
The Panama Cannonball's Transnational Ties: Migrants, Sport, and Belonging in the Interwar Greater Caribbean

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The interwar years saw the creation of a circum-Caribbean migratory sphere, linking British colonial sending societies like Jamaica and Barbados to receiving societies from Panama to Cuba to the Dominican Republic to the United States. The overlapping circulation of migrants and media created transnational social fields within which sport practice and sport fandom helped build face-to-face and imagined communities alike. For the several hundred thousand British Caribbean emigrants and their children who by the late 1920s resided abroad, cricket and boxing were especially central. The study of sport among interwar British Caribbean migrants reveals overlapping transnational ties that created microcultures of sporting excellence. In this mobile and interconnected world, sport became a critical realm for the expression of nested loyalties to parish, to class, to island, to empire, and to the collective they called "Our People," that is, "the Negro Race," worldwide.

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THE *PANAMA AMERICAN*'S "WEST INDIAN PAGE" in August of 1926 traced a world of sports in motion. There was a challenge from the local "Wonderers CC to the Pickwick CC"—cricket clubs, of course—promising "a real treat in the good old English game"; results from matches between four local Basket Ball teams at Colón's (Colored Only) "Silver Clubhouse"; reports on the pugilism and piety of "Tiger Flowers, negro fighter," Georgia-born and Europe-bound; baseball results from "the diamond" of this and that Panama Canal Zone town; daily updates on (bicycle) speed trials among "the Colon boys" and "Panama [City] boys" seeking to make the team for a tour they dreamed might hand Jamaican cyclists an unprecedented home defeat; and greetings to *Panama American* readers from local boy and Negro League Cuban Stars starter "Chick" Levy, "styled as the Great Panaman pitcher and Spitball Wonder," who "asked to be remembered to his Isthmian friends."¹

Overlapping collectives—parish of birth, island of origin, colony, empire, race—were on jostled display here. The West Indian page's Jamaica-born editor published jibes at local "mudheads" from Demerara but also denounced "insularity," preached solidarity, and cheered news from Barbados of "the West Indian team"—cricket, of course—gathering to tour England. Updates from local divisions of the Universal Negro Improvement Association pointed to an even larger peoplehood.

When immigration scholars speak of dense networks of transnational ties, this is the kind of world they mean.² By 1930, the travels of three generations of British West Indian migrants had created interconnected communities that stretched from Barbados to Panama to Brooklyn. In the western Caribbean, Jamaicans homesteaded, traded, and loaded bananas all along Central America's coastal rimlands. In the eastern Caribbean, Barbadians and Windward Islanders headed south to Trinidad with its cocoa groves and prosperous port, or to Venezuela with its gold mines, cocoa, and cities. Panama Canal construction from 1904 on drew tens of thousands of Barbadians and scores of thousands of others west. In the Great War's wake scores of thousands more streamed north toward Cuba's sugar boom, and in many cases from there to a new mecca, New York. By 1924, when a new U.S. immigration law put halt to arrivals from the islands, Caribbean immigrants and their children made up more than a third of the populations of Harlem and Brooklyn.³

This essay seeks to illuminate the role of sport practice and sport fandom in the circum-Caribbean migratory sphere. I will approach this by borrowing concepts from scholars of transnational migration and tracing the multiple, partially overlapping supranational fields that shaped migrants' "ways of being" and "ways of belonging."⁴ The first category remits to matters of practice. The practice of sport fandom among British Caribbeans at home and abroad was transnational, shaped by circulating media (newspapers, films, radio, photographs) and the international recruitment and high profile tours of cricket teams and boxing champs. Sport participation was transnational too, shaped by smaller circuits that linked nearby settlements in amateur competition (like the British West Indian cyclists gathering a team in Panama to compete in Jamaica). These circuits, too, carried would-be professionals across the stepping stones of success, from Panama City to Kingston to Harlem, following channels limned by tens of thousands of fellow migrants and potential supporters.

The second category—ways of belonging—also worked in part through sport. Multiple collectives were in the making at this moment. Few corresponded to formal nation-states, although “national” was a vital vernacular category in this world. It referred sometimes to island identities, sometimes to the British West Indies as a whole, sometimes to the “Negro race” as a whole.⁵ Other collectives mattered too: parish of birth, town of residence (the “Colon boys” versus “Panama boys” competing for cycling spots, above), and the British empire and its “good old English game.”

Different sports came to delineate different lines of belonging. Within migrant communities in Panama, Costa Rica, Cuba, Santo Domingo, and New York, cricket made British Caribbean commonality palpable even as it provided fodder for inter-island chauvinism: Trini versus Bajan, Jamaican flash versus Grenadian flare. Thus cricket marked apparently contradictory but in fact reinforcing collectives. On the one hand, cricket became even more strongly linked to island pride in these overseas communities where migrants from so many different islands converged. On the other hand, cricket passion marked the boundary between British West Indians as a whole and the receiving-society nationals around them, whether Panamanian, Cuban, or African-American. In this sense, cricket was a prime symbol within a broader imperial pride, part of what Afro-Caribbeans knew made them “Britishers.” (They insisted on believing they shared this Britishness with fellow Britishers of pinker skin—a generosity rarely reciprocated.)

Boxing, in contrast, offered a vocabulary of identification centered not on island and empire but on nation and race. There were two ways a boxer might be considered a community’s champion: by hailing from among them, as did a long string of local boys who found fleeting fame in international rings, or by standing for them, as did all the brown and black boxers who in these years sought to shame white sportsmen into crossing the color line and putting white power to the test. Young men raised in the intercultural sporting crucibles of migrant destinations—Panama and Cuba most prominently—spared, learned, and excelled. British Caribbeans cheered as Panama-born boxers of West Indian ancestry like Oscar Bernard, the “Panama Cannonball”; “Panama Joe Gans”; and World Bantamweight Champion Alfonso Teófilo “Panama Al” Brown tested their prowess in New York and beyond. The boxer with the biggest following of all, though, was the “Brown Bomber” himself, Joe Louis. Within the United States, Louis’ career became a referendum on whether an African American could represent American national honor. Around the Greater Caribbean that national tag was irrelevant. Louis was “ours,” pure and simple: the most powerful symbol of international black pride at the heyday of international white racism.

Even as sport fandom put difference on display, sporting practice built certain bridges. When we observe the face-to-face connections that shaped and were shaped by the practice of sport, another set of linkages comes to the fore. These were ties that crossed boundaries of nationality and language, structuring Anglophone immigrants’ ongoing interactions with the Spanish-speaking populaces around them. Immigrants’ children put cricket skills to use on baseball diamonds. Boxing prospects and promoters built followings across the English-Spanish divide. The result was a striking degree of individual mobility and success—that did not, however, shift the bounds of collective belonging.

Within the history of sport, this essay intersects with two well-developed literatures: that on West Indian cricket at the dawn of decolonization, on the one hand, and that on the symbolism of boxing within African-American struggles for equality, on the other. But I look away from the terrain existing studies have centered (Jamaica and Trinidad for the former, North Atlantic metropolises for the latter) to ask what was happening at the margins, in Panama, Costa Rica, Cuba. This shift allows us to observe pieces of the process that in existing accounts happen off stage. Who taught Panama Al to box? How did cricket feed a circum-Caribbean baseball boom—one far larger than the recognized case of San Pedro de Macoris?

If attending to migrants at the margins shifts our understanding of interwar sports, attending to sport also shifts our understanding of migrants and their world. Overall, we see that sporting among migrants functioned both as a symbolic realm for boundary-formation and as a social realm in which skill could cross borders of race, language, and citizenship, even though those borders were not, by those crossings, redrawn.

Mobile Lives and Scholarly Models

Sport history has generally approached the question of sport's importance among immigrants through the concept of assimilation: a central heuristic for U.S. immigration scholarship from the 1950s to the 1980s. Sport historians have underlined the importance of organized sport within efforts at "Americanization" from without, as well as its importance to immigrant strivers seeking to prove their new cultural bona fides.⁶ Assimilation continued to be a useful paradigm for sport historians even after scholars of contemporary migration had begun to urge the term be radically refined, or even rejected altogether. "Assimilation," those scholars argued, suggested a teleology of cultural absorption and socio-economic advance that ill-matched the experience of post-1965 immigrants to the United States—or perhaps, most migrants, in most eras.⁷

Observing circum-Caribbean migration, you see their point. No piece of the picture looks like a one-way voyage to a nation-sized melting pot. Around the Greater Caribbean, longstanding patterns of mobility had created heterogeneous borderlands outside state control. As foreign investment surged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in sites where local populations were both scarce and diverse, British Caribbean arrivals remade the social geography of multiple subregions. There were not just neighborhoods but whole provinces where British West Indian immigrants and their descendants made up the majority, including *circa* 1930 the U.S.-run Panama Canal Zone; the entire province of Limón, Costa Rica; large neighborhoods in the "terminal cities" (Panama City and Colón) within the Republic of Panama; scores of Cuban sugar plantations; and whole blocks of Harlem and Brooklyn.⁸

The resultant communities look either very marginal or very attached, depending on where one stands. Assimilate to what, where? For advancement and identity alike, position *vis à vis* other points in the migratory sphere often mattered more than position *vis à vis* any given host society. Seasonal, serial, and return migration formed part of routine family cycles. Remittances circulated not only back to island homes but between migrant destinations: a common pattern in the early 1920s was for cash earned in Cuba to fund passage to the United States for family members elsewhere, be that back in Barbados or



Caribbean-born People Living outside Their Places of Birth c.1930. MAP DRAWN BY BILL NELSON; DATA AND DESIGN BY LARA PUTNAM.

away in Panama. Jamaican newspapers carried obituaries from Panama, Costa Rica, and New York as a matter of course, identifying the deceased by (Jamaican) parish of origin and noting mourning sons and daughters scattered from Colón to Harlem.

Facing external prejudice, these migrants nevertheless secured what looked to some like privileged status. British West Indian immigrants routinely arrived with more human capital than the natives around them. Their socio-occupational insertion—internally varied, to be sure—was rarely rock bottom. In Bocas del Toro, Panama; Limón, Costa Rica; Bluefields, Nicaragua; and other centers of export agriculture along Central America's Caribbean rimlands, British Caribbeans came to dominate mechanic and low-level

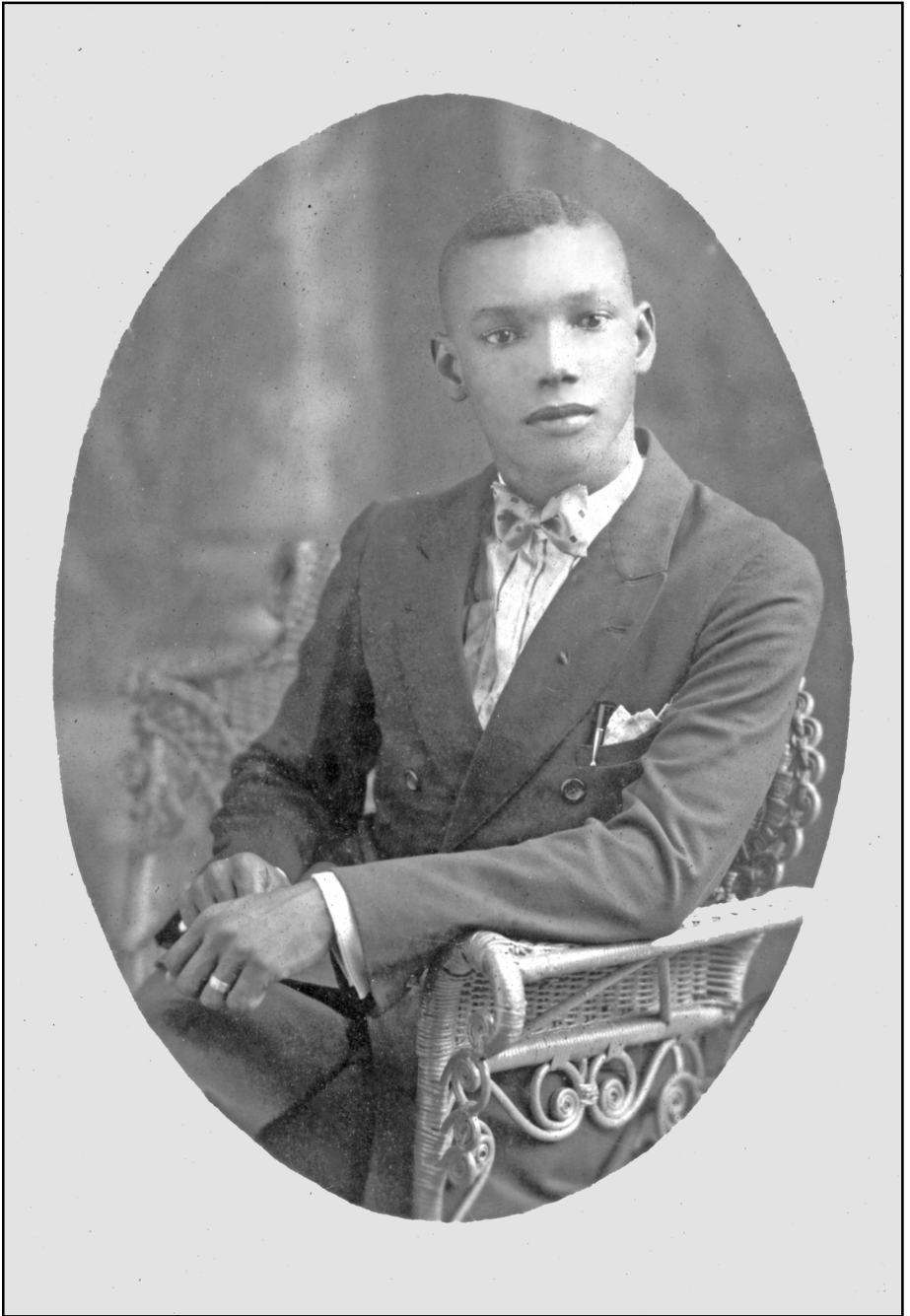
administrative ranks and established rural smallholdings when banana exporters moved on, in each case placing them above the level of the Spanish-speaking *mestizo* citizens moving east into the rimlands in increasing numbers. In Harlem and Brooklyn, black immigrants' domination of real estate and insurance and their overrepresentation in skilled trades and professions was recognized, and resented.⁹

This was not a world of wealth, but travel was not restricted to the wealthy. To visit relatives abroad for a year or more was routine. Another modality for reconnection was the "excursion," organized by a local entrepreneur who arranged transport and planned communal events. Shared sport and music were mainstays. "Equipped for baseball, football, and basket ball, swimming, boxing, tennis and ping pong, an extensive tourist party" prepared to leave Panama in December of 1937 for a fortnight in Jamaica then travel on to Limón "for a continuation of their sports. A theatrical party and an up-to-date band of music are also included in the party." All Limón was a whirl in preparation.¹⁰

Labor migrant, reunifying kin, "tourist": these were life-cycle stages rather than categorical divides. And as such voyagers circled between locales, their presence combined with growing commerce to spur media circulation as well. By the late 1920s, English-language newspapers read across the region included major dailies out of Kingston, Port of Spain, and Panama City and much smaller, black-owned papers including the Universal Negro Improvement Association's *Negro World* (New York), T.A. Marryshow's *West Indian* (Grenada), Clennell Wickham's *Weekly Herald* (Barbados), and Sidney Young's *Panama Tribune*.¹¹ All had sports pages covering local, regional, and international competition. Indeed, sport, press, and civic activism went hand in hand. Kingston-born, Panamaised Sidney Young returned to the isthmus after schooling back in Kingston: he founded the Isthmian Baseball League in 1918, Baden-Powell Scout troops in the 1920s, the *Panama American's* West Indian Page in 1926, and the *Panama Tribune* in 1928.¹² George Westerman, born in Colón to a Barbadian father and St. Lucian mother, won national tennis titles in Panama and led the national team in the Pan-American Games. At age sixteen, in 1926, he was already covering sports for Young. Westerman served as sports editor then associate editor of the *Tribune* and kept the paper alive after Young's death in 1959.¹³

Readership among migrants was broad. With parish schools providing at least a few years of instruction to most working-class children on the islands and the self-selection typical of these as other emigrants, overseas British West Indians were among the most literate populations anywhere in the tropics in this era. Literacy *circa* 1930 ranged from around 70 percent among British Caribbeans growing cacao in rural Venezuela, to 80-90 percent in the long-established communities in Panama and Costa Rica, to nearly 100 percent among British Caribbean immigrants in New York and Boston.¹⁴ In such communities, local papers really did serve as the voice of "the people," as so many mastheads proclaimed.

New technologies let sound and image circulate as well. Radio, film, and souvenir photographs joined the papers in spreading news far and wide. Ports across the region boasted cinemas by the early 1930s. Films came largely from U.S distributors and from a narrow range of genres: as one critic complained in 1931, surely Limón deserved more than another "excessive jazz production or a fistic encounter reproduction or cheap love-sick



Teenage tennis star, *Panama Tribune* sports reporter, and future Panamanian ambassador to the United Nations George Westerman. COURTESY OF GEORGE WESTERMAN COLLECTION, SCHOMBURG RESEARCH CENTER, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, NEW YORK, NEW YORK.

grimaces?"¹⁵ Yet those fistic encounters drew audience *en masse*. Meanwhile those who could afford a radio found the whole region at their fingertips—and again, boxing matches were high on the list of lures. With a “first class RADIO set,” promised one 1930 ad in Limón, “you may sit in your home and enjoy Concerts, Pugilistic bouts, speeches or any Amusements, broadcasted from the United States, Cuba, Jamaica or Europe.”¹⁶ The set of sites from which news arrived via film or radio overlapped—in part—with the set of sites that local papers, through reprints and letters, bound into a circum-Caribbean sphere of debate, which overlapped—in part—with the set of sites where you, or someone you knew, had a brother, or cousin, or gran.

Migration scholars Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick-Schiller describe a social field as a “set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” and suggest the task of scholars of transnational connection is to determine empirically the spatial contours, components, and impact of the particular transnational (and national, and subnational) social fields that shaped the cases they seek to explain.¹⁷ Recent scholarship in sports history reflects similar interest in the impact of transnational ties; yet, as sport historian Matthew Taylor notes, thus far supranational institutions and their ideologies, rather than bottom-up practices of connection, have received the bulk of attention.¹⁸ This should change, for the greatest analytic payoff may lie in elucidating the interaction of different kinds of connection. As sociologist Alejandro Portes has emphasized, multinational investing, international policy-making, supranational organizations, and transnational migrant practices and information flows have shaped each other’s parameters over time.¹⁹

Such interactions defined the Greater Caribbean. Capital and workers, remittances and ideologies, media and kinfolk, club players and pros: each circulated along particular patterned circuits, sketching a distinct supranational geography. None of the circuits were encompassingly “global,” although some touched multiple continents. Their drivers differed, yet they impacted each other. The specific frictions and synergies between them shaped the excellence of interwar Caribbean sport, while providing face-to-face experiences and symbolic languages through which multiple collective identities became real.

Cricket at Home and Abroad

Caribbean sport was not limited to cricket and boxing. Nor was play limited to men. The interwar era saw new attention to youth across the region, in line with international trends.²⁰ The value of physical activity for young women became a focus of exhortation in the rimland black press: indeed, so much exhortation one is tempted to think no one was listening. A typical 1930 editorial chirped that “[a]thletics in all its phases” was on “an upward trend in Limon,” citing widening participation in football, baseball, basketball, and cricket, including not just one but two girls’ basketball teams.²¹ Such endeavors proved hard to sustain, even among the middle-class young women whom social reformers thought their best allies.

Cricket was different. You couldn’t stop it if you tried.

Played with passion from sand beaches to Queen’s Ovals across the islands and rimlands, cricket was a constant source of shared knowledge and symbolic difference alike. Its role in generating connection through competition is captured in George Lamming’s novel, *In*

the Castle of My Skin (1970), set in Barbados during the 1937 riots that Lamming himself lived through as a child of ten. A shoemaker is trying to understand what news of strikes and cane fires in Trinidad might mean. If for authorities it was the menace of labor revolt that united the islands, for the Barbadian shoemaker it was cricket: "He knew Trinidad through the annual cricket tournaments which were played in the two islands." Tours from Jamaica were less frequent, yet still "[e]very boy who felt his worth as a batsman called himself George Headley. In most cases the only knowledge most people might have had of Jamaica was the fact that George Headley was born there."²²

It is typical of Caribbean lives of the era that George Headley—whose Jamaican origin might be the only thing Barbadians knew of Jamaica—was in fact not born in Jamaica at all. Rather he was born in Panama, to Jamaican parents, in 1909. From there the family (like so many others) moved on to Cuba. Headley lived in Jamaica from the age of ten, yet maintained close ties to the isthmian community so tightly linked to that island. As an adult he wrote on a regular basis to friends at the *Panama Tribune*, and his letters intended for publication have the familiar cant of a local boy far from home—"How are the rest of the folk? Please give them my sincere regards"—while also reflecting, with modest pride, extraordinary achievement: "I was rather lucky to fulfill your desire by making the double century at the last moment."²³ It was not just any double century, either: Headley had been tipped to bat at number 3 in the Test matches against the English touring team—in 1930, the first black man to gain such recognition in the supposedly more cerebral batting role—and his 114 and 112 secured the West Indies their first victory against England.²⁴

Headley's place in the batting order mattered. For cricketers did not only represent islands. They were marked by color and class as well. C.L.R. James (born in Trinidad in 1901) famously laid out the taxonomy of color and class within Port of Spain's cricket teams. There was Queen's Park Club (QPC), its players "for the most part white, and often wealthy"; "Shamrock, the club of the old Catholic families," "almost exclusively white"; Stingo, the "plebeians . . . [t]otally black and no social status whatever"; Maple, "the club of the brown-skinned middle class"; and Shannon, "the club of the black lower-middle class," a team that played with a relentless brilliance aimed at demonstrating that "on the cricket field if nowhere else, all men in the island are equal, and we are the best men in the island."²⁵

The class and racial hierarchies of island societies echoed among emigrants abroad, but social distances were compressed in the communities emigrants built. The great majority of British West Indians abroad came from the ranks represented by Shannon and Stingo, and boomtime wages meant some gained real economic mobility. In contrast, the white colonial elites who filled the ranks of QPC and Shamrock rarely emigrated. The few who did were absorbed into the Yankee expatriate world, living in the segregated white zones established on the Canal, plantations, and oil camps and no longer mixing their leisure with the Afro-descended working folk around them. Meanwhile, within the communities forming outside these zones the scions of the brown-skinned middle class represented by Maple struggled to hang on to prestige, in the face of their exclusion from white expatriate society on the one hand and the upward mobility of the black strivers around them on the other. In turn-of-the-century Limón, there was a civic association self-titled the "Brown Man's Club," which maintained its own tennis courts; it did not last long.²⁶

Both the intimacy and tensions of class relations in these communities are captured in a conflict that began on the cricket ground in Port Limón in 1922. Charles Brown, a young man wealthy enough to brag that his father could buy him out of trouble, was pushed during a game and fell. His cricket whites must have been soiled, and mocking stories spread. A few days after the game a woman he did not even know taunted him by calling him “Dirty Brown”; he replied that only a whore like her would be so vulgar. One of her boarders stepped in, wrench in hand, to defend her name; Brown grabbed a knife and fatally stabbed him, claiming self-defense.²⁷

Self-appointed community leaders sought to ensure collective respectability while the masses insisted on their right to be bawdy and loud. Cricket, though, had the respect of all. In Panama and Costa Rica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, Harlem and Brooklyn, British West Indian middling classes and masses alike played cricket. Each of the tiny “line-towns” along the rail lines that connected United Fruit’s banana farms to port had at least one team. A typical weekend in Limón would find “The Bee Hive C.C. of Old Harbour” playing The Cosmopolitan on their home ground at Chase Farm in the Talamanca Division; the Pacuarito Cricket Club traveling to 24 Mile to play “The Fearless C.C.”; and so on, on down the line.²⁸ In the Canal Zone too each town had one or more clubs; Colón and Panama City had more.

In the same years in New York City, “any weather short of a torrential downpour” would find “twelve teams of West Indian Negroes jousting with an ardor and intensity” outsiders might find hard to believe.²⁹ The twelve teams of the Brooklyn-based Cosmopolitan Cricket League played in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx on Saturdays; the twelve teams of Harlem’s New York Cricket League played there on Sundays: “The climax of the season is a contest between teams of picked players from each league, an engagement that sets Myrtle Avenue in Brooklyn and Manhattan’s Lennox Avenue quite agog.”³⁰ Each team had a ladies’ auxiliary, and each was linked to a particular island of origin (and included benevolent works for needy fellow islanders alongside sport in its brief). Even small islands had a big presence. The Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Antigua, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and St. Kitts clubs topped the standings in New York *circa* 1928—but over time, Trinidadian and Jamaican clubs, and the Barbadians of Brooklyn’s Carlisle Cricket Club, tended to dominate.³¹

If playing cricket brought island loyalties to the fore, supporting cricket did so all the more so. Cricket fandom gave loud scope to insular pride, whether in rooting for touring teams from the different islands, or in disputes over the selection of batsmen from this or that island for the West Indies squad. A typical letter to the editor of the *Limón Searchlight* in 1930 went on at length about Trinidadians and their “egoistic expressions” about cricket, arguing that if the West Indies team had had more Jamaicans, they would have gotten the “MCC,” or the Marylebone Cricket Club, “out for less than 400 runs.” The *Searchlight* editors took the author to task in an appended note: “It is a pity that this spirit of gambling rivalry exists among West Indians with so much insulting criticisms, and prejudicial comparisons made of individual cricketers, that tend only to breed bad blood among individuals who should compete in clean, healthy, friendly sport. We do not see this unfriendly rivalry among the Australian, South African nor English players.”³² Scolding changed

nothing, of course. A 1935 letter to the *Searchlight's* successor lamented Limón's reactions to international matches: "How unusual it is to hear a Trinidadian give merit to a Jamaican and vice versa."³³

Such debates reflected and reinforced the nested loyalties fundamental to these communities. On the one hand, cricket play and cricket fandom served to underline island-specific social ties and stereotypes among British Caribbeans abroad. On the other hand, both the passion for cricket and inter-island rivalry itself were things that British Caribbeans had in common and that set them apart from the Cuban, Virginian, or Panamanian natives around them.³⁴

Visiting the Caribbean two years after George Headley's 1930 double century, Englishman Owen Rutter saw Headley, whom he called "the third greatest living batsman in the world," playing an exhibition match against a Port Limón club (as Rutter explained to readers, "all negroes"). Headley's Jamaican squad was returning from Test trials in Trinidad and, typical of the shipping schedules of the era, the only route between the islands led via the rimlands. Limón reveled. "An immense crowd of negroes lined the square and every time Headley sent a ball crashing on to one of the corrugated iron roofs they sent up a delighted roar."³⁵ There was a coda to this scene of triumph in Rutter's recounting. "Here was a man whom the British public would be cheering in a few weeks' time; whom the cricket savants of the British Press would be honoring in columns of expert appreciation"—and yet as they steamed on to Jamaica, Rutter's fellow white travelers refused to bathe in the same swimming pool as Headley and his teammates.³⁶

Analysts from C.L.R. James onward have argued that the pieces captured here—the brilliance of the players, the passion of black fans, the white racism around them—were not merely ironically dissonant but fundamentally linked. The drive against imperial racism drove players' brilliance and fans' identification alike. "The Caribbean game" was, in British activist Chris Searle's summation, "a cricket of resistance."³⁷

Was this true in the rimlands as well? British Caribbeans abroad were well aware of the ways race created hierarchies of subjecthood within their nominally color-blind empire: they talked about it, joked about it, wrote bitterly about it in publications ranging from the Garveyite *Negro World* to the Marxist *Negro Worker* to the middle-class press described above.³⁸ But in those same papers at the time, and in communal memory today, cricket had no part in this critical discussion. Instead cricket stood as a proud symbol of imperial belonging, alongside "God Save the Queen," portraits of the royal family, and the commonplace use of "Britishers" as self-identification. Cricket here was part of a poetics that performed empire as it claimed to be, rather than denouncing it as it was.³⁹

For West Indians abroad, the slice of white racism that mattered most was pan-American rather than imperial, and as we shall see it was the sport of boxing that spoke most directly the transnational struggle against Jim Crow. Cricket, in contrast, here spoke of communal pride more than the injuries of race. Part of that pride was establishing where you stood with respect to the local citizens around you. Even as cricket play and fandom reified this collective divide, the transferability of expertise meant that cricket could serve as a bridge, for individuals, as well.

Batting across Boundaries: Anglo-Latin Links

The synergistic skill sets of cricket and baseball meant an athlete shaped by one could shine in the other. Baseball's popularity in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Panama grew with the active engagement of British West Indian talent. Boxing, as we shall see below, built on even more thorough exchange. The growth of paying sport in the interwar era allowed individual athletes opportunities for mobility across a variety of boundaries. As their fans followed them, shared sporting traditions—spanning English-speaking communities and Spanish-speaking surroundings—began to emerge.

This did not obviate collective divides. Labor market pressures set receiving-society and Anglo-Caribbean workingmen against each other in the 1920s, as “national” labor organizations argued that immigrants undercut wages, and British West Indians argued that they had built up these lands over long decades and had every right to stay.⁴⁰ Tensions escalated with economic crisis in the 1930s, and deportations threatened in Panama, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela. Only after the 1940s would the children and grandchildren of immigrants find national citizenship consistently open to them, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s their degree of symbolic belonging within these lands remained probationary. Yet exchanges of and through sport can be traced across this long era, an important counterpoint to the dominant politics of division.

British West Indian devotion to cricket fed foci of baseball excellence where the two overlapped. San Pedro de Macorís' role as generator of baseball superstars is the most visible modern legacy of this process, for San Pedro was the center of British Caribbean migration to Santo Domingo across the early twentieth century.⁴¹ The pattern was much broader though, encompassing many places now forgotten. A casual newspaper note from 1908 records a tour from Bocas del Toro (Panama) to Limón by a team whose baseball was “far superior to her last visit”; after another round in Limón including a baseball team from Costa Rica's Spanish-speaking, highland capital of San José, “the entire week following will be a cricket week as the Bocas-del-Toro cricketers will contest four teams from Limon.”⁴²

From such crossover play, skill traditions grew. In 1928 the *Panama Tribune* reported with pride on the success of “famous local pitcher” Chick Levy as a “hero in Cuba.” Oscar Levy had left Panama in 1920 for the United States and built a career circulating between by Havana's top teams and the (Negro League) Cuban Stars.⁴³ Historian Adrián Burgos has documented the complex panorama facing Latin American players moving into the segregated U.S. baseball world.⁴⁴ For some, the U.S. taxonomy of black and white was simply the latest in a journey across the racial formations of the Americas, beginning with childhoods spent as racially marked “chombos” (Panama) or “cocolos” (D.R.) within Spanish-American receiving societies. (A generation later Rod Carew, born in the Canal Zone in 1941, would replicate the journey.)

A successful athlete might be claimed by multiple communities, even if his origins positioned him as marginal to all of them. We see this in the life of Costa Rican Juan Gobán, known as “El Negro,” star of the country's first professional soccer squad. Of unclear parentage and dark skin, born in a highland *mestizo* community in 1904 and raised in Port Limón, Gobán moved through multiple collectives and regions, and the

sports associated with them. Lamenting Gobán's premature death in 1930, the *Limón Searchlight* noted that Gobán had been a great cricketer and "in Base Ball he held his own, but he was best known as a Foot Baller." The obituary rang with pride in ability of this local boy, his color stamped on his nickname, to triumph at the center of the host nation: "He was a much sought for member of the 'Libertad,' the champion club of Costa Rica, and Juan was always on the first team being one of the best 'Forwards' that Costa Rica boasts of."⁴⁵ Gobán was inducted into the Costa Rican Sporting Hall of Fame in 1977; the municipal soccer stadium in Limón bears his name today.

Connected sporting traditions were shaped not only by the few who gained fame and fortune but the many who sought them. Afro-Costa Rican sportsman Bancriff "Big Boi" Scout was born in Limón to immigrant parents in 1900. He grew up in Colón, playing baseball alongside other children of Barbadians and Jamaicans on the junior league team "Brooklyn" (in the same years in that Barbadians and Jamaicans, some former residents of Colón, played cricket in Brooklyn itself). Over the next three decades Big Boi followed typical Central American circuits, laboring on docks and rail lines in Bocas del Toro and Changuinola (United Fruit's Panamanian plantations) as well as Limón. At all of these sites he boxed and played baseball for what money he could. Limón had three baseball teams in the 1920s and superb players, he explained years later, even if outside scouts never recruited there like in Cuba and Panama. Big Boi played in Costa Rica's highland capital, San José, for one of the semi-professional teams that emerged in concert and competition with the Limón-based nines. Yet the early history of baseball in Costa Rica and the importance of Limón's international ties within it has been largely forgotten. Big Boi reached his seventies sleeping on the streets of Limón, penniless and nearly blind.⁴⁶ His life captures the ways international labor migration spread sporting traditions around the Greater Caribbean, in a process even more widespread than its present traces attest.

Boxing in the Greater Caribbean: Promoters and Pressmen Help Local Boys Make Good

Cricket set the rhythm of communal life. But boxing was the symbolic sport *par excellence* of the interwar years, in the Greater Caribbean as internationally. The emergence of supranational celebrity via media circulation created a new genre of culture hero: the boxer whose battles stood for his nation and race.⁴⁷ British West Indians abroad were particularly attuned to this, tightly tied as they were to U.S. Afro-American life via migration and popular culture. Yet the distance between local fame and international fortune did not seem insurmountable. The boxing scene was driven by scrappy strivers at every level, their efforts visible to all because self-promotion was essential to build a career—to lure opponents and fans alike—and newspapers were the key venue of self-promotion.

Even more than the cricket-baseball duet, boxing pulled Anglophone migrants and the Spanish-speaking citizens around them into a single competitive sphere. Careers and followings routinely crossed national frontiers even as they reified them. Where pugilists were from mattered with an ease you could joke about, like in the monikers pugilists adopted: place-based identifiers alongside borrowed names that created fictive genealogies of style. The transnational world of interwar boxing was fluid all the way up to its one

sharp edge: the color line. That border was no laughing matter. As we will see below, when that barrier was at stake, the whole black Caribbean held its breath.

But first: the local boys.

In improvised rings on streetcorner lots in Colón, Big Boi recalled, would-be boxers fought barefoot with no safety gear. Indeed there were multiple cases of men killed in friendly matches in this era. (In a defensive letter to the editor, the organizer of one Canal Zone match kept insisting it had been the concussion, not the boxing, that killed the youth in question. One is not reassured.⁴⁸) Yet youths boxed anyway, with impressive results. The migrant-linked ports of Kingston, Colón, and Havana seem to have created a “microculture of sporting excellence” in boxing similar to baseball in the southern Dominican Republic today.⁴⁹ Certainly, the number of champions who came out of Caribbean migrant circuits in the 1920s is remarkable. The last three holders of the World Colored Middleweight Championship were Larry Estridge (b. St. Kitts, 1902), who took the title in 1924 from “Panama Joe Gans” (Cyril Quinton, b. Barbados, 1896, and raised in Panama), who took the title in 1920 from “The Jamaica Kid” (Robert Buckley, b. British Honduras, 1896), who had claimed the title in 1916.⁵⁰ This was no peripheral sideshow: the Gans-Estridge fight, in Yankee Stadium, was viewed by 50,000 fans in person and circulated as a motion picture as well.⁵¹

And then there was skinny, incomparable Alfonso Teófilo Brown. Born in Colón in 1902, “Panama Al” won championship matches on the isthmus before moving on to New York. He claimed the world bantamweight title in 1929 and held it for six years, winning major fights in Europe throughout the 1930s. Much of that time he lived in Paris, embracing its cosmopolitan delights. He both tap-danced and sparred with Josephine Baker and ran the “Kit Kat Club” in Toulouse with, according to an admiring 1939 account in the black press, “cocky indifference to precedence and what have you.” He led his own swing band there, “always gyrating, always selling his outfit for all its worth.”⁵² Paris knew Brown as the protégé and lover of French poet Jean Cocteau. Folks back home either did not know or did not care. They followed his exploits with pride and discussed them in line with the loyalties of place and race basic to the era, with no attention to the sexual border-crossing later accounts have foregrounded.

Like his contemporaries Juan Gobán and Big Boi, Panama Al moved easily across the linguistic and cultural frontiers of Caribbean towns like Colón and Harlem. One New York writer noted that when Al arrived, “he made friends easily around the Latin-American section of Harlem and when he went out as a professional fighter, he had his crowd in there rooting for him.”⁵³ The 1930 census captures Brown on 141st in Harlem, back from his first Paris sojourn. He shared his apartment with another fighter and two trainers, one Cuban, one New York-born to Cuban parents, and one from Panama like himself. Al, like the others, listed Spanish as his first language. His Havana-born roommate was none other than Eligio Sardiñas, “Kid Chocolate,” already the toast of Gotham, who would win the junior lightweight championship in 1931 and the world featherweight title in 1932.⁵⁴

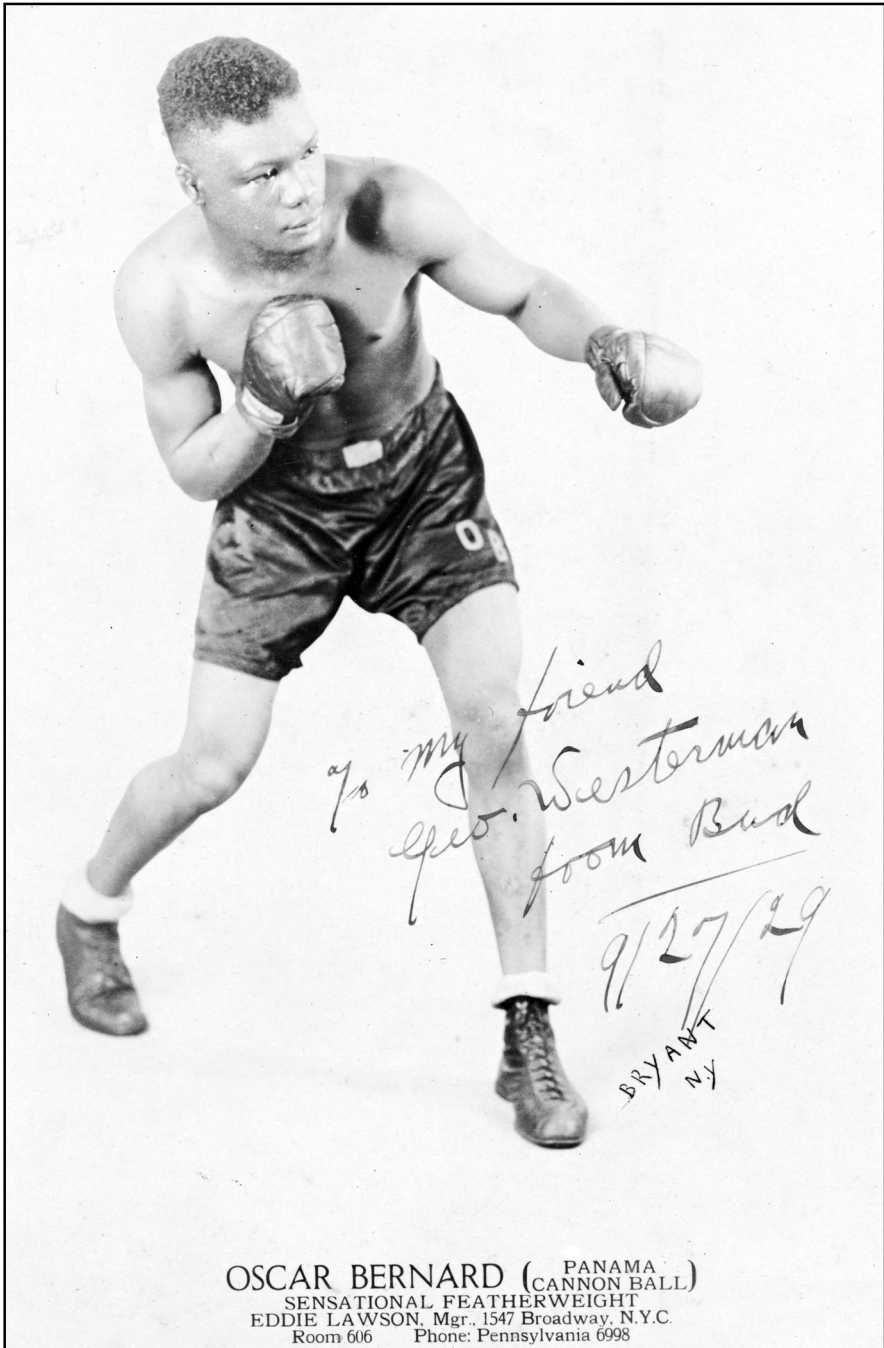
Panama Al also, West Indian papers assured West Indian readers, kept in touch with the folks back home. Canal Zone resident Juan Copeland, who claimed to have been Brown’s first trainer in Panama, crowed in the Kingston *Daily Gleaner* in 1927 over Al’s reception in Paris, reporting that Brown’s “world wide popularity” enabled him to send significant money to support his mother in Colón: “Don’t you think that is marvelous of

a black boy, born of Jamaican parentage?”⁵⁵ The *Panama Tribune* too reported on the glory raining down on “Kid Teofilo” (as they knew him) abroad, adding sly commentary on the conventions equating boxers to working-class roots: “We never knew Al to be a bootblack or newsboy as was reported in a couple of dailies. Not that we wouldn’t be doubly proud of the achievement if he rose from that sphere, but we wonder why the report should have been so colored. Perhaps it is all in pugilistic psychology!”⁵⁶ (Elsewhere, Al told a reporter that he had qualified as a dentist before professional boxing called.⁵⁷)

While the prize fights recognized as champion bouts generally took place in North Atlantic metropolises, the feeder pattern that nourished talents like Panama Al and Kid Chocolate reflected the migrant-driven networks that wove together circum-Caribbean ports. Prizefighting in the interwar Greater Caribbean was both locally run and routinely international. It was also not very respectable and only semi-legal. The sinews of the system comprised men like “Bear Cat Reid, the Panamanian boxer,” who traveled to Kingston in 1926 to challenge local champ Leonard “Fighting Pitt”⁵⁸; Jimmy Briggs, “champion of Panama,” who signed on to fight Cuban Eliseo Quintana, “champion of Jamaica,” in a 1926 fight billed as “The Dempsey Tunney Bout of Jamaica”⁵⁹; and “coloured Panaman” Jose Lombardo, “also of West Indian parentage,” who after winning the isthmian championship moved to New York to try for the World Championship: “He did not get it, but we are proud to say that as a young man of 25 or 26 years of age he owns a three-story tenement house that can support him and his poor parents as long as he lives.”⁶⁰

The career of Afro-Cuban Eliseo Quintana, “champion of Jamaica,” above, offers insight into two key aspects of the growth of interwar Caribbean boxing: the importance of inter-island competition and the role of promoters in making it happen. Over 90,000 Jamaicans traveled to Cuba to work in the decade from 1918 to 1928, tying the two islands more closely than ever before.⁶¹ In the same years, sports entrepreneurship among Spanish-speaking Cubans was also booming, in close association with U.S. markets and media.⁶² Those entrepreneurs included men like Quintana, once “The Lion of Cuba,” who moved laterally across the Caribbean rather than north to Miami or New York. After winning matches in Cuba before 1922, Quintana relocated to Jamaica and then moved on to the Dominican Republic. Although boxing history notes him only as a minor fighter, Jamaican newspapers record his role as a trainer as well as reigning champion on that island in the mid 1920s.⁶³

By the end of the decade, still fighting intermittently himself, Quintana was not only training but arranging bouts for Dominican boxers. A letter from Quintana from Santo Domingo in 1930, addressed to “the boxing public and boxers of Jamaica” via the *Daily Gleaner*, sought challengers for one welterweight and one lightweight and issued a challenge to “any woman boxer” in Jamaica from Ana Cristina Peralta, “woman boxer of Santa Domingo who has fought in other countries viz. New York, Cuba, etc.”⁶⁴ By 1934 Quintana was back in Kingston, training boxers from Cuba, Panama, and beyond at his “Cuban Boxing Camp,” where Quintana (an “old fighter” with the support of “kind friends who are willing to give him a big-hand,” explained one columnist) not only presented amateur matches but organized accompanying performances by “the Follies, a party of girls who did not fail to put it over with a bang.”⁶⁵ Panama Al was not the only one who found boxing and jazz dance combined nicely.



Publicity card sent by Oscar Bernard, "The Panama Cannonball," to George Westerman of the *Panama Tribune*. COURTESY OF GEORGE WESTERMAN COLLECTION, SCHOMBURG RESEARCH CENTER, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, NEW YORK, NEW YORK.

The regional press, it becomes clear, was a generative piece of the system rather than mere recorder of its results. As local boys sought international horizons, they made sure to write home. Oscar Bernard, the “Panama Cannonball,” sent George Westerman of the *Panama Tribune* a signed publicity photograph from New York in 1929. Trying his luck in the same metropolis in the same years, “Kid Singh, the well known British Guianese boxer” published in the Grenada-based *West Indian* a long letter nominally addressed “to a friend in British Guiana,” describing his efforts and prospects. (Singh, a.k.a. “The Fighting Rajah,” would win the world flyweight crown four years later and go on to fight in the U.K. in 1933 and then in South Africa, where he won the Indian featherweight title of the world.)⁶⁶ Yet another Caribbean contender, Harry Smith, wrote from New York to the Sporting Editor of the Kingston *Gleaner* in 1930, explicitly to bulk up his hometown reputation: “As you no doubt know, Jamaica is my home and I am anxious that you and the people of the country should learn of my success.” Smith reported that he was scheduled to fight for the World’s Middleweight Championship but hoped to travel to Jamaica with his manager first. He enclosed a signed publicity photograph along with U.S. press clippings on his pugilistic success.⁶⁷

Given how much reputations and fans mattered, the emergence of New York City as a pan-Caribbean destination—home to roughly 54,000 British West Indians; 46,000 Puerto Ricans; 5,000 Cubans; and 5,000 Virgin Islanders in 1930—meant real opportunity for Caribbean boxers. As one New York sports editor explained, “matchmakers are taking advantage of the large following of South and Central Americans and West Indians to induce the elusive dollar to come their way by giving the foreigners a break.”⁶⁸

To boxing fans origins mattered. Tags like “Panama Cannonball” and “Lion of Cuba” felt natural for a reason. But the frequency with which monikers fused place-names with personal homage suggested a kinship that cut across nation. Fighters seeking bouts in Colón in 1927 included “Panama Joe Gans”—Cornelio Liverpool—a.k.a. “Young Panama Joe Gans,” not to be confused with the “Panama Joe Gans” defeated by Larry Estridge in New York a few years earlier, much less with the original Baltimore-born Joe Gans—the first black World Boxing Champion—or any of the other Joe Ganses whose fistic exploits filled print and screen.⁶⁹ Such naming practices knit island and rimland and mainland pugilists into a larger whole.

When aspiring boxer Reginald Smith reached New York armed with a packet of press clippings from his “home town of Jamaica,” the black press welcomed him as one of a long list of British Caribbean islanders who had sought to “risk their hides along the colour line.”⁷⁰ A similar article a few years later noted that “[m]any of the British Islanders have claimed Panama as their own, but the majority just happened to have found themselves on the isthmus either by going there to find work or by being carried there by their parents.”⁷¹ What this New York journalist dismissed as a trajectory that “just happened” was instead crucial to the push that set Panama Al Brown and fellow champions on their way: the convergence of British and Latin Caribbeans in a pugilistic ecosystem—press, promoters, contenders, and fans—that formed a vital subfield of interwar colored boxing.

Boxers and Race: Joe Louis, Ours

Looking at cricket, we saw nested loyalties to club, island, West Indies, and empire. Look at boxing, we see a tumult of pan-Caribbean fandom and then one big divide:

between colored fighters and the white men who refused, across most of the 1920s, to fight them. Boxing's color line and its stakes were as visible from Colón as they were from Chicago. In 1927 despite the recent defeat of aging legend Harry Wills (the Brown Panther) by Paulino Uzcudum (the Basque Woodchopper), wrote George Westerman, "we will yet pull along with [Wills], or until such time as some other Negro heavyweight springs into the limelight and takes the place of our beloved Brown Panther." Had not British West Indian Panama supported Wills across those "fruitless seven years" in which Wills had pursued Jack Dempsey, seeking to draw the Manassa Mauler across the color line to defend his diadem with his fists?⁷² The relevance of race to fandom was so basic it almost goes unspoken here—captured only in Westerman's off-hand assurance that any heavyweight who might gain readers' allegiance would be, of course, a "Negro."

The man whose fistic exploits had driven anxious whites to reassert that color line was Texas-born black heavyweight Jack Johnson—and already the Caribbean had been watching. Johnson's championship defeat of the white James Jeffries was five years past by 1915, when Johnson happened through Barbados on his way to Mexico. Two years earlier, Johnson had been convicted under the Mann Act of sexual trafficking, a prosecution spurred by his high-profile relationships with white women. The white press figured Johnson as a brute. In Barbados he was simply a hero. The scene in Bridgetown in 1915 resembled George Headley's match in Limón two decades later:

News of [Johnson's] arrival spread instantly through town and surroundings and in 'no time' as the Yankees say, the Pierhead and the Wharf and its approaches were filled with a mass of struggling and excited humanity. . . . [A] reception worthy of this pugilistic hero was heartily accorded, for cheers upon cheers rent the air and it was with difficulty that the motor car carrying him made way.⁷³

Accounts of the scene in the Trinidad press capture the intensity of identification, how much it mattered that Johnson looked like "one of us." "'Good dear,' cried an old Barbadian woman as the car passed by, 'muh son come back as de champion.' Another elderly 'Bajan' claimed him as her cousin."⁷⁴ Ebullient mistaken identity reflected an underlying collective claim to Johnson and his achievements.

As part of "the race work in which many thousands of ambitious your men and women are today engaged," explained the editors of Trinidad's *Argos*, Johnson's defeat of Jeffries had shaken the world "as much as the result of the Russo Japanese war. It put new inspiration in the coloured races. Its message could never be erased by fifty defeats of Johnson at this present day."⁷⁵ Reassertion by whites of the color line after Johnson's reign was "a pure and simple confession of fear," one that would not be allowed to rest easy: "white pugilistic supremacy . . . can never go unchallenged while white championship holders refuse to meet coloured boxers."⁷⁶ So Caribbean fans suffered alongside Harry Wills during his seven long years in the wilderness and protested the consignment of the Jamaica Kid, Panama Joe Gans, and Larry Estridge to the *colored* middleweight title when they deserved a shot at the world title, full stop.

So it was that as white imperial power and black internationalist challenges surged in tandem in the 1920s and 1930s, the stage was set for one fighter to crystallize the global politics of race. Joe Louis would be that fighter, and the Schmeling rematch would be that fight.⁷⁷ Louis was already famous across the Caribbean by then. Harlem-based journalist

Roi Ottley, himself the child of Grenadian immigrants, captured the impact of Louis' 1935 victory over Italian Primo Carnera within Harlem—its population one-fourth Caribbean-born. Joyous dancers thronged the streets, Ottley wrote. Louis had “lifted an entire race out of the slough of inferiority.”⁷⁸ Small wonder that Louis' upset defeat by German Max Schmeling in 1936 before a crowd of 40,000 in Yankee Stadium left “the Negro public . . . flabbergasted.”⁷⁹ Letters of consolation poured in from across the Caribbean. People prayed for Joe. They waited for the rematch.⁸⁰

Given boxing's place in Panama and the open Jim Crowism of the Canal Zone, the stakes in Panama could not have been higher. A traveler described the scene in a Canal Zone hotel when Schmeling and Louis finally met in 1938. “All the coloured bell-boys and porters” huddled the radio console in a hush. The knockout came two minutes in. “Jubilant” porters “collected dollar notes with a grin from the pallid American travelers. Then swiftly they disappeared to celebrate in riotous fashion among their own kind in Silver Town.”⁸¹ Reliving the triumph in cinematic glory fueled similar passions at the opposite end of the isthmus, the traveler reported. “In Panama City, in a hot little cinema crammed with Jamaican, Barbadian, and Harlem negroes, I saw that brief flight flickering on the screen. Screaming enthusiasm when the stern, unsmiling Joe Louis appeared on the screen. Pandemonium when his opponent reeled to the ground. I almost had to fight my way out.”⁸²

Meanwhile, across the Caribbean in Trinidad, one round of calypsos followed Louis' 1936 defeat by Schmeling, another his 1938 victory. Some were composed in Trinidad and recorded in New York; others circulated back to small islands in migrants' oral repertoires rather than in vinyl. A sympathetic traveler learned the words to several from men whiling the hours in a St. Vincent barbershop, its “walls well pasted with pictures of Joe Louis and the Royal Family.”⁸³

In sum, interwar British Caribbeans inhabited a world where identification might well follow lines of race and cut across lines of empire. The border-crossing celebrity of boxers of color—some African-American, others Caribbean in origin—was one symbol of those identifications. Sports fandom had become one piece of a broader black internationalist popular culture, within which regular men and women questioned national and imperial hypocrisies, cited parallels of racist injustice, urged solidary response. This popular black internationalism set the backdrop against which events ranging from Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia to the British Caribbean's 1938 labor riots would be read. In doing so, it shaped the terrain over which decolonization would be fought.⁸⁴

Conclusion

The circum-Caribbean migratory sphere—with outposts from Panama to Harlem—was knit together by ongoing migration of British subjects of color and by the institutions and practices migrants built over two generations as they sought to sustain communities within sometimes hostile host societies. Both as social practice and as symbolic glue, sports were important contributors to that process. Sporting practice built boundaries, and occasionally breached them. Cricket let players and supporters proclaim island loyalty and cross-island commonality at once. Boxers' monikers created fictive genealogies that likewise declared both contrast and connection, as borrowed names claimed filiation and

national modifiers insisted place of origin mattered. Meanwhile, sporting spoke back to the racism migrants and their children faced daily, as they endured Yankee bosses or joblessness or worried where they might move next.

In the cases under study here, sport was neither part of a social reform or acculturation project from above (“Americanization” or Panamanianization or Costa Ricanization), nor a struggle for assimilation or acceptance from below. Yet it was vital component of communal life across the circum-Caribbean migratory sphere. It was integral to the weekly rhythms of face-to-face communities and to the weaving of imagined communities. Multiple collectives were imagined at once. Cricket practice and fandom highlighted loyalties of island and empire. Boxing fandom embodied racial struggle. In each case, observing the sporting realm shows us a new arena for dynamics that were simultaneously playing out in other realms of popular culture. But when we observe the practice of boxing and baseball—the latter now largely forgotten except for the iconic case of San Pedro de Macoris but, in fact, an integral part of participatory sport across interwar British West Indian overseas communities—a different picture emerges. Among boxers and ballplayers, competition frequently crossed lines of language, citizenship, and ethnicity, as British Caribbeans competed against Spanish-speaking Panamanians, Costa Ricans, Cubans, and (in New York) Puerto Ricans. In this sense, attention to sport importantly complements existing scholarship on the circum-Caribbean migratory sphere, showing us systematic connections to receiving-society individuals and institutions in an era in which these otherwise were rare.

These were the cumulative results of interactions shaped by multiple partially overlapping circuits: of migrants, of media, of ideas and ideologies, of investment, of contenders. In the interaction of multiple transnational fields we find the drivers of sport in the interwar Greater Caribbean.



KEYWORDS: CRICKET, BOXING, RACE, PANAMA, CARIBBEAN MIGRATION

¹Microfilm, *Panama American*, 1-30 August 1926, West Indian page.

²See, for example, Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, and Nina Szanton Blanc, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 68 (1995): 48-63; Alejandro Portes, “Introduction: The Debates and Significance of Immigrant Transnationalism,” *Global Networks* 1 (2001): 181-194; and Peggy Levitt, “Transnational Migration: Taking Stock and Future Directions,” *Global Networks* 1 (2001): 195-216. Challenging the presumption that such patterns are unique to the present, see Ewa Morawska, “Immigrants, Transnationalism, and Ethnicization: A Comparison of this Great Wave and the Last,” in *E Pluribus Unum? Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation*, eds. Gary Gerstle and John Mollenkopf (New York: Russell Sage, 2001), 175-212; and Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald, “Transnationalism in Question,” *American Journal of Sociology* 109 (2004): 1177-1195.

³Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁴Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, “Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society,” *International Migration Review* 38 (2004): 1001-1039.

⁵See discussion in Lara Putnam, “Migrants, Nations, and Empires in Transition: Native Claims in the Greater Caribbean, 1850s-1930s,” in *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America, 1850-1950*, eds. Nicola Foote and Michael Goebel (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014).

⁶See, for example, Peter Levine, *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Steven Pope, "Negotiating the 'Folk Highway' of the Nation: Sport, Public Culture, and American Identity, 1870-1940," *Journal of Social History* 27 (1993): 327-340; George Eisen and David Kenneth Wiggins, eds., *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994); Mike Cronin and David Mayall, "Sport and Ethnicity: Some Introductory Remarks," *Immigrants & Minorities* 17 (1998): 1-13; and Mike Cronin, David Doyle, and Liam O'Callaghan, "Foreign Fields and Foreigners on the Field: Irish Sport, Inclusion and Assimilation," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 25 (2008): 1010-1030. For useful alternative approaches, see Diethelm Blecking, "Sport and Immigration in Germany," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 25 (2008): 955-973; and John Hunter, "Flying the Flag: Identities, the Nation, and Sport," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 10 (2003): 409-425.

⁷See, for example, Nathan Glazer, "Is Assimilation Dead?" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530 (1993): 122-136; Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530 (1993): 74-96; and Russell A. Kazal, "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 437-471. Cf. Rogers Brubaker, "The Return of Assimilation? Changing Perspectives on Immigration and Its Sequels in France, Germany, and the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24 (2001): 531-548.

⁸Overviews include Elizabeth M. Thomas-Hope, "The Establishment of a Migration Tradition: British West Indian Movements to the Hispanic Caribbean in the Century after Emancipation," *International Migration* 24 (1986): 559-571; and Bonham Richardson, "Caribbean Migrations, 1838-1985," in *The Modern Caribbean*, eds. Franklin Knight and Colin Palmer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 203-228. From the late 1930s onward, new legal barriers to black immigration at each of the receiving societies would isolate these communities in unprecedented ways. Far-flung family remained the norm, but opportunities for mobility shrank. Consonant with this, efforts to gain national citizenship, and to make it real through access to employment, education, and social services, became the focus of the now-divided remnants of what had been a supranational sphere. For the 1940s onward, then, this story becomes a dozen separate stories, and "assimilation" a meaningful topic of inquiry within each.

⁹See secondary sources cited in Lara Putnam, "Borderlands and Border-Crossers: Migrants and Boundaries in the Greater Caribbean, 1840-1940," *Small Axe* 42 (2014): 7-21.

¹⁰"Costa Rica News Items," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 3 November 1937, p. 20. Similarly, among many, "Excursion to Limon by Jamaican Party," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 2 March 1939, p. 41.

¹¹Putnam, *Radical Moves*, chap. 4.

¹²"Sudden Passing of Sidney Young Stuns Nation," *Panama Tribune*, 24 May 1959, pp. 1, 19.

¹³Michael Conniff, "George Westerman: A Barbadian Descendant in Panama," in *The Human Tradition in Latin America: The Twentieth Century*, eds. William H. Beezley and Judith Ewell (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1987), 141-150.

¹⁴Putnam, *Radical Moves*, 128-129.

¹⁵"Theatrically Crazy," *Limón Searchlight*, 17 January 1931, p. 2.

¹⁶"Radio Installation," *Limón Searchlight*, 21 June 1930, p. 2.

¹⁷Levitt and Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity," 1009.

¹⁸Matthew Taylor, "Sport, Transnationalism, and Global History," *Journal of Global History* 8 (2013): 199-208. See, for example, Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson, "Sport and Globalization: Transnational Dimensions," *Global Networks* 7 (2007): 107-112; Enver M. Casimir, "Contours of Transnational Contact: Kid Chocolate, Cuba, and the United States in the 1920s and 1930s," *Journal of Sport History* 39 (2012): 487-506; and Matthew Taylor, "The Global Ring? Boxing, Mobility, and Transnational Networks in the Anglophone World, 1890-1914," *Journal of Global History* 8 (2013): 231-255.

¹⁹Portes, "Introduction," 191.

²⁰Barbara Keys, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

²¹"Athletics in All Its Phases Take an Upward Trend in Limon," *Limón Searchlight*, 13 December 1930, p. 5.

²²George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (London: Michael Joseph, 1953; reprint ed., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 100-101.

²³"Headley Writes to the Panama Tribune," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 10 May 1930, p. 18. Similarly, after Jamaica's M.C.C. stopped in Limón in 1930, papers there crowed over "our newly found young Master 'Geo Headley' who professionals and amateurs alike all look at as one of the champion bats of cricket and among those considered the world's first batsmen" and noted that in person Headley remained "as unostentatious as a lamb." "The M.C.C. Team in Limon," *Limón Searchlight*, 22 March 1930, p. 1.

²⁴See Hilary McD. Beckles, *The Development of West Indies Cricket*, vol. 1, *The Age of Nationalism* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 1999), 46, 48-49.

²⁵C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Stanley Paul, 1963; reprint ed., New York: Random House, 1983), 55-56, 61. See also Douglas Hartmann, "What Can We Learn from Sport If We Take Sport Seriously As a Racial Force? Lessons from C.L.R. James's *Beyond a Boundary*," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26 (2003): 451-483; and Aviston Downes, "'Flannelled Fools'? Cricket and the Political Economy of the British West Indies c. 1895-1906," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 17 (2000): 59-80.

²⁶Trevor Purcell, *Banana Fallout: Class, Color, and Culture among West Indians in Costa Rica* (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Afro-American Studies, 1993), 32-35.

²⁷Judicial transcript, homicide investigation, 1922: Juzgado Penal de Limón no. 1244, Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica, Zapote, San José, Costa Rica.

²⁸See, for example, "Current Items: Cricket in Talamanca," *Limón Searchlight*, 17 May 1930, p. 1; "Cricket at 24 Miles," *Limón Searchlight*, 12 April 1930, p. 1.

²⁹Bertram Remitz, "Negro Cricket Thrives Here," *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 July 1928, p. 6 (reprinted from *New York Tribune*). Remitz's surprise would not have been shared by a journalist closer to the community. In the 1920s and 1930s New York's black press, reflecting its large British West Indian readership, routinely carried both international and local cricket news.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.; see, for example, A.R. Sammah, "Indies Sports Notes: Intercolonial Sports," *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 August 1931, p. 16; and B.M. Clarke, "Cricket," *New York Amsterdam News*, 16 July 1930, 13.

³²"West Indian Test Cricket," *Limón Searchlight*, 31 May 1930, p. 1.

³³"Negro Weakness in Cohesive Propensities," *Atlantic Voice* (Limón), 6 April 1935, p. 7.

³⁴See, for example, Herbert Morrice, "Is West Indian Unity a Fact?" *Panama American*, 28 October 1926, n.p.; Putnam, *Radical Moves*, 200-201.

³⁵Owen Rutter, *If Crab No Walk: A Traveler in the West Indies* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1933), 133.

³⁶Ibid., 134.

³⁷Chris Searle, "Race before Wicket: Cricket, Empire and the White Rose," *Race & Class* 31 (1990): 31-48, 34 [QUOTATION]. See James, *Beyond a Boundary*, and discussion in Malcolm MacLean, "Ambiguity within the Boundary: Re-reading C.L.R. James's *Beyond a Boundary*," *Journal of Sport History* 37 (2010): 99-117; Beckles, *Development*; and Michael Arthur and Jennifer Scanlon, "Reading and Rereading the Game: Reflections on West Indies Cricket," in *In the Game: Race, Identity and Sports in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Amy Bass (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 117-135.

³⁸Lara Putnam, "Citizenship from the Margins: Vernacular Theories of Rights and the State from the Interwar Caribbean," *Journal of British Studies* 53 (2014): 162-191.

³⁹Similarly see Jorge L. Giovannetti, "The Elusive Organization of 'Identity': Race, Religion, and Empire among Caribbean Migrants in Cuba," *Small Axe* 19 (2006): 1-27.

⁴⁰For example, "24th MAY," *Limón Searchlight*, 31 May 1930, p. 1.

⁴¹Rob Ruck, *The Tropic of Baseball: Baseball in the Dominican Republic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); idem, *Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011).

⁴²"Limon Notes," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 27 April 1908, p. 16.

⁴³"Around the World of Sport," *Panama Tribune*, 25 November 1928, p. 6.

⁴⁴Adrián Burgos, *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

⁴⁵"Those Who Travel the Great Beyond: A Sportsman Dead," *Limón Searchlight*, 15 March 1930, p. 1.

⁴⁶"Autobiografía de Big Boi," *Autobiografías Campesinas*, vol. 26-3, Biblioteca Central, Universidad Nacional, Heredia, Costa Rica; "El Beisbol en Costa Rica," Federación Costarricense de Beisbol, <<http://www.fcbeisbol.org/main/el-beisbol-en-costa-rica/>> [16 September 2014].

⁴⁷See Jeffrey Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Thomas R. Hietala, *Fight of the Century: Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); and Theresa Runstedler, *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing in the Shadow of the Global Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

⁴⁸Letter, Juan Copeland, Cristobal, C.Z., to Editor, "On Prizefighting," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 5 April 1927, p. 10.

⁴⁹Ruck, *Raceball*, 198.

⁵⁰Panama Joe Gans came through Jamaica in 1924 on his way to fight several bouts in Panama during the lead up to his match with Estridge in New York. See "Departure of Joe Gans," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 14 November 1924, p. 6. Many in the black press saw the World Colored Middleweight Championship as a racist sop, created by white promoter Tex Rickard to shore up the color line. See, for example, "The Sportive Whirl," *New York Amsterdam News*, 10 September 1930, p. 12.

⁵¹"Panama Joe Gans Loses Title Bout," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 July 1924, p. 7.

⁵²"The Sportive Whirl," *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 August 1930, p. 12. See William Detloff, "The First Hispanic World Boxing Champion," *ESPN.com*, 15 September 2008, <<http://sports.espn.go.com/sports/boxing/news/story?id=3586234>> [16 September 2014].

⁵³Dan Burley, "Scribe Gives Real Lowdown on Panama Alphonse Brown," *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 May 1939, p. 11.

⁵⁴Census of the U.S., 1930, New York City, Enumeration District 31-990, sheet no. 7A, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, found via www.ancestry.com; Casimir, "Contours," 491.

⁵⁵Letter, Juan Copeland to Editor, "Boxing and Self Defense," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 12 May 1927, p. 15. One might hear racial condescension in this query, but the rest of the letter undercuts any simple reading. Copeland urged that more Jamaican boys be given the chance to learn "the manly art" of pugilism, explaining that after all, not everyone can "afford to be a student, or go to England and return a doctor or barrister, etc."

⁵⁶"Atlantic Side Pars: Do You Care to Know?" *Panama Tribune*, 11 November 1928, p. 11.

⁵⁷Burley, "Scribe Gives Real Lowdown."

⁵⁸"In the Ring," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 1 November 1926, p. 6.

⁵⁹Advertisement, "Boxing," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 13 November 1926, p. 4.

⁶⁰Copeland letter, "Boxing."

⁶¹Malcolm J. Proudfoot, *Population Movements in the Caribbean* (Port of Spain: Caribbean Commission, 1950), 78-79.

⁶²See especially Casimir, "Contours."

⁶³"In the Ring." See <<http://www.fightsrec.com/eliseo-quintana.html>> [16 September 2014].

⁶⁴"Challenges to Boxers," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 26 June 1930, p. 12.

⁶⁵"Enjoyable Boxing and 'Follies' Show at The Cuban Boxing Camp," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 29 November 1934, p. 15.

⁶⁶"West Indian Flyweight in USA," *West Indian* (St George's, Grenada), 11 February 1930, p. 5; "My Top 10 Guyanese boxers of all time," *Stabroek News* (Georgetown, Guyana), 6 March 2008, <<http://www.stabroeknews.com/2008/sports/03/06/my-top-10-guyanese-boxers-of-all-time-2/>> [16 September 2014].

⁶⁷"Jamaica Boxer's Record in U.S.," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 10 July 1930, p. 19.

⁶⁸"The Sportive Whirl," *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 August 1930, p. 12.

⁶⁹"Panama Joe Gans Is Sent to Prison after Winning Bout," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 23 May 1927, p. 5; see <http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=624747&cat=boxer> [16 September 2014]. Another West Indian Panamanian seeking bouts that year was "Young Harry Wills" (John Mowatt), who had gone to New York to seek purses but found himself "through the negligence of promoters" unable "to secure any matches." George W. Westerman, "Sports Shots," 25 August 1927, reprinted in Sidney Young, ed., *Isthmian Echoes* (Panama City: n.p., 1928), 198-199; <http://boxrec.com/media/index.php/Young_Harry_Wills_%28Panama%29> [16 September 2014].

⁷⁰"Ex-Constable Smith in New York City," *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, 30 January 1924, p. 9.

⁷¹"The Sportive Whirl," *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 August 1930, p. 12.

⁷²George W. Westerman, "Sports Shots," 19 July 1927, reprinted in *Isthmian Echoes*, ed. Young, 196-197. See Brian D. Bunk, "Harry Wills and the Image of the Black Boxer from Jack Johnson to Joe Louis," *Journal of Sport History* 39 (2012): 63-80.

⁷³"Arrival of World-Famed Pugilist Jack Johnson," *West Indian* (St. George's, Grenada), 16 February 1915, p. 3.

⁷⁴"Jack Johnson in Barbados," *Argos* (Port of Spain), 9 February 1915, p. 5.

⁷⁵"The King Is Dead! Long Live the King!" *Argos* (Port of Spain), 30 April 1915, p. 3.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷Lewis A. Erenberg, *The Greatest Fight of Our Generation: Louis vs. Schmeling* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Margolick, *Beyond Glory: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling, and a World on the Brink* (New York: Vintage, 2006).

⁷⁸Roi Ottley, *New World A'Coming: Inside Black America* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1943), 191. The phrase he quotes is from the *Pittsburgh Courier*. See also Theresa Runstedtler, "In Sports the Best Man Wins: How Joe Louis Whupped Jim Crow," in *In the Game*, ed. Bass, 47-94.

⁷⁹Ottley, *New World A'Coming*, 195.

⁸⁰For example, "We're Sorry, Joe," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 August 1936, p. 14; "Advises Joe to Pray," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 September 1937, p. 15.

⁸¹William J. Makin, *Caribbean Nights* (London: Robert Hale, 1939), 264.

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³Glanville Smith, *Many a Green Isle* (London: The Travel Book Club, 1942), 264, 262 [QUOTATION].

⁸⁴Putnam, *Radical Moves*.