy. As in other parts of the Caribbean, state officials sought to modernize the Haitian economy and develop agricultural exports both during and after the U.S. occupation of the country (1915-1934). Who better to supply the labor for export production than the *Viejos* (the Spanish nickname for elite cane cutters) who experienced agricultural wage labor, work discipline, and production schedules on Cuban sugar plantations, the most modern in the world? However, members of Haiti's ruling classes quickly learned that their expectations were not necessarily identical to those of return migrants. As one U.S. official said of the Haitians coming back from Cuba, "While he is quite willing to work in Cuba, and is considered a valuable workingman

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<sup>869</sup> Cervantes-Rodríguez, *International Migration in Cuba*, 133-4.

<sup>870</sup> Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed"; Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money."

<sup>871</sup> McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846-1940."

there, when he returns he is practically useless to the country.”<sup>872</sup> It is this gulf between migrants’ actions and the expectations of Haiti’s ruling classes that this chapter explores.

Despite the massive number of individuals returning to Haiti from Cuba between 1928 and 1940, not a single study traces their experiences of return or their interactions with other sectors of Haitian society. The invisibility of return migrants in secondary literature is a symptom of larger gaps in the scholarship on migration and 20<sup>th</sup> century Haiti. Traditionally, migration historians have focused on receiving societies and the process by which newcomers became integrated into existing social, political, or economic structures.<sup>873</sup> More recently, scholars have looked to conditions in sending societies in order to understand migrants’ actions in host societies.<sup>874</sup> However, return migrants often “drop out of the story;” analyses of return migration are still scarce.<sup>875</sup>

Our lack of knowledge about return migrants in Haiti is compounded by other lacunae in the country’s historiography. There is relatively little scholarship on Haiti’s post-occupation period or the experiences of rural and urban workers during and after the U.S. occupation. Typical periodizations of Haitian history highlight the U.S. occupation of the country (1915-1934) and the dictatorships of François and Jean-Claude Duvalier (1957-1986) with less analysis of the interim period.<sup>876</sup> Since the peak years of migrants’ returns occurred between 1928 and

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<sup>872</sup> Report to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti from the District Commander, Jeremie, May 1, 1920, USNA RG 127 E 165 Box 6, Folder: Jeremie, Reports of Conditions No. 134.

<sup>873</sup> For critiques of this approach, see Diner, “History and the Study of Immigration,” 37; Moya, “A Continent of Immigrants,” 3.

<sup>874</sup> Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*, 3; Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, chapter 8.

<sup>875</sup> McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks*, 7. For treatments of return migration in the Caribbean, see Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 89-99; Richardson, *Panama Money in Barbados*, chapters 5-7; Fog-Olwig, *Caribbean Journeys*, 194.

<sup>876</sup> This critique is articulated in Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 2.

1940, they cut across well-defined periods of study, placing them outside of traditional narratives.

Existing accounts of Haitian economic history often gloss the period between 1934 and 1957 as one in which the agricultural gains made under the U.S. occupation eroded. One scholar described the Haitian government's approach to economic development after the occupation as "twenty years of ad hockery." The Haitian government made attempts to increase foreign capital investments in agricultural projects and encourage rural landholders to replace subsistence farming with export production. However, "there were still no pronounced long-term efforts of a more systematic kind to promote agricultural development." Such projects were evaluated only in terms of whether they increased the volume and value of Haitian coffee exports, the country's main trading good since independence.<sup>877</sup> The ramifications of economic policies on rural livelihoods and the experiences of rural and urban workers in this period remain largely unexplored.

New directions in the scholarship on Caribbean migration demonstrate the importance of studying the experiences of the migrants who returned to their home countries after a sojourn abroad. Scholars have argued that Haitians and other people in the Caribbean often conceptualize migration as a strategy to increase their social or economic status in their home country, not necessarily an effort to settle abroad permanently. For circular migratory movements such as the one between Haiti and Cuba, to ignore migrants' returns is to misunderstand the population movement entirely.<sup>878</sup> Other scholars demonstrate that return migrants have historically had profound effects on sending societies throughout the Caribbean. Their money may shape the social and economic structures of rural areas. In addition, the ideas

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<sup>877</sup> Lundahl, *Peasants and Poverty*, 302-8 [quotes from 302].

<sup>878</sup> Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 18; Fog-Olwig, *Caribbean Journeys*, 194.



and rising expectations acquired from the migration experience may change labor relations or motivate political mobilizations and protest.<sup>879</sup>

Recent historiography of 20<sup>th</sup> century Haiti has argued that the period between 1934 and 1957 deserves considerably more scholarly attention because it was “modern Haiti’s greatest moment of political promise” and a period of immense transformation. Opposition organizations were becoming increasingly vocal against the Haitian government at the same time that they splintered and fought amongst themselves. Both during and after the occupation, the Haitian government repressed a number of nationalist and radical opposition groups, largely relying on U.S. doctrines of anti-Communism for justification.<sup>880</sup>

Understanding return migrants’ aspirations and experiences in the midst of such transformations is extremely difficult because of the limited sources available to historians. The memoirs, letters, and firsthand accounts that historians employ to study other migratory movements are non-existent for the mostly illiterate Haitian agricultural workers who circulated between their home country and Cuba. The newspaper articles and government documents that describe return migrants were written by individuals whose priorities were not necessarily identical to those of the migrants. Although rich, Haiti’s mainstream newspapers and government documents were written with the goals of promoting economic development and political stability, making their descriptions of return migrants necessarily partial. Their actions are described only when the goals of production or governability were challenged, providing an important, though largely incomplete glimpse into return migrants’ experiences.

Haitian literature represents another body of possible sources for reconstructing migrants’ experience. Return migrants appear prominently in some Haitian novels of the 1930s and 1940s,

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<sup>879</sup> Richardson, *Panama Money in Barbados*, 242-3.

<sup>880</sup> Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 2.

where they were often described in terms of their conspicuous dress and cosmopolitan mannerisms.<sup>881</sup> They appear as major and minor characters in Jean Batiste Cineas' *Le drame de la terre* (1933), Maurice Casseus' *Viejo* (1935), Pierre Marcelin and Philippe Thoby-Marcelin's *Canapé-vert* (1943), Jacques Roumain's *Les gouverneurs de la rosée* (1944), and other literary works of the period.<sup>882</sup> Collectively, these texts represent the cultural and political movements of *Indigénisme*, *noirisme*, and Marxism, providing a cross-section of Haitian political thought during and after the occupation and their responses to return migrants.

In the years immediately following the publication of these novels, scholars were divided about whether they were authentic representations of Haiti's lower classes. Many Haitian and U.S. scholars praised the texts for "depict[ing] the peasant realistically."<sup>883</sup> Others accused authors of idealizing life and labor in the countryside, especially on plantations.<sup>884</sup> More recently, such debates about literary realism and authenticity have given way to larger discussions about the relationship between literature, history, and the representations of subaltern groups. On the one hand, literary critics show that novels contain individual and collective beliefs, interpretations, voices, and fantasies that do not appear in state documents. However, these characterizations may be skewed by the authors' racial or class biases, their political subjectivities, or their attempts to promote a vision of a unified nation.<sup>885</sup> Ultimately, the novels,

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<sup>881</sup> Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, 113-4.

<sup>882</sup> Richard Larose wrote a story called "Les Émigrés," which was published in *Haiti Journal*, April 27, 1932 and April 28, 1932. Jacques Stephen-Alexis, *Compère General Soleil* (1955) details the experiences of a return migrant from the Dominican Republic. The latter is analyzed in Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, chapter 3.

<sup>883</sup> Cook, "The Haitian Novel," 224; Price-Mars, "Preface," viii; Tinker, "Haitian Background," xxvii.

<sup>884</sup> Logan, "More Black Magic in Haiti," 63.

<sup>885</sup> Dash, *Haiti and the United States*, xi-xiv; Frederick, "Colón Man a Come," xi-xiii; Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 76; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 5; Duno-Gottberg, *Solventando las diferencias*, 15; Beverley, "The Im/Possibility of Politics," 57-9.

like newspapers and government documents, reflect the fears, expectations, and goals of their authors above all else, though they also provide an entry point into understanding the experiences of migrants.

This chapter traces migrant experiences upon their return and reintegration into Haitian society from the 1920s to the 1940s. I argue that the processes of return and reintegration varied widely for migrants according to the manner in which they left Cuba and their degree of economic success there. Return migrants' experiences of reintegration were shaped heavily by the country's increasing political conflicts and the government's attempts to modernize the economy, which were much more effective than previously recognized. In contrast to elite expectations, many return migrants used the wages they earned in Cuba's export economy, not to work in the production of Haitian exports, but to engage in subsistence agriculture in the rural areas or move into cities. Upon returning from Cuba, Haitian agricultural workers engaged in a variety of activities to achieve economic autonomy and improve their social status. These included purchasing land, migrating to cities, and acquiring nice clothing and manufactured goods. In Haiti's rural and urban spaces, these strategies often met with elite disapproval and coercive state policies that were geared both specifically to return migrants and more generally to urban and rural workers.

## **8.1 POLITICAL CONFLICT AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN HAITI**

The migrants who returned to Haiti both during and after the U.S. occupation entered a country of polar, and sometimes violent, political divisions. Between 1915 and 1934, when U.S. Marines controlled the Haitian government through puppet presidents, the biggest threat to the established

order were strikes and rebellions led by peasants and students. Between 1918 and 1920, the Caco rebellion raged in various parts of rural Haiti. It was quelled only with the aid of U.S. airplanes and the destruction of entire villages and populations. In 1929, a student protest over scholarships at a U.S. agricultural school quickly grew into a countrywide strike against the occupation. In the Southern peninsula, Marines fired on Haitian peasants, massacring over twenty. The island-wide protest only subsided when it was announced that there would be a fair presidential election in 1930.<sup>886</sup>

While popular groups protested the U.S. military and political control of Haiti, intellectuals and artists defended the country from the occupiers' racism using the language of cultural nationalism. In Haiti, as in many other parts of Latin America, lettered individuals challenged the tenets of the scientific racism that dominated academies in Europe and the United States. In response to widely held theories about the natural inferiority of non-white individuals and claims that miscegenation (racial mixture) would lead to human degeneracy, Latin American scholars developed alternative anthropological theories that promoted the positive benefits of racial mixture and celebrated the African and indigenous biological and cultural roots of their own national societies. In Haiti, such cultural nationalism was known as *Indigénisme* and strongly associated with the ethnographic works of Jean Price-Mars, especially his 1928 *Ainsi parla l'oncle* (*So Spoke the Uncle*). In Haiti, as elsewhere, the movement was not limited to the social sciences. Beginning in the 1920s, *Indigénisme* manifested itself in visual arts, literary works, and music as well.<sup>887</sup>

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<sup>886</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 102-3, 196; Bellegarde-Smith, *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*, 111-2; Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 33-4.

<sup>887</sup> For a discussion of scientific racism in the United States and Europe, see Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*; Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research*; Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science*; Kühl, *The Nazi Connection*. For a discussion of Jean Price-Mars and the larger

In the final years of the occupation and the subsequent decades, the relative unity of the Haitian opposition to the U.S. disintegrated. Soon after the occupation ended, Sténio Vincent, the popular, nationalist winner of the 1930 presidential election, successfully changed the constitution to concentrate power in the executive branch. His efforts were met with a number of failed coup attempts involving prominent Haitian leaders and military officials.<sup>888</sup> Shortly after the end of the occupation, the *Indigéniste* movement itself split between *noiristes* and Marxists. The former transformed *Indigénisme*'s message of anti-racism and pride in African culture into a rigid ideology proclaiming blacks' biological essence and their unique role as the natural leaders of Haiti. The latter interpreted capitalism and class differences as the primary divisions within Haitian society, though many organizations and leaders combined elements of both *noirisme* and Marxism.<sup>889</sup>

In the period after the occupation, state repression of political protest continued. Previous fears by state officials of an armed nationalist rebellion were replaced by a red scare. Throughout the Vincent administration (1930-1941), opposition groups, especially Haitian Communists, faced repression from the newly centralized government. Violence and in-fighting occurred among opposition groups throughout the post-occupation period as well.<sup>890</sup>

The country awaiting returning migrants was also shaped by ambitious government attempts to transform the Haitian economy. Like its Latin American and Caribbean neighbors,

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*Indigéniste* movement in Haiti see Price-Mars, *Ainsi parla L'oncle*; Antoine, *Jean Price-Mars and Haiti*; Largey, *Vodou Nation*; Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, chapter 4; Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, chapter 1; Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 25; Dash, *Literature and Ideology in Haiti*, chapters 2 -3; Shannon, *Jean Price-Mars*. For discussions of this trend elsewhere in Latin America, see Wade, *Race and Ethnicity*, 105-7; Telles, *Race in Another America*, chapter 2; Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba*; Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*; Price, *The Convict and the Colonel*, 174-7.

<sup>888</sup> Corvington, *Port-Au-Prince au cours des ans 1934-1950*, 14-6, 27-36.

<sup>889</sup> Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 19-28; Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, 67.

<sup>890</sup> Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 3-4, 22-7.

the Haitian government expanded its role in the economic affairs of the country during the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. The main goal was to increase the cultivation of export crops and modernize urban spaces after the capitals of Europe and the United States.<sup>891</sup> In Haiti, these plans began under the U.S. occupation and continued through the presidencies of Sténio Vincent (1930-1941) and Elie Lescot (1941-46). In 1924, John Russell, the highest ranking U.S. official in Haiti declared that the country's "future prosperity depends upon the development of her soil."<sup>892</sup> A few years before, in 1918, occupation forces implemented a constitution in Haiti that permitted foreigners to own land for the first time since Haitian independence. The occupation government subsequently courted foreign capital for agricultural production and provided "vocational and manual training" to Haitians in rural areas. They also sought to increase the collection of taxes by declaring that export crops like coffee, cacao, and cotton had to be sold in cities, not in the countryside away from the gaze of the state.<sup>893</sup> By 1924, Russell declared, "If further development takes place in sugar and cotton and if additional staple industries are developed, so as to minimize the present dangerous predominance of coffee, Haiti can face with confidence its future as a competitor in the export markets of the world."<sup>894</sup>

Similar goals drove state policies in the aftermath of the occupation, highlighting an area of overlap between the periods of U.S. and Haitian rule. In 1936, a Haitian government report

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<sup>891</sup> On rural modernization and an increase in the role of the state elsewhere, see Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*, chapters 4-7; Santamaría García, *Sin azúcar no hay país*, 3-5; McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*, 146. On urban spaces, see Rosenthal, "Spectacle, Fear, and Protest"; Corvington, *Port-Au-Prince, 1934-1950*; Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction*, 70-9; Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*, 12-4.

<sup>892</sup> Third Annual Report of the American High Commissioner at Port-au-Prince, Haiti to the Secretary of State, December 31, 1924, USNA RG 59 838.00/2079.

<sup>893</sup> "L'arrêté du 18 octobre 1922 et la liberté du commerce dans les campagnes," *Le Matin*, September 20, 1923.

<sup>894</sup> Third Annual Report of the American High Commissioner at Port-au-Prince, Haiti to the Secretary of State, December 31, 1924, USNA RG 59 838.00/2079.

echoed Russell's statements from twelve years earlier. "Only agriculture can create wealth in Haiti; all the activities of this country are ineluctably conditioned by agricultural production."<sup>895</sup> In the 1930s, the Haitian government sought to improve the quality of Haitian coffee and diversify exports. The year after the occupation ended, the Haitian government awarded a concession to the Standard Fruit Company to promote banana exports.<sup>896</sup> In the 1940s, the regime of Elie Lescot oversaw the creation of the *Société Haïtiano-Américaine de Développement Agricole* (SHADA), a collaboration between U.S. companies and the Haitian government, designed to increase rubber production to serve the Allied cause during World War II.<sup>897</sup>

Plans to increase Haiti's agricultural exports were predicated upon the availability of an abundant labor force that would be tied to the land. Attempts to court foreign capital were combined with exhortations to the peasantry to produce export crops rather than engage in subsistence agriculture or move to cities. Prominent politicians communicated with peasants directly in Creole, the language of the Haitian majority, rather than French, the usual language of governance. For instance, on the eve of the withdraw of U.S. troops from Haiti, President Sténio Vincent addressed a group of rural Haitians in Creole about government attempts to bring water to the countryside and develop fallow lands in order to grow grain, bananas, and cotton.<sup>898</sup> Four years later, after U.S. troops had left the country, Vincent addressed peasants in Aux Cayes in an effort to encourage them to cultivate the land with exportable crops rather than passing

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<sup>895</sup> "La richesse de notre pays depend de la culture de nos terres," *L'Action Nationale*, December 16, 1936.

<sup>896</sup> Dehoux, *Le problème du café*; Lundahl, *Peasants and Poverty*, 303.

<sup>897</sup> Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 44.

<sup>898</sup> "Le Président Vincent parle aux paysans dans leur patois," *Haiti Journal*, May 02, 1933. For an extended discussion on the French/ Creole division as a mechanism for stratifying Haitian society see Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, chapter 11.

their time idly. The president who claimed that he was responsible for Haiti's "second independence" recalled the labor policies that revolutionary leaders implemented during the country's *first* independence struggle (1791-1804). He even made reference to the fact that Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Haitian revolutionary hero, had forced freed slaves back onto plantations to maintain agricultural production in the aftermath of abolition, drawing a parallel with conditions in Haiti in the 1930s.

And like the young people of [L'Ouverture's] era hardly wanted to devote themselves to cultivation [of the land] under the fallacious pretext that they were free,--I want to tell you that not much has changed, and they spent the workday 'running around and vagabonding' – don't you see that nothing has changed?<sup>899</sup>

For state officials, peasant labor had to be directed toward export production, away from subsistence agriculture. During the occupation, the government established agricultural and trade schools in an effort to train Haitian rural-dwellers in the scientific techniques of agricultural production. After the occupation, the schools lost their funding but the government's ideas about the proper labor of the peasantry remained the same.<sup>900</sup> In 1935, the Haitian government offered land to rural families who "agreed to plant 50 percent of such acreage with export crops."<sup>901</sup> Nevertheless, *Le Matin* later complained that peasants only "do small-scale cultivation" since "their needs are very limited," resulting in "a grave inconvenience for the national economy."<sup>902</sup>

Efforts to develop the countryside were coupled with an emphasis on *urbanisme* (city planning) in Port-au-Prince and Haiti's other cities. During the occupation, U.S. policies sought

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<sup>899</sup> "Le Discours des Cayes," *La Lanterne* (Cayes), December 31, 1937. For Toussaint L'Ouverture's labor policies, see Lundahl, *Politics or Markets*, chapter 8; Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*, 31-4.

<sup>900</sup> Lundahl, *Peasants and Poverty*, 302-3.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*, 303; "Le bien rural de la famille," *L'Assaut*, July 3, 1935.

<sup>902</sup> "Ici, Port-au-Prince," *Le Matin*, January 31, 1936.



to illuminate cities with electric lamps and make streets more sanitary. After the Marines left, state efforts to beautify urban spaces may have actually increased. Throughout the 1930s, newspapers spoke of “the necessity of making cities more attractive, ridding villages of buildings that are too old, and rectifying their convoluted streets.”<sup>903</sup> In 1937, a law was passed aiming to regulate construction projects in the city, increase electric and water infrastructures, and restore old buildings.<sup>904</sup>

Throughout Port-au-Prince, the effects of these policies were noticeable as construction projects were carried out to increase the aesthetics and infrastructure of the city. In the period after the occupation, the major streets of Port-au-Prince were widened and paved. The Grand’rue in the center of downtown was “embellished with a grass strip converted from the old footpath and endowed with uniform sidewalks.” New churches and hotels were constructed and empty lots were converted into public plazas. Improvements to the city’s infrastructure were also underway. In 1937, water had gathered under a viaduct on the rue Cappoix before flooding the surrounding areas and causing property damage. The government responded by building a large stone dike to prevent further unnecessary floods. Finally, wide roads connected Port-au-Prince to outlying areas, integrating distant populations into the sphere of the capital and drawing renewed attention to previously abandoned neighborhoods.<sup>905</sup>

As in other parts of the Americas, discussions of sanitation and urban reform were imbued with assumptions about improving the masses by changing their environments and habits.<sup>906</sup> A 1936 editorial in *L’Action Nationale* was unequivocal on the point. “In our days, all

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<sup>903</sup> “Urbanisme, bienfait social,” *L’Action Nationale*, December 28, 1936.

<sup>904</sup> Corvington, *Port-Au-Prince, 1934-1950*, 138.

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-41.

<sup>906</sup> Caulfield, *In Defense of Honor*, 55-63; Stepan, “*The Hour of Eugenics*,” 73; Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*, 131-4.

civilized people strive for one capital goal: *urbanisme*.”<sup>907</sup> The same publication later praised the Haitian government’s *urbanisme* as “a new step toward great civilization.”<sup>908</sup> For the urban poor, *urbanisme* could entail forced relocation and the clearing of their neighborhoods. On a visit to Port-au-Prince in the late 1930s, Katherine Dunham described a “slum area” in the city as being full of “mud and filth” and consisting of “huts of cardboard, tin, and burlap,” which were divided by “narrow passages,” and punctuated with “charcoal braziers.” A few years later, these structures were “torn down and their sites reclaimed” in preparation for official celebrations of the two hundred year anniversary of the founding of Port-au-Prince to be held in 1949.<sup>909</sup>

The problems of rural productivity and *urbanisme* were intimately linked. Many feared that rural-born individuals were swelling the ranks of the urban poor instead of working in the countryside. In the minds of Haiti’s ruling classes, peasants were giving up the allegedly pure, “good life” of the countryside for the anxiety-producing, “hectic life of the city.”<sup>910</sup> In 1930, *L’Élan* complained that there were “large strapping men” that “could be staying on their lands to work.” Instead, they moved to the cities where they became “dirty and smelly,” “circulating through our streets, be it with a box under their arms calling themselves shines, be it with a bucket full of bottles on their heads offering whipped kola.”<sup>911</sup> *Canapé-vert*, the 1943 novel by Pierre Marcelin and Philippe Thoby-Marcelin, illustrates this by depicting rural-urban migration as a phenomenon that drains individuals of their ambitions to work. Sarah, a rural-born prostitute in Port-au-Prince, ridicules a newly arriving woman who expressed a desire to work

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<sup>907</sup> “Urbanisme, bienfait social,” *L’Action Nationale*, December 28, 1936.

<sup>908</sup> “Urbanisme,” *L’Action Nationale*, June 15, 1937.

<sup>909</sup> Dunham, *Island Possessed*, 44-5.

<sup>910</sup> “Ici, Port-au-Prince,” *Le Matin*, January 31, 1936.

<sup>911</sup> “Il faut obliger les campagnards à travailler la terre,” *L’Élan*, November 6, 1930.

for having “a silly, country idea. She too, at the beginning of her urban career, had nursed that naïve intention, but she soon satisfied herself that the only reward of work was fatigue and exhaustion.”<sup>912</sup>

The results of the state’s efforts to increase Haiti’s production of exports during and after the occupation were mixed. Between 1924 and 1948, the volume of major Haitian exports steadily and sharply increased, from 41.3 to 88.1 thousands of metric tons. In the peak year of 1938-39, Haiti exported 97.1 thousands of metric tons of agricultural goods (See Table 5).

**Table 5 Haitian Commodity Exports (in thousands of metric tons)**

Commodity	1924/25	1928/29	1931/32	1934/35	1936/37	1938/3	1942/43	1946/47	1947/48
Coffee	30.8	28.6	23.2	19.0	24.8	29.3	25.8	24.7	22.7
Cotton, raw	3.6	4.8	6.3	6.2	5.4	4.7	2.0	0.3 *	3.3
Sugar	5.4	4.7	20.6	32.7	32.5	38.2	11.6	26.1	20.1
Sisal	---	0.1	2.8	5.0	6.2	7.5	10.7	28.4	26.1
Bananas**	---	---	0.03	0.5	1.3	2.0	0.6	7.3	3.5
Cacao	1.5	1.4	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.8
Molasses	---	9.9	13.5	10.0	10.8	15.6	---	13.2	14.1
<b>Total***</b>	<b>41.3</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>81.1</b>	<b>97.1</b>	<b>51.9</b>	<b>94.3</b>	<b>88.1</b>

\* Not including cotton waste

\*\* Million stems

\*\*\*Figure excludes bananas

Source: United Nations, *Mission to Haiti*, 214

Previous scholars have criticized the effects of Haitian economic policies after the occupation on the basis of a decline in coffee production. However, these increases in the overall quantity of exports represent a shift away from coffee and a move toward diversification. In 1924-25, Haiti exported 30.8 thousands of metric tons of coffee, representing 79.4% of total exports. In the ensuing two decades, the percentage of coffee in total exports decreased while sugar, sisal, and bananas did the opposite. Although coffee maintained its position as the leading

<sup>912</sup> Marcelin and Thoby-Marcelin, *Canpé-Vert*, 114-5.

export crop in Haiti, by 1947-48, production had decreased to 22.7 thousand metric tons, representing 34.9% of all exports that year.<sup>913</sup>

Low commodity prices in the world market, however, meant that diversification and an increase in production did not bring more revenue. After netting the Haitian government an annual average of 94.3 million gourdes (18.86 million USD) in the five fiscal years between 1924-25 and 1928-29, export values remained predictably low during the depression. From 1929-30 to 1942-43, the average annual value of Haitian exports was only 43.2 million gourdes (8.64 million USD).<sup>914</sup>

## **8.2 RETURN MIGRANTS AND FEARS OF POLITICAL RADICALIZATION**

“The return of the emigrants is an interesting sight,” a U.S. official in Aux Cayes declared in 1925. “Two or three hundred come at a time, crowded on a small motor launch which anchors in the bay while the passengers come ashore in row boats.” There they were met by “a band of customs’ [sic] men and police” whose job it was “to examine their baggage.” In good years, the baggage could be substantial, as many return migrants carried “a new small trunk tied with a new rope.” Migrants were also known to bring money. When sugar prices were high and Cuban companies thrived, observers noted that return migrants carried “consederable [sic] money, ” and credited them with bringing “a steady influx of capital” into their home regions. Even “the laborers who left with nothing return with enough to buy small farms.”<sup>915</sup> In 1924, one U.S.

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<sup>913</sup> United Nations, *Mission to Haiti*, 210, 14.

<sup>914</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>915</sup> Maurice P. Dunlap, American Consul, Port-au-Prince, “Significance of Haitian Emigration to Cuba,” September 10, 1925, USNA RG 59 838.5637/6.

official claimed that “the United Fruit Company’s men are in much better condition than others, they have better clothes and more money, and look to be in better physical condition.”<sup>916</sup>

The process of return was not always so smooth. Carrying this much wealth made migrants vulnerable to the corruption of state officials and the envy of their peers. Customs officials were known for extorting money from return migrants. In 1923, for instance, *Le Courrier Haitien* criticized an official who imposed exorbitant fines on “the poor Haitian emigrants returning from Cuba.”<sup>917</sup> Others were victims of fellow return migrants or Haitian merchants. Upon their return to Haiti from Cuba in 1937, a Haitian woman named Dieudonne Thimothee “succeeded in captivating the trust and heart” of another returning migrant laborer. After landing in Port-au-Prince, she stole his money and the numerous goods he was bringing back from Cuba.<sup>918</sup> Migrants’ conspicuousness in rural Haiti and their reputation as rich individuals made them special targets from merchants who inflated prices to take advantage of their cash. In Aux Cayes, an official noticed that “so many Haitians returning from Cuba come in with at least one year supply of all the necessities of life except food, and the merchants, resenting this, gauge [sic – gouge].”<sup>919</sup>

On the other hand, some migrants arrived home with nothing that could be stolen. In years of low sugar prices, individuals returned with very little money and in poor physical health due to low wages, undernourishment, unemployment, and harsh working conditions in Cuba. In

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<sup>916</sup> Winthrop R. Scott, “Immigration in Northern Haiti,” March 22, 1924, USNA RG 59 838.56/1.

<sup>917</sup> Press Excerpt from *Le Courrier Haitien*, October 8, 1923 mentioned in D.C. McDougal, Gendarmerie d’Haiti, “Memorandum for the Brigade Commander,” October 9, 1923, USNA RG 127, E165, Box 1, Folder: ‘Summary of GD’H 1921, 1 of 2’

<sup>918</sup> “Comment le rapatrié de Cuba fut dépouillé de son avoir par son amie et le mari de celle-ci,” *Le Matin*, April 23, 1937.

<sup>919</sup> J.A. Rossell, Department Commander, Gendarmerie d’Haiti, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie, July 1, 1920, USNA RG 127 E 176 Box 1, Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921

1921, a year of low sugar prices and wages, for instance, U.S. authorities reported that many Haitians were returning “without the usual wealth.”<sup>920</sup> In the midst of the depression in 1937, a group of 496 returnees who landed in Port-au-Prince were described as being in a “deplorable and miserable state.” They were apparently “gaunt, exhausted from fatigue and...privations, the majority sick, without a cent.”<sup>921</sup>

Migrants returned under different degrees of coercion from Cuban authorities and sugar companies. Between 1913 and 1931, migrants left Haiti legally and many could and did return home voluntarily after one or more years abroad. However, the number of involuntary returns increased substantially beginning in 1928. In May 1928, *L’Echo* observed that many “*Viejos*,” the name given to elite sugar cane cutters, were returning to Haiti after having spent “many years” in Cuba.<sup>922</sup> That same year, over 2,000 Haitians were deported from Cuban soil against their will.<sup>923</sup>

Deported migrants arrived under much less advantageous conditions than those who came voluntarily. In Cuba, they were treated violently and not given time to gather their belongings, forcing them to leave significant stores of money and property on the island. As chapter five demonstrated, sometimes these individuals were detained for many days before actually being repatriated, placing a strain on their health and material resources. Haitians were also physically harmed or killed by Cuban police when they sought to resist deportation.<sup>924</sup> In

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<sup>920</sup> Harold H. Utley, “Intelligence Data: Aux Cayes, August 1, 1921 to August 31, 1921,” September 10, 1921, USNA RG127 E165, Box 6, Folder: Aux Cayes Conditions

<sup>921</sup> “Rapatriement massif d’émigrants haitiens à Cuba.” *Le Matin*, February 23, 1937.

<sup>922</sup> “Retour des travailleurs Haitiens de Cuba,” *L’Echo*, May 24, 1928.

<sup>923</sup> USNA RG59 837.5538/ 8 – “Emigration and Deportation of Colored Population from Eastern Cuba,” – June 7, 1928

<sup>924</sup> “Le gouvernement de Mr. Borno refuse d’entendre un malheureux qu’on a maltraité à Cuba.” *Le Petit Impartial*, July 24, 1928. For a description of the violence associated with migrants’ deportation see James, Millet, and Alarcón, *El Vodú En Cuba*, 56-68.

addition to the massive repatriations by the Cuban government, sugar companies sent migrant workers out of Cuba with little regard for their wishes or well being. The companies that contracted and transported migrant workers from the Caribbean were required to return them each year or forfeit the deposit they made. As a result, companies resorted to many strategies to achieve their annual quotas. Late in the harvest season in 1928, the United Fruit Company in Cuba attracted Haitian laborers to the Preston plantation by claiming there was available work. As soon as they arrived from other parts of the island, Haitians were physically forced into boats, which promptly left for Haiti.<sup>925</sup> Whether they were deported by the Cuban government or tricked by sugar companies, the migrants who were returned against their will were forced to leave their savings and goods in Cuba. In 1928, the majority of deported migrants had left “their suitcases or trunks deposited in the boarding house where they were staying” and could not bring them home.<sup>926</sup> In 1937, the Haitian press reported, a group of repatriated migrants “were embarked with urgency, without even being allowed the time to put their effects in order and bring them.”<sup>927</sup>

Faced with these deportations, the Haitian government sought to regulate migrants’ returns by directing them to their original places of departure or to improvised hospitals and dormitories. The migrants who appeared visibly sick were taken to hospitals. In 1937, 500 migrants were dropped off at the port of Aux Cayes. From there, they were “directed to the old prison where the *Service d’Hygiène* provides them with some services.”<sup>928</sup> Earlier that year, a

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<sup>925</sup> Letter from T. Godoy, Santiago de Cuba to R.B. Wood, Chaparra Sugar Company, November 15, 1928, APLTCASMC 1/43/444/192, 225.

<sup>926</sup> Letter from T. Godoy, Santiago de Cuba to R.B. Wood, Chaparra Sugar Company, November 15, 1928, APLTCASMC 1/43/444/192, 225.

<sup>927</sup> “Rapatriement massif d’émigrants haitiens à Cuba.” *Le Matin*, February 23, 1937.

<sup>928</sup> “Émigrants,” *La Garde*, March 21, 1937.

group of 448 return migrants was taken to “Fort-Islet where...they were lodged and fed.”<sup>929</sup> Another significant area of state action involved returning migrants to their regions of origin.<sup>930</sup> When a group of Haitian migrant agricultural workers from Cuba were dropped off in Port-au-Prince, the Vincent government took “measures...to help these *malheureux* return to their dwelling places. By automobiles and trucks, they were driven, to different regions of the country, to locations as close as possible to the localities they indicated as their place of residence before going to Cuba.”<sup>931</sup>

Haitian journalists interpreted state efforts to regulate migrants’ returns as humanitarian actions, though official responses were equally motivated by pressing political and economic concerns. In 1937, *L’Action Nationale* declared that government efforts to provide medical services and homeward transportation to return migrants “touched us profoundly.”<sup>932</sup> Yet government officials feared that migrants’ experiences in Cuba or the traumatic process of deportation would cause unrest. In 1921, after the collapse of sugar prices in Cuba and shortly after the end of widespread peasant rebellion in Haiti, a U.S. official warned that return migrants, especially those without money, were potential risks to security.

The return of a number of Haitian emigrants from Cuba without the usual wealth will doubtless give the police authorities some trouble as many of those returned here are not residents of this district and consequently are without friends or other means of support. Each consignment arriving is being carefully watched.<sup>933</sup>

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<sup>929</sup> “Rapatriement,” *L’Action Nationale*, February 22, 1937.

<sup>930</sup> “Le gouvernement de Mr. Borno refuse d’entendre un malheureux qu’on a maltraité à Cuba.” *Le Petit Impartial*, July 24, 1928.

<sup>931</sup> “Rapatriement massif d’émigrants haitiens à Cuba.” *Le Matin*, February 23, 1937.

<sup>932</sup> “Rapatriement,” *L’Action Nationale*, February 22, 1937.

<sup>933</sup> Harold H. Utley, “Intelligence Data: Aux Cayes, August 1, 1921 to August 31, 1921,” September 10, 1921, USNA RG127 E165, Box 6, Folder: Aux Cayes Conditions



Later, in the midst of the Vincent administration's (1930-1941) repression of Communists, prominent citizens and state officials complained of the "mounting Communist propaganda" in the migrant sending (and receiving!) area of Aux Cayes in the 1930s. There were also known links between Haitian and Cuban Communist party leaders, explaining why the government had been motivated to prevent return migrants and their potentially subversive ideas from spreading beyond migrant-sending areas.<sup>934</sup>

Government officials' fears were not groundless. According to noiriste and Marxist contemporary novels, the experiences of hardship in Cuba contributed to the political radicalization of Haitian migrants. This process is exemplified in Maurice Casseus' noiriste text, *Viejo*, published in 1935. The novel details the life of Mario, a Haitian peasant who spent sixteen years in Cuba before returning to Port-au-Prince. Mario became embroiled in the political movement against the U.S. occupation and enters a love triangle with Cap, a former Marine, over the affections of a Haitian woman named Olive. He eventually rejected the racism, cultural influence, and political domination of occupation officials in favor of embracing the African cultural roots of Haiti and other parts of the African Diaspora.

In Cuba, Mario experienced the harsh working conditions and racial discrimination suffered by other Haitian sugar workers. He recalled "the infinite field streaked with stagnant pools after the rain, and this herd of blacks who creep toward the cutting." "All the chests make this han! han! han! intermittently and soon it is nothing but a long murmur, uniform and vague."<sup>935</sup> He began to interpret Cuban reality in racial terms, describing the country as a racist place that thrived economically only through the exploitation of blacks. Mario described "the

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<sup>934</sup> For a discussion of President Vincent's violent anti-Communist policies, see Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti*, 22-3. For claims about Communism's presence in Aux Cayes, see "Des Cayes," *La Lanterne*, January 2, 1937.

<sup>935</sup> Casseus, *Viejo*, 17.

entire island covered by prejudice, Cuba set against the defenseless black, the *Centrales* [sugar mills] running to assault his black skin.”<sup>936</sup> He perceived his conflicts over labor on sugar plantations as contests between white and black as well. While reflecting on a fight he had with a Cuban police officer that led to the latter’s death, Mario declared: “No, no, no remorse, but one hundred percent hate, Mario, one hundred percent struggle for the defense of the crucified race!”<sup>937</sup>

Mario’s growing racial and political radicalization began in Cuba, though it would not reach its zenith until his return to Haiti. In a Haitian *houmfort* (Vodou temple), his awareness of anti-black racism was complemented by a realization that his true origins lay in Africa. As he walked through the streets of Port-au-Prince, Mario

recognized the hereditary, ancestral dance, the dance his nude father danced, the whole tribe at the beginning of the nocturnal clearing. Mario left for the dance, guided by the drum. His course was a flight towards the tunnel where he encountered the god in the grim mask that the tribe celebrated, like those days in the burning land of his *Guinée*.<sup>938</sup>

Mario’s *prise de conscience* made him intensely critical of both the United States Marines and Haiti’s elite politicians who spoke on behalf of popular sectors without actually representing them. He participated in a fictionalized account of the general strike that spread throughout Haiti in 1929 alongside a Communist and a disaffected member of the Haitian elite. Mario spoke out against the press censorship in Haiti and complains that the occupation “smothers us, it cannot continue like this.”<sup>939</sup> Other characters invoked the Haitian Revolution. “Let’s prove to these

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<sup>936</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>937</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>938</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-102. For Haitian complaints of press censorship see “‘Whole Haytian People Deceived,’ Asserts Port-au-Prince Editor,” *New York Herald Tribune*, February 16, 1930.

pigs that we are still the heirs of 1804.”<sup>940</sup> But for Casseus, the strike’s main message was one of black resistance to white oppression. “Long live the strike! Down with the white executioner eternally set against black skin!”<sup>941</sup>

Like Casseus’s *Viejo*, Jacques Roumain’s *Les Gouverneurs de la rosée* (1944) portrays return migrants as potential carriers of radical political ideologies. The novel details the experiences of a Haitian agricultural worker named Manuel who returned to his (fictional) native village of Fonds Rouges after spending fifteen years in Cuba. The village he left is in a state of decline, the ground was parched from a drought, and the land barely produced anything. Poor natural conditions were exacerbated by fierce rivalries among peasant families that prevented cooperation.

Like Mario, Manuel’s experiences of harsh labor and racism in Cuba radicalized him. He recalled “the bitter wave of cane fields” defined by “the endless fatigue of the overburdened body.”<sup>942</sup> Compounding the difficulties of labor were the acts of violence and racism by rural guardsmen. Manuel experienced “bludgeoning” from rural guards in Cuba who cursed at him for being a “Damned Haitian, black piece of shit.”<sup>943</sup> Instead of forming a strong racial consciousness in Cuba, Manuel’s experiences there taught him the importance of class solidarity across racial lines. In Cuba, he witnessed the problems of worker division as well as the benefits of worker unity and labor organizing. “In the beginning, in Cuba,” Manuel declares, “everyone was defenseless and without resistance; this one believed himself white, that one was black and there was bad blood between us: all were scattered like sand and the bosses walked on this sand.”

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<sup>940</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>941</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>942</sup> Roumain, "Gouverneurs De La Rosée," 283.

<sup>943</sup> Ibid., 284.

This changed “when we recognized that we were all alike, when we organized ourselves for the *huelga* [labor strike].”<sup>944</sup>

Upon returning to Haiti, Manuel sought to translate the spirit of worker unity learned in Cuba to help his native country. He attempted to locate a source of water, bring it to the village, and reconcile the differences between the peasant families of Fonds Rouges. In order to achieve these seemingly insurmountable goals, Manuel applied the lessons of worker solidarity and class unity that he had learned in Cuba. Instead of forming a labor union in Haiti, Manuel wanted to revive the *coubite*, a cooperative labor form in which peasants work the field of a neighboring landowner in exchange for food and drink.<sup>945</sup> Rather than organizing for the benefit of a single landowner, Manuel’s goal was to build an irrigation system that would benefit everyone. This required the acquiescence of the entire peasant population. Mario made speeches to elders in both families encouraging them to organize and participate in the *coubite*. He also fell in love with Anaise, a young girl from a rival family, promising a new unity in the village. Eventually, Manuel found water and won Anaise’s affections, but he was killed by a jealous rival while on the verge of convincing people to join the *coubite*. The novel ends with water coming to the village as a result of a *coubite* initiated by Anaise and Manuel’s mother, Délira.

### 8.3 RETURN MIGRANTS AND RURAL WORK

Return migrants’ reintegration in the rural areas of the country, as well as the way it was perceived by Haiti’s lettered population, was shaped by the context of the state’s economic

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<sup>944</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>945</sup> For a description of the *coubite*, see Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, 71-7.

development projects. Haiti's ruling classes described return migrants in terms of how they would fit into ongoing plans to develop agricultural exports. During and after the occupation, lettered Haitians feared that the rural workers who had gone to Cuba would return with ambitions that did not include producing exports in the countryside. Jean Batiste Cineas' *Le drame de la terre* (1933) embodies the trepidations many elite Haitians harbored about return migrants. This *indigéniste* novel was published the year before U.S. troops left Haiti. It describes rural Haiti as a place inhabited by "people without history" for whom "the world stops...at the four corners of their sections."<sup>946</sup> Paradoxically, however, like some other *indigéniste* writings, the novel is obsessed with the economic and cultural destruction of this pristine place as a result of U.S. occupation policies, rivalries among peasant leaders, and migration.<sup>947</sup>

In Cineas' novel, migrants are considered highly social and opportunistic individuals. Their work in Cuba does not help them materially and is detrimental to the Haitian countryside. Ti-Monsieur Servilius, a return migrant, "embodies the bad-luck type who bungled his life, who succeeded in nothing. A sort of bohemian who knocked about everywhere." Servilius and other migrants expend their labor to develop countries like Cuba and the Dominican Republic at the expense of Haiti, which does not benefit.<sup>948</sup> Servilius "did not enrich himself" while abroad. Instead, he came back with a wealth of new stories, the Spanish nickname of *Viejo*, and a reluctance to engage in agricultural labor. In Cuba, Viejo "acquired experience from the world that the [Haitian] countryside lacks." He "formed an original conception of life and created a

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<sup>946</sup> Cineas, *Le drame de la terre*, 11, 118.

<sup>947</sup> See Price-Mars, "Le problème du travail." For a larger discussion of Haitian folklorists' anxieties about the disappearance of Haitian culture, see Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law*, 213.

<sup>948</sup> Cineas, *Le drame de la terre*, 16.

savory language mixed with French, Spanish, and English words.” While this made him a hit among the elders in his home village, his new designation prevented him from working the land. Since returning, “he never seized a hoe and machete and hardly works.” Instead of performing manual labor, Viejo would now get by leading the *coumbite*. While his fellow countrymen dug, planted, weeded, plowed, and harvested, Viejo led them in song and enjoyed the free food and drink. Perhaps this was the reason that he always “arrived first at a meeting and left last.”<sup>949</sup>

The fears that migration to Cuba was ruining the countryside and returnees were avoiding agricultural labor were expressed by lesser-known literary voices as well. In 1932, *Haiti Journal* published *Les Émigrés*, a short story by a writer named Richard Larose.<sup>950</sup> The story begins with a description of “a peasant family that lived from the cultivation of their land.” Their rural harmony was shattered when Belle d’Amour, a young member of the household, defied her family’s wish that she marry a politically prominent suitor in favor of Grigri, the peasant man she loved. The couple eloped and traveled to Cuba alongside other peasants from the area. They arrived at a moment of economic downturn and earned only enough to eat. After years of desperation in Cuba, they returned to Haiti to find their village in ruins. Their old farms were “entirely deserted. All had disappeared. Nothing remained any longer on the habitation: plants and trees had withered. The land became unproductive.” Rather than trying to rebuild their rural world, “Grigri and Belle d’Amour, at the end of their resources, found themselves condemned to go work in the homes” of other Haitians. For Larose, this state of affairs resulted from the fact that even successful return migrants refused to work in agriculture. Upon returning, migrants “lavished their gold on you, sang the beauty of [Cuba] to you, and with an indescribable

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<sup>949</sup> Ibid., 16-7.

<sup>950</sup> Larose does not appear in standard works of Haitian literary criticism or even those dedicated specifically to the literature depicting migration. Dash, *Literature and Ideology*. Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*.

cheekiness [sans-gêne], told you about returning.” They did not work, however, since “it was party morning, noon and night.”<sup>951</sup>

The anxieties of literary figures, both famous and obscure, were shared by journalists as well. In 1928, *L’Echo*, a Port-de-Paix newspaper wondered whether a group of migrants getting off of a United Fruit Company steamer would continue working in the countryside.

The arms that providence sent us back...will they remain idle? We wish that it would be otherwise and that they would continue to work here like they just did in Cuba. That they would know that they must break a little sweat and dispense with a little energy in this land that permitted them to leave, full of vigor, to search for their fortune in Cuba.<sup>952</sup>

As literary references to return migrants indicate, the cultural influences of migrants were noticeable in the rural areas of Haiti. During 1932 fieldwork in the rural areas around Port-au-Prince, U.S. anthropologist Harold Courlander discovered that “Cuban music...has found fertile soil in Haiti” due to the return of “Haitian Negroes” who had previously “been in great demand in Cuba for work in the cane fields and the sugar refineries.” As a result, the music of rural Haiti was full of lyrical references to Cuba:

Céline was a beautiful girl, Céline!  
Céline made her toilet in a gourd,  
She threw the water into the roadway,  
That was for a man to see.  
Céline my dear!  
If it were in Quantanamo, you would have died!”<sup>953</sup>

Five years later, Alan Lomax, another song recorder from the U.S., noticed that “Cuban music [was] sung” in the migrant-sending area of Aquin.<sup>954</sup>

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<sup>951</sup> Richard Larose, “Les émigrés,” *Haiti Journal*, April 27, 1932 and April 28, 1932.

<sup>952</sup> “Retour des travailleurs haitiens de Cuba,” *L’Echo* (Port-de-Paix), May 24, 1928.

<sup>953</sup> Courlander, *Haiti Singing*, 172-3. Lyrics translated by Courlander. For a critical interpretation of Courlander’s book, see Largey, *Vodou Nation*, 206-7.

Haitian journalists' and novelists' anxieties about return migrants' unwillingness to continue agricultural labor in Haiti were well founded. Although Haitians were accustomed to wage labor and work discipline in Cuba, these were not the only experiences they brought back to Haiti. As chapters four and five indicate, Haitian agricultural workers in Cuba engaged in techniques to resist company domination, hold out for higher wages, and diversified their economic activities. They had many reasons to continue such activities in Haiti. Even the lowest wages that migrants received in Cuba were much higher than those available in Haiti. In 1922, a U.S. official noted that Haitians would work "an entire twelve-hour day for a wage of twenty cents." This was lower than the 30 to 80 cents per day that Haitians earned cutting cane in Cuba in 1933, a year of depressed wages. Few return migrants would opt for agricultural wage labor in Haiti, especially if they returned with cash or had access to land of their own. Considering that many Haitian families "live on one gourde [20 cents USD] a day," return migrants with a little money could attempt to subsist on their savings and hold out for higher wages.<sup>955</sup>

In rural Haiti, many return migrants sought to achieve economic autonomy by buying land or engaging in other subsistence activities. Throughout the 1920s, U.S. observers noted return migrants' propensity to lease or buy land using the cash they received in Cuba. In Aux Cayes, "many of the laborers who left with nothing return with enough to buy small farms."<sup>956</sup> Usually, acquiring land was only the first step in a long-term strategy to obtain rural stability that

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<sup>954</sup> Alan Lomax, "Aquin," January 23, 1937. Printed in Lomax, *Haitian Diary*, 110.

<sup>955</sup> "Memorandum in connection with the raising of a subscription by the Patriotic Union," Port-au-Prince, January 9, 1922, USNA RG127 E180 Box 1, Folder: Investigation Haitian Affairs 1 of 2.

<sup>956</sup> "Significance of Haitian Emigration to Cuba. Maurice P. Dunlap, American Consul, Port au Prince, Haiti September 10, 1925, USNA RG 59 838.5637/6



involved multiple trips to Cuba.<sup>957</sup> “The Haitian returning from Cuba invests in land which is leased to him, and thereafter departs again...to obtain the necessary funds which will permit him to build a good home.”<sup>958</sup>

Migrants’ efforts to “build a good home” involved returning with goods purchased in Cuba. Material goods represented a means for return migrants to achieve economic autonomy, engage in leisure activities, and cement social relationships in Haiti.<sup>959</sup> “A surprising number of returning Haitians carry lanterns,” a U.S. official noted, “an article of luxury where great stretches of country districts have no lights at night...and over fifty per cent bring roosters.”<sup>960</sup> Lanterns’ uses were not limited merely to outdoor visibility. They may have also signified an ambition to educate themselves or their children. In rural Haiti, lanterns, along with money, were a necessity for peasants who wanted any kind of schooling. Upon entering a peasant’s home in rural Haiti, Katherine Dunham noticed that “a boy of twelve or thirteen sat at a table, reading by lantern light.” She decided that his family “was among the rich of the peasantry, that is, with enough money to send a child to school, which all Haitians passionately want to do but can seldom afford.”<sup>961</sup> The roosters had social, economic and religious meanings. In rural Haiti, roosters were probably acquired for their obvious use on a farm to breed and sell chickens, especially since merchants had been “buying up chickens and other food products for exportation

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<sup>957</sup> As Samuel Martínez argues, this trend continues to the present among the Haitians who travel seasonally to the Dominican Republic. Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 97.

<sup>958</sup> To Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti from District Commander, Petit Goave, November 10, 1920, RG 127 E165 Box 6, Folder: Report, Jeremie Conditions

<sup>959</sup> My analysis of 20<sup>th</sup> century draws from Tamara Walker’s study of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Peruvian slaves’ strategic uses of clothing and material goods. She shows that such goods allowed slaves to challenge the limitations put on them by dressing in the finery reserved for free people and building links of reciprocal exchange and gift giving with each other. Walker, “He Outfitted His Family in Notable Decency,” 393-4.

<sup>960</sup> Maurice P. Dunlap, American Consul, Port-au-Prince, “Significance of Haitian Emigration to Cuba,” September 10, 1925, USNA RG 59 838.5637/6.

<sup>961</sup> Dunham, *Island Possessed*, 31-2.

to Cuba” during the previous decades.<sup>962</sup> However, roosters were also a staple element in Vodou ceremonies.<sup>963</sup> Finally, they held economic and social significance in the popular pastime of cockfighting. “Peasants with or without money” a Haitian journalist noted, “pass hours and hours in these *gageures* (cockpits), which are open from Monday to Sunday from Sunday to Monday.”<sup>964</sup>

For Haitian and U.S. state officials, the land and goods that migrants purchased, especially the aspirations embedded in them, were a threat to their development projects. Officials interpreted return migrants’ and other peasants’ attempts at working small plots of land negatively because it entailed production for subsistence instead of exports. In 1921, a U.S. official in Aux Cayes blamed return migrants for the fact that “more foodstuffs are not produced in this section.” He complained that “laborers returning from Cuba have accumulated sufficient funds with which to purchase small plots of ground, that they do purchase this ground, settle down on it and produce only sufficient for their own needs.”<sup>965</sup> Despite the labor involved, subsistence planting was described as a sign of laziness because it did not involve producing exports. The same official declared that return migrants could produce more “if they worked diligently each day.”<sup>966</sup> Perhaps that is why a U.S. soldier in Jeremie complained, referring to

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<sup>962</sup> District Commander, Aux Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, “Monthly Reports on Conditions, September 1918,” September 30, 1918, USNA RG127 E176 Folder [Monthly Reports] Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921.

<sup>963</sup> See Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 214-5.

<sup>964</sup> “Le paysan doit produire,” *L’Élan*, November 4, 1930.

<sup>965</sup> “Conditions in Department of Cayes,” Department Commander, Department of Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, June 7, 1920, USNA RG 127 E176 Box 1, Folder: Monthly Reports Jan 1918-Sep 1921.

<sup>966</sup> “Conditions in Department of Cayes,” Department Commander, Department of Cayes to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti, June 7, 1920, USNA RG 127 E176 Box 1, Folder: Monthly Reports Jan 1918-Sep 1921.

the Haitian peasant, that “While he is quite willing to work in Cuba, and is considered a valuable workingman there, when he returns he is practically useless to the country.”<sup>967</sup>

The roosters that migrants brought back from Cuba played into officials’ ongoing complaints about cockfighting, its interference with rural productivity, and its associations with vice and criminality. In 1922, the Haitian Secretary of the Interior asked the Haitian *Gendarmerie* to put an end to the cockfights that occurred every day in the countryside, since they “prevent *agriculteurs* from going to their fields and occupying themselves with their agricultural work.”<sup>968</sup> In addition to diverting time from laborers, it was believed that cockfighting made rural Haitians more prone to criminality and vice. In 1930, *L’Élan* asserted that “it is necessary to restrict” peasants’ ability to “battle cocks from morning to night.” “It is there in the cockpits where they get drunk the most and where afterwards, being drunk, they go to commit crimes.”<sup>969</sup>

The return migrants whose actions were perceived to threaten rural productivity were those that received the most attention from state officials. Official silences should not blind us to the fact that many migrants probably returned home from Cuba and began working in export agriculture. Since they did not elicit comment from state officials, their experiences are rarely discussed. In *Canapé-vert*, a return migrant named José arrives home ready to work since “he had no other means of support except to farm his father’s property.”<sup>970</sup> Other migrants,

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<sup>967</sup> Report to Chief of the Gendarmerie d’Haiti from the District Commander, Jeremie, May 1, 1920, USNA RG 127 E 165 Box 6, Folder: Jeremie, Reports of Conditions No. 134.

<sup>968</sup> B. Dartiguenave, Secrétaire d’état de l’Intérieur to Commandant en Chef de la Gendarmerie d’Haiti, April 1, 1922, USNA RG 127 E174 Box 1, Folder: Complaints: Dept., South, 2 of 2.

<sup>969</sup> “Le paysan doit produire,” *L’Élan*, November 4, 1930.

<sup>970</sup> Marcelin and Thoby-Marcelin, *Canapé-vert*, 99.

especially those that returned with little or no cash, were almost certainly forced to work on land that did not belong to them or move to Haiti's growing cities (the subject of the next section).

#### 8.4 LIFE IN A HAITIAN *VILLE*: RETURN MIGRANTS IN URBAN SPACES

Not all return migrants headed back to their rural places of origin. Many sought to avoid the conflicts and hard labor of the countryside entirely by heading to Haitian cities. Eli Dérosier spent "several years in Cuba as a cane worker" before settling in Port-au-Prince where he "worked at numerous domestic jobs."<sup>971</sup> As chapter three demonstrates, members of rural households combined migration to Cuba with movements to cities. When individuals returned to Haiti, many joined their kin in urban spaces. Elda Barjon exemplified this trajectory. After returning from Cuba, he traveled directly to Port-au-Prince "to stay with one of his relatives" who was already living there, showing that migration to Cuba overlapped with other family strategies.<sup>972</sup> Such practices were common enough that *La Garde*, an Aux Cayes newspaper, complained in 1937 that "these 'Viejos'...do not want to get back to their residence, preferring to stay in the city."<sup>973</sup>

The return migrants who settled in Haitian cities were part of a much larger trend of urbanization in the country and the region. As in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, Haiti's urban population increased dramatically throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>974</sup>

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<sup>971</sup> Courlander, *Haiti Singing*, 239.

<sup>972</sup> "Comment le rapatrié de Cuba fut dépouillé de son avoir par son amie et le mari de celle-ci" *Le Matin*, April 23, 1937.

<sup>973</sup> "En deux mots," *La Garde*, June 27, 1937.

<sup>974</sup> Pineo and Baer, *Cities of Hope*; Rosenthal, "Spectacle, Fear, and Protest," 38. The growth of cities was a global trend in the period. Manning, *Migration in World History*, chapter 9.

Between 1906 and 1950, Haiti's overall population increased from 2.5 million to a little over 3 million people, a growth of about 23%. In the same period, the population of Port-au-Prince more than doubled, from 101,133 to 261,720.<sup>975</sup>

Like those who returned to the countryside, the reception of return migrants in Haitian cities was heavily influenced by government efforts to beautify Haiti's urban spaces by keeping agricultural workers in the countryside. *Viejo*, Maurice Casseus' 1935 novel, exemplifies the way return migrants in urban spaces were perceived by lettered Haitians, explaining why one contemporary declared that the work "reflects, as if in a faithful mirror" the people inhabiting the "shady quarters of Port-au-Prince."<sup>976</sup> In the novel's beginning, before Mario's racial and political radicalization, he personified the image of the migrant who returned to Haiti's cities and ceased agricultural labor. Instead of returning to "the vast denuded countryside," he headed to Port-au-Prince where "he walks among unknown *quartiers*. Without the earth that smoked beneath his feet, and that good odor from the land that moved through his veins, mixed with his blood, Mario would be a foreigner among all these new faces that he did not know."<sup>977</sup> At least one familiar face was a childhood friend named Olive, a young woman who had moved to the city and "commercialized her caresses."<sup>978</sup> Now that he was not working the land, Mario "divides the days' existence between Olive's house in the *quartier* 'Centrale' and his room." He also frequented a bar near his house called *La Glacière* [The Ice Chest], a place "where the guitar remains his singing companion."<sup>979</sup> Mario's Spanish songs and discussions of traveling abroad gave him the reputation of being "*youn viejo fini!* [an accomplished Viejo]" among the bar's

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<sup>975</sup> For 1906 figures, see n.a., *Haïti 1919-1920: Livre bleu d'Haïti*, 23, 62. For a synthesis of census data from 1950, see Locher, "The Fate of Migrants in Urban Haiti", 52, 56, 311.

<sup>976</sup> Price-Mars, "Preface," viii.

<sup>977</sup> Casseus, *Viejo*, 4, 91.

<sup>978</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>979</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

patrons.<sup>980</sup> Casseus' perception that return migrants in the cities were unproductive was common. In 1932, *L'Élan* described laborers coming back from Cuba as "one hundred valid men" who were destined to become "one hundred new charges for the city."<sup>981</sup>

As in the countryside, return migrants were associated with the goods they brought from Cuba and their new habits. In *Canapé-Vert*, the 1943 novel by Pierre Marcelin and Philippe Thoby-Marcelin, José (né Josaphat), a Haitian peasant returning from Cuba, is described in terms of his new clothing and haughty attitude. He was

a young man of exotic appearance, dressed in a sea-blue coat, flannel trousers, black-and-white shoes, a large, gray felt sombrero, à la Mexicaine, and further adorned with huge tortoise-shell spectacles. In a word, a caballero. This important-looking personage talked with an exuberance and emphasis truly Castilian, and with a self-satisfaction seasoned his conversation plentifully with curse words and Spanish expressions. He often took off his impressive glasses, wiped them on his sleeve and replaced them on his nose.<sup>982</sup>

Similarly, at the beginning of *Viejo*, Mario flaunts his "gold chain with enormous links" along with "a large smile crowned with metal" for other city dwellers to see.<sup>983</sup>

The writers' depictions of return migrants' new mannerisms and nice clothing were corroborated by others. The cultural influences of return migrants on Haiti's urban spaces were just as pronounced as in rural areas. Observers noted the presence of Cuban music styles and instruments in the growing working class districts of Port-au-Prince. "Last night," Alan Lomax wrote in 1936, "I listened for an hour to one of the native orchestras, composed of a pair

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<sup>980</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>981</sup> "Les Émigrés," *L'Élan*, May 2, 1932.

<sup>982</sup> Marcelin and Thoby-Marcelin, *Canapé-vert*, 87-8.

<sup>983</sup> Casseus, *Viejo*, 9.

of bones, a three-string guitar, a pair of Cuban cha-chas (or gourds), and a *manoumbas*, a peculiar bass instrument.”<sup>984</sup> In 1925, a U.S. official noted: “The articles brought back from Cuba usually include a new suit of clothes, toilet articles, underwear, and a heavy, showy pair of American shoes.”<sup>985</sup> Others declared that migrants returned with “more clothes than ever before, their favorite articles of clothing being a light weight colored cotton underwear [sic] (usually pink), tan shoes and gaudy ties.”<sup>986</sup>

By purchasing shoes and nice clothing, return migrants were attempting to increase their social status and differentiate themselves from Haiti’s agricultural workers. As in the countryside, these goods served as markers of status in the cities. As the U.S. sociologist James Leyburn noted in 1941, “When a man of the masses dons the castoff shoes of some aristocrat, the logical assumption by everyone is that this man is preparing to try to move one step up the social ladder.”<sup>987</sup> These goods were also acquired in an effort to cement their right to inhabit the streets of Port-au-Prince and other cities without fear of reprisal from the Police.

Shoes, clothing, and social status were closely linked in Haitian society. Both Haitian and foreign observers used shoes and nice clothing to divide Haitian society “in terms of binary oppositions.”<sup>988</sup> During and after the U.S. occupation, dichotomous descriptions of Haiti’s social structure were made through the idiom of shoes. United States Marine Major

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<sup>984</sup> Lomax, “First Reports from the Field,” Letter to Oliver Strunk, Chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress, December 21, 1936, Reprinted in Lomax, *Haitian Diary*, 32-3. For analysis of Lomax’ goals, experience, and itinerary, see Averill, “Ballad Hunting in the Black Republic.”

<sup>985</sup> Maurice P. Dunlap, American Consul, Port-au-Prince, “Significance of Haitian Emigration to Cuba,” September 10, 1925, USNA RG 59 838.5637/6.

<sup>986</sup> Winthrop R. Scott, “Immigration in Northern Haiti” March 22, 1924, USNA RG 59 838.56/1.

<sup>987</sup> Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, 5-6.

<sup>988</sup> Martínez, *Decency and Excess*, 10.

Smedley Butler famously “divided the Haitian population into two categories: the 99 percent who went barefoot and the 1 percent who wore shoes.”<sup>989</sup> Coming from a different ideological perspective, but just as prone to reductive divisions was Langston Hughes’ 1931 claim. “To be seen barefooted marked one a low-caste person of no standing...Most of Haiti’s people without shoes could not read or write, and had no power.”<sup>990</sup> Haitians described the social significance of shoes and nice clothing in similar ways. In *Canapé-vert*, a character named Ti-Macelin had the appearance of “a workman of the poorest class. Like them he was shabbily dressed and went barefooted, his trousers rolled up to the knees.”<sup>991</sup> In 1936, *L’Élan* identified the alleged lack “of physical and moral cleanliness” among urban workers, whom they labeled “the barefoot people.”<sup>992</sup>

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Haiti, shoes held an additional, quasi-legal significance since they often represented the difference between being harassed by Police or left alone. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Haitian governments sought to segregate the country strictly between urban elites and rural masses. The latter were not permitted to enter Port-au-Prince or other cities except on specific market days.<sup>993</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, formal laws limiting internal movement in Haiti, like other parts of the world, were replaced by restrictions on human movement based on the logic of hygiene and sanitation.<sup>994</sup> Shoes were central to these regulations. In 1924, a law was formally passed making it “strictly prohibited to circulate at

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<sup>989</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 80.

<sup>990</sup> Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 28. On the limits of Hughes’ observation of Haitian society, see Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 261-4.

<sup>991</sup> Marcelin and Thoby-Marcelin, *Canapé-vert*, 208.

<sup>992</sup> “Les pieds nus,” *L’Élan*, September 22, 1936.

<sup>993</sup> Mackenzie, *Notes on Haiti II*, 154-5.

<sup>994</sup> McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 41.



the Capital bare-footed.”<sup>995</sup> Other cities followed suit in the ensuing years.<sup>996</sup> Later, on Port-au-Prince’s *Champs de Mars* in 1931, Langston Hughes “asked a Haitian in the crowd..., ‘Where are all the people without shoes? I don’t see any of them.’ ‘Oh, they can’t walk here,’ he said. ‘The police would drive them away.’”<sup>997</sup> These laws remained in force into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>998</sup>

The strong linkages between dress, shoes and social status had deep roots in Haitian history.<sup>999</sup> In colonial Saint Domingue, the French colony that would be renamed Haiti after the Revolution, a 1779 law was proposed “forbidding both men and women of color from wearing certain types of fabric and garments.”<sup>1000</sup> After Haitian independence, the emphasis on dress, and especially shoes, continued. During his lengthy rule of Haiti, Faustin Soulouque (1847-1859) reportedly distributed boots to his ministers to buy their loyalty. In 1891 a French traveler in Haiti observed: “The question of footwear is the most arduous, Haitians believe themselves dishonored if they are ever shoed simply... How many elegant functionaries close themselves hermetically in their homes... for the simple reason that they do not have shoes.”<sup>1001</sup>

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<sup>995</sup> Unknown article in *Le Moniteur*, May 15, 1924 translated and summarized in Thomas A. Tighe, “Memorandum for the Chief of the Gendarmerie,” May 20, 1924, USNA RG 127 E165, Box 5, Folder: “Morning Reports of Intelligence to AHC 1924 1 of 2”

<sup>996</sup> Summary of newspaper *Les Annales Capoises*, Cap-Haitien, June 21, 1924 contained in “Memorandum for the Chief of the Gendarmerie,” June 25, 1924, USNA RG 127 E165 Box 5, Folder: Morning Reports of Intelligence to AHC 1924 1 of 2.

<sup>997</sup> Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 28-9.

<sup>998</sup> Dunham, *Island Possessed*, 45-6; Glick Schiller and Fouron, *Georges Woke up Laughing*, 189.

<sup>999</sup> This is not peculiar to Haiti but in fact manifested itself throughout the Atlantic in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Akinwumi, “Interrogating Africa’s Past,” 191-2; Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, 17.

<sup>1000</sup> Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, 163.

<sup>1001</sup> Texier, *Aux pays des généraux*, 89. Quoted and cited in Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros curros*, 42. Ortiz erroneously states that Texier’s book was published in 1898.

Despite the existence of similar social and legal prescriptions about status and dress throughout the Atlantic, slaves and individuals from low social classes often acquired clothing, shoes, and other material goods to claim status or honor.<sup>1002</sup> Similarly, return migrants' purchases of shoes and nice clothing with the money they earned in Cuba allowed them to subvert the legal and cultural norms that sought to exclude peasants from the cities in Haiti. With these material goods, the return migrants asserted their right to inhabit the urban spaces of Haiti and set themselves off from rural-dwelling peasants or even barefoot workers in the cities.

Some Haitian observers interpreted migrants' desire to wear shoes and nice clothing as proof that they legitimately belonged in the cities. These individuals associated the use of material goods with a host of new customs and habits that distinguished return migrants from other peasants.<sup>1003</sup> Edmond Craig, a Haitian consul in Cuba declared: "Our country dwellers, barefoot from their birth, illiterate, accustomed to sleeping on the ground, eating on the ground or squatting, upon arriving in Cuba are continually shoed, they sleep at least in a hammock, eat at a table, and learn, if not to read, at least to sign their names, often in Spanish and they go to the theatre."<sup>1004</sup> Some believed that these new habits would allow migrants to fulfill new roles in Haitian cities. A 1932 editorial in *Haiti Journal* suggested that "our counterparts who return from Cuba" should be employed as Municipal Police because of the moral and physical benefits they were said to receive there. Though the suggestion was novel, it did not signify a break with the logic behind official efforts at rural and urban modernization. In fact, the plan envisioned

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<sup>1002</sup> See for instance, Walker, "'He Outfitted His Family in Notable Decency'," 394-6; Díaz, *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves*, 65; Ortiz, *Los negros curros*, 3; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 79; Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction*, 39; Akinwumi, "Interrogating Africa's Past," 195.

<sup>1003</sup> For other discussions of the civilizing power of goods, see Bauer, *Goods, Power, History*, 69, 218; Rood, "Herman Merivale's Black Legend," 182.

<sup>1004</sup> Edmond Craig, Ancien Consul à Cuba, "A propos de la brochure de M. Lélío Laville," *L'Autre Cloche*, May 19, 1933.

that return migrants would be responsible for clearing urban “quarters of all our sickly ones and vagabonds (roustabouts, traveling merchants doing bad business, idle [shoe]shines, recidivists.” Those who were in Cuba, therefore, were distinct from “all these undesirables” who “left their fields to come and try an adventure in the cities.”<sup>1005</sup>

Those who interpreted material goods and new habits as legitimate paths to upward mobility were a minority. Most saw return migrants as a threat to the social order or the authentic nature of the rural peasantry. Clothing, shoes, and consumer goods are central to understanding Maurice Casseus’ interpretations of return migrants and Haitian society. “Casseus’ novel” Valerie Kaussen argues, “is obsessed with the intrusion of the global market into Haiti, as well as with consumer and mass culture, represented as new forms of colonialism and servitude that enslave the subject’s psyche as well as his or her body.”<sup>1006</sup> In a highly allegorical love triangle, Mario’s love interest must choose between Cap, the white man from the United States who buys her imported cosmetics, and Mario the protagonist of the novel who would eventually realize the folly of a sterile consumer culture and become the prototype of the future leader of Haiti. The incongruity between consumer goods and Casseus’ vision of an authentic black culture is clearly demonstrated when Mario participates in a Vodou ceremony. During the ritual, “Mario removed his shoes [and] socks to dance better, and rolled his woolen pants up to his knees.”<sup>1007</sup> By partially disrobing at the moment of transfiguration, Casseus posits the incompatibility between these consumer goods and Haitian nationalism, associated here with Vodou, music, and dancing.

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<sup>1005</sup> R.C. Charlot, “Simples réflexions au sujet d’une Police Municipale (suite et fin),” *Haiti Journal*, February 13, 1932.

<sup>1006</sup> Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions*, 67.

<sup>1007</sup> Casseus, *Viejo*, 155.

State officials also criticized return migrants' shoes and nice clothing because it meant that experienced agricultural workers would not resume laboring in the countryside. "Flushed with wealth and a trunk full of clothes," an official noted in 1920, the returning migrant "parades in front of his less fortunate friends, never to work while his money lasts."<sup>1008</sup> Even the habits that migrants adopted in Cuba were perceived as a thin façade that did not merit an increase in these agricultural laborers' status. Jean Price-Mars describes return migrants as individuals who became "mixed up by the lure of easy fortunes engendered by the prosperity of the neighboring island." He claimed that they were "plumed with false pride because in the swarming cosmopolitan cities, they mixed some Spanish expressions with their black patois [*patois nègre*]."<sup>1009</sup> In other words, migrants' efforts to claim a higher status or fit in with urban society were largely misguided. Others specifically asked that Police expel return migrants from urban spaces since their shoes and nice clothing ostensibly prevented them from being kicked out of cities like other rural-born individuals. A 1937 newspaper in Aux Cayes declared: "The Police are obligated to clear the city of these '*Viejos*.'"<sup>1010</sup>

## 8.5 CONCLUSION

Between 1928 and 1940, the number of migrants who returned to Haiti from Cuba increased.

Many of those who had spent numerous years in the neighboring island began to return in the

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<sup>1008</sup> Report to Chief of the Gendarmerie d'Haiti from the District Commander, Jeremie. May 1, 1920, USNA RG 127 E 165 Box 6, Folder: Jeremie, Reports of Conditions No. 134. Jan. 1918-Sep. 1921

<sup>1009</sup> Price-Mars, "Preface," 9.

<sup>1010</sup> "En deux mots," *La Garde*, June 27, 1937.

context of decreases in sugar wages and efforts by the Cuban government to deport Haitians and other immigrants. The migrants who returned to Haiti from Cuba diverged widely in the manner in which they traveled home, their physical health, and material conditions. Although scholars have largely ignored the fate of these individuals, their importance is reflected in the frequency with which they appear in Haitian novels, newspapers, and official documents from the period. Return migrants were greeted with a mixture of hope, fear, and expectations by Haiti's government officials and ruling classes, who wondered about their reintegration into the country. Concerns about the return migrants centered around the role they would play in Haiti's agricultural development and whether their experiences in Cuba had radicalized them politically. These questions were especially urgent because the Haitian government was attempting to increase the production of agricultural exports and modernize Haitian cities. The goods migrants brought back from Cuba, as well as the actions they took upon returning to Haiti, hint at their aspirations for upward mobility and economic autonomy in both the rural and urban areas of the country. Their efforts at acquiring land and goods, as well as the goals these signified, were challenged by state policies that were aimed specifically at return migrants and urban and rural workers more broadly.

## 9.0 CONCLUSION

In 2002, a Cuban book celebrating the country's medical missions in Haiti recounted the life story of Juan Teodoro Tipilí. At some point during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at the age of fifteen, Tipilí had left his parents and siblings in his hometown of Anse-à-Veau, Haiti for eastern Cuba. "There he dedicated himself to cutting cane...he worked like a slave and did not ask to do any thing other than devour those cane fields for miserable wages. He also worked in a small stand that sold food [*fonda*]." While in Cuba, he married a woman named Dolores and had six children. Tipilí's situation changed dramatically after the Cuban revolutionary government assumed control of the island in 1959, when he "obtained a piece of land which he cultivated until he died." His children benefited from the revolutionary government's emphasis on education and public health. Isabel, the daughter of this Haitian-born cane cutter, became a medical technician and a nurse.<sup>1011</sup>

Juan Teodoro Tipilí died in Cuba at the age of 90 without ever returning to his birthplace. However, at the moment that "he closed his eyes definitively," his daughter Isabel was in Haiti on a Cuban medical mission, a trip that had been motivated by her father. Before dying, he had told her "if one day they ask for people to go help Haiti, my little daughter, go. Find out if

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<sup>1011</sup> Ugás Bustamente, *Haiti*, 84.

anyone in my [family] stayed. Help my countrymen that need us so much and bring me a little bit of earth and a Haitian flag.”<sup>1012</sup>

Parts of Tipili’s story embody the way that Haitians’ early 20<sup>th</sup> century migratory movements have been narrated in Cuba since 1959. In what has become a common trope for describing Haitians’ experiences in Cuba, Tipili’s work in the cane fields is described in terms of slavery. In this narrative, his redemption came from the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and its agrarian reform. Other scholars have identified a 1967 Cuban law which extended social security benefits to all individuals on the island, even those without personal identification. The Haitians who had migrated a generation earlier, with or without legal documentation, would now receive a monthly pension from the Cuban government.<sup>1013</sup> The narrative also suggests that migration to Cuba represented a permanent cutting of links with Haiti.

Tipili’s story also represents a more recent development in the way Haiti is invoked in contemporary Cuba, because he illustrates the links between early 20<sup>th</sup> century Haitian labor migrations and 21<sup>st</sup> century Cuban medical missions. Since the 1990s, Cuba’s medical aid to Haiti has been significant. Between 1998 and 2010, over 6,000 Cuban medical practitioners worked in clinics throughout Haiti.<sup>1014</sup> In 2011, there were almost 300 Haitian-born individuals attending Cuban medical schools.<sup>1015</sup> In fact, in contemporary Cuba, Haiti is more often described as a receiver of Cuban doctors than as a historic sending society for labor migrants. On his first and only visit to Cuba in November 2011, Haitian President Michel Martelly

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<sup>1012</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>1013</sup> Gómez-Navia, “Lo haitiano en lo cubano,” 38-9.

<sup>1014</sup> Kirk and Kirk, “Cuban Medical Cooperation,” 167.

<sup>1015</sup> “Haitian President Highlights Meetings with Fidel and Raúl,” *Digital Granma International* (English edition), November 18, 2011, <http://www.granma.cu/ingles/cuba-i/18nov-presidente.html>.

emphasized the medical cooperation between the two countries without mentioning the historic population flows between them or the thousands of second- and third-generation Haitians still living in Cuba.<sup>1016</sup>

Voices in contemporary Cuba rightfully emphasize the changes Haitians experienced in Cuba after 1959 and the achievements of Cuban medical missions abroad. However, the emphasis on contemporary links between Haiti and Cuba ignores a rich and intense history of exchanges between the two countries that dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Depictions of this history has portrayed Haitian migrants in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba as pawns of sugar companies, state institutions, and imperial politics. Haitians are described as fleeing the poverty and violence of rural Haiti, at times at the behest of the U.S. occupation government there. In Cuba, anti-Haitian racism and the strength of U.S.-owned sugar companies effectively isolated Haitians on the bottom rung of labor hierarchies and in a marginal position in society.<sup>1017</sup>

Recent scholarship on Haiti has identified the limitations of state-centered analyses of Haitian history. In a recent publication, Laurent Dubois writes: “Life in Haiti is not organized by the state, or along the lines many people expect or want it to be. But it does draw on a set of complex and resilient social institutions that have emerged from a historic commitment to self-sufficiency and self-reliance.”<sup>1018</sup> Ignoring Haitians’ social institutions and their efforts at self-sufficiency has serious ramifications. First, it reinforces the longstanding stereotype that Haitians are helpless people, unable to maintain self-governing institutions, and in need of

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<sup>1016</sup> “Haitian President Highlights Meetings with Fidel and Raúl,” *Digital Granma International* (English edition), November 18, 2011, <http://www.granma.cu/ingles/cuba-i/18nov-presidente.html>.

<sup>1017</sup> McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism,” 607-8; Gerlus, “The Political Economy of Haitian Migration,” 71-80; Perusek, “Haitian Emigration,” 6; Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom*, 21, 171; López Segrera, “Slavery and Society in the Caribbean,” 148.

<sup>1018</sup> Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*, 12.



outside rule. Second, it jeopardizes the success or benefits of any program of reform or development, however well-intentioned, that may conflict with such non-state social structures. In the case of Haitian migration to Cuba, a singular focus on the state misses the strategies that Haitians used to achieve autonomy, assert control over their lives and labor, create communities, and maintain connections between Haiti and Cuba. Ultimately, this gives the false sense that neither Haitian integration into Cuban society nor the maintenance of connections with Haiti were possible before 1959. Indeed, other aspects of Juan Teodoro Tipilí's life, which appear as incidental details in the above story, hint at social and economic activities not limited to those established by sugar companies or states. First is the fact that Tipilí married a woman, perhaps a Cuban, showing the existence of larger social networks within rural Cuba. Second, Tipilí's work was not limited to cutting the sugar cane that he and thousands of other Haitians were recruited to do. He supplemented his wages selling food in a small stand. In his efforts to establish kin and social relationships and diversify his economic activities, Tipilí was hardly unique.

I argue that Haitian migrants created economic, social, and kinship networks within and between both Haiti and Cuba outside the direct control of company and state throughout the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Cuba, Haitians' economic activities were not limited to cutting sugar cane. Some moved up within sugar company hierarchies to work in the *centrales* while others performed different economic activities entirely. Haitian men and women supplemented the labor on sugar plantations for which many were contracted with work in Cuban coffee fields. Some even managed to secure autonomy by renting or buying land. Some forms of Haitians' work were not wage labor and were not registered on company payrolls. In the rural areas of both Haiti and Cuba, Haitian men, women, and children performed a variety of unpaid and subsistence work and engaged in petty commerce. Though few Haitians seem to have joined

formal labor unions or other organizations in Cuba, they employed other coping strategies that included moving between plantations for the highest wages and collaborating with other immigrants to perform domestic labor. They also took advantage of their leisure time to create their own social, cultural and ritual spaces outside of work hours.

Reconstructing Haitians' labor and leisure activities in both Haiti and Cuba offers new perspectives on the way that racial ideologies functioned at the local level. Although the Cuban press and sugar companies described Haitians as being totally separate from Cubans and individuals of other nationalities, I argue that such divisions were often blurred in the rural areas of Cuba, indicating that national racial ideologies did not dictate personal relationships at the local level. Haitians and individuals of other nationalities worked together in various aspects of sugar production. They also engaged in informal economic activities as both consumers and producers and relaxed outside of the work hours gambling, drinking, and buying and selling sex. Haitians and Cubans also engaged in healing and religious practices of African origin together, an arena where the former were considered especially powerful. In Haiti, there was a similar division between national-level racial ideologies and local social relationships. Many of the Haitian intellectuals who praised their country's rural masses as an authentic source of nationalism criticized return migrants and other peasants who sought rural autonomy or upward mobility in the cities, showing the limits of the new claims of inclusivity.

Analyzing sugar companies and state institutions from the perspective of Haitian migrants challenges existing assumptions about how those institutions functioned on the ground. In early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cuba, the political power of sugar companies was notorious, leading many to conflate the Cuban state with the companies that apparently dominated it. However, this dissertation shows areas where the two institutions moved in opposite directions. For example,

sugar companies often permitted Haitians and individuals of other nationalities to engage in illegal activities like gambling, prostitution, or selling goods without a permit in order to maintain their workforce. State officials occasionally cracked down on such activities, showing that states and companies could diverge on questions of labor. In another example, some Haitian consuls invoked Cuban laws to criticize sugar companies' labor practices and protect the rights of Haitians within Cuban sugar plantations.

Migrants' actions shaped the formation and implementation of state policies as well. Haitians' beliefs about religion and magic led them to denounce Haitians, Cubans, and individuals of other nationalities for practicing what they considered malicious magic, thus shaping the way that these practices were prosecuted by Cuban authorities. One of the areas in which Haitians' actions had the most effect was in shaping migration policies. Haitians traveled to Cuba in the period before migration was legalized for their own economic and political pursuits. These early migratory flows shaped how legal migration flows were later organized. Haitian migration regulations changed over the course of the migratory movement, often in response to actions taken by migrants and consuls. Finally, Haitians' movement into Cuban coffee production and their economic importance to that industry allowed them some protection from state officials, particularly during the repatriation drives of the 1930s.

Uncovering migrants' experiences before and after migrating to Cuba offers a more textured sense of life in rural Haiti during and after the U.S. occupation of the country. Haitian migration to Cuba occurred in areas that were not affected by rural rebellions or large-scale land expulsions by the United States. However, Haitians responded to more subtle disruptions of their rural livelihoods and customary rights by U.S. state-building projects and efforts to control peasants' labor. Migration was only one response to these rural changes. Haitian peasants, and

especially return migrants, continued to face conflicts over their labor into the 1930s and 1940s, showing continuities between the period of U.S.-rule and its aftermath. Return migrants' money, nice clothing, relocation to cities, and even their desire to engage in subsistence agriculture were roundly criticized by ruling classes attempting to increase agricultural exports and beautify cities, both during and after the U.S. occupation of Haiti.

Haitians' movements to Cuba did not begin with the legalization of migration in 1913, nor did their integration into Cuban society begin in 1959. By focusing on the migrants themselves, this dissertation has sought to challenge the prevalent idea that Haitians were subject to the whims of states and sugar companies in both Haiti and Cuba. Analyzing their work, on sugar plantations and elsewhere, reveals a heterogeneous group of laborers that did not fit into the neat categories of company administrators who sought to divide their workforce along racial lines. Expanding the scope of analysis to times and spaces outside of work hours reveals social, economic, and religious networks that Haitians formed in an effort to cope with the harsh conditions of sugar work. The fact that individuals of other nationalities engaged in these informal activities alongside Haitians raises new questions about life and labor in rural Cuba.

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Secretaria de Estado y Justicia (ANCSEJ)

Secretaria de la Presidencia (ANCSP)

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Juzgado de Instrucción del Partido Judicial de Camagüey (APCJIPJC)

Registro de Asociaciones (APCRA)

Tribunal de Urgencia (APCTU)

###### Archivo Provincial de Guantánamo (APG)

Registro del Estado Civil (APGREC)

###### Archivo Provincial de Holguín (APH)

Gobierno Municipal de Holguín (APHGM)

Juzgado Municipal de Holguín (1889-1965) (APHJMH)

Juzgado de Primera Instancia de Holguín (APHJPIH)

###### Archivo Provincial de Las Tunas (APLT)

Cuban American Sugar Mills Company (APLTCASMC)  
Juzgado de Victoria de Las Tunas (APLTJVLT)

Archivo Provincial de Santiago de Cuba (APS)  
Audiencia Territorial de Oriente (APSATO)  
Gobierno Provincial (APSGP)  
Juzgado Municipal de Baracoa (APSJMB)  
Juzgado de Primera Instancia (APSJPI)  
Registro del Estado Civil: Tomos de Ciudadanías (APSRECTC)  
Sala de Urgencia (APSSU)  
Tribunal de Urgencia (APSTU)

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Biblioteca Provincial Elvira Cape, Santiago de Cuba

Biblioteca Provincial Julio Antonio Mella, Camagüey, Cuba

Biblioteca Policarpo Pineda, Guantánamo, Cuba

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Bibliothèque Haitienne de F.I.C., St. Louis de Gonzague, Port-au-Prince

Bibliothèque Nationale d'Haiti, Port-au-Prince

## **United States**

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

Records of the United States Marine Corp, Record Group 127 (USNA RG 127)

New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

Kurt Fisher Haitian Collection (NYKFHC)

Kurt Fisher Haitian Collection (Additions) (NYKFHCA)

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