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El Puente: transnationalism among Cubans of English-speaking Caribbean descent

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This article examines intra-Caribbean migration and transnationalism through the case of anglophone Caribbean immigrants and their descendants in Cuba. In seeking an explanation for the resurgence of English-speaking Caribbean associations in Cuba during the 1990s, it explores the historical trajectory of this group from the time of arrival through the 1959 Revolution to the present. In addition to providing a narrative of the experience of this particular group of Anglo-Caribbean/Afro-Latin American/African diasporic subjects and illuminating the continuities and discontinuities in transnational practices over time, I argue that this case of West Indian Cubans expands the notion of the transnational social field itself beyond the sending and receiving countries, particularly for those who lived in Guantánamo and worked on the US naval base. I also argue that this case clearly, and perhaps dramatically, demonstrates the primacy of the state in regulating transnational processes and provides insights into how second and third generation immigrants, who are very rooted in their national identity, can become agents of transnational and Diasporic practices.

Keywords: Cuba; West Indian migration; transnationalism; Guantánamo; US military bases

Introduction

El Centre

It was August of 2001 that I found myself in Guantánamo for the first of what would come to be many visits to this stiflingly hot city of about 100,000 people in eastern Cuba. Unlike the nearby United States naval base that bears its name, Guantánamo, the city, is relatively unknown. My reason for being there: to investigate the resurgence of English-speaking Caribbean ethnic associations in Cuba during the Special Period.¹ As Guantánamo is the location of the revitalized British West Indian Welfare Centre, founded in 1945 by Jamaican immigrants drawn to Guantánamo by the promise of stable, better paying jobs on the naval base, it is an important stop on my journey.

‘El Centre’, as it is most often called, is a single-story building with one large room equipped with a desk, a file cabinet of some sort, and the essential wooden rocking chairs that no Cuban home or social space is considered complete without. Indeed, what demarcates this space as one dedicated to reaching people and places beyond the island’s borders are its walls. On the wall to the left, there is a Black Star

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Line promotional poster that features one of the ill-fated ships purchased with dues paid by the millions of Universal Negro Improvement Association members, many of whom were English-speaking Caribbean migrants living in the United States and Latin America. The black masts of the ship are foregrounded by the visage of Marcus Garvey whose experiences as a migrant laborer in Limon, Costa Rica motivated him to found the largest black social movement in history. The Black Star Line was to be the route of physical return to Africa as well as to economic independence, self-determination, and racial uplift.

On the wall space facing the entrance of the Centre, the Jamaican flag and the Union Jack sit on either side of a black and white photograph of the Centre's founding leadership. Positioned in front of the Cuban and British flags that sit side-by-side on the wall behind them, some are seated, some standing, all have dark, stoic faces. There are also much smaller color photographs of the former Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson's recent visit to Cuba and special events hosted at the Centre in the 1990s. With the growing interest in revitalizing their roots and 'knowing they fadah',² in time, more anglophone Caribbean flags would come to decorate this space.

As the late afternoon wore into evening, increasing numbers of people began to mill about, greeting each other in Jamaican-accented English and conversing in a sort of West Indian Cuban style Spanglish. Many of them were elders, most middle-aged, all traced their origins to the anglophone Caribbean, an early twentieth-century anglophone Caribbean that was still an outpost of the British Empire. Most among them are the children and grandchildren of immigrants who, during Cuba's Special Period, moved to 'rescue their roots' through revitalizing ethnic associations and re-establishing ties with the anglophone Caribbean.

This revitalization of the 1990s was most distinctly located in the lodges, churches, and ethnic associations that had been established in the first half of the twentieth century by British West Indian immigrants. In Guantánamo, the British West Indian Welfare Centre had been a vital cultural space, its success and stability due in part to the proportion of its members who benefited from the stable salaries earned on the naval base. Though essentially dormant from the mid-1970s onward, in 1993, a group of professionals in their 40s founded what they called the Young People's Department. During the most difficult times of Cuba's 'Special Period' when the government was allowing and, in some cases, encouraging the development of connections abroad out of economic necessity, this branch of the traditional Centre claimed as its mission the reclaiming of anglophone Caribbean roots and set out to do so through developing and promoting linkages to the English-speaking Caribbean past and present. Like the Centre's physical space, the lives of the both the Centre's old and new guard illustrate the prominence of movement and intersections in the forging of African diasporic and, specifically, Afro-Latin American subjectivity.

Research among English-speaking Caribbean immigrants and their descendants in the

United States, Canada, and England indicates that multiple factors influence patterns of identification as well as the maintenance of connections to the 'homeland'. For instance, the presence and status of other black groups, gender, class status, generation, residential segregation, and the experience of interpersonal racism have all been found to be significant in shaping immigrant social and political identity (Foner 1998; Hintzen 2001; Rogers 2001; Waters 2001). Among the studies that focus on intra-regional migration, the English-speaking Caribbean presence in Central America has been analyzed through the lens of labor (Chomsky 1996; Echeverria-Gent 1992; Petras 1988), racial and ethnic stratification (Bourgois 1989; Newton 1984; Purcell 1993), national identity and inclusion (Harpelle 2001), gender (Putnam 2002), religion (Bryce-Laporte 1998), and political ideology and Diasporic identity (Gordon 1998). Those that have looked specifically at the Cuban case have focused on labor movements (Carr 1998), the meanings and uses of British colonial subject status (Charlton 2005; Giovannetti 2001), Garveyism (Estévez Rivero 2003; Lewis 1998), black immigrants in the context of early twentieth-century Cuba (Chomsky 2000; McLeod 2000), family structure (Espronceda Amor 1999), and black subjectivities (Queeley 2010). In nearly all of this research, the presence of 'home' persists whether it be through voluntary return, expulsion, or a continual influx of migrants; through letters to loved ones updating them on life abroad or to the British consulate protesting the conditions of that life; through family remittances or funds saved for hurricane victims; or through traveling pastors or visiting cricket teams. In the Cuban case, the presence of a broader, interconnected Caribbean world inside and outside of the island appears to be at times integral and at times peripheral to the life of this particular immigrant group.

This secondary migration from the British colonies to Latin America is an often times overlooked chapter in the history of African diasporic movement and is significant for several reasons. The first relates to its ability to expand understandings of migration and Diaspora. As Shalini Puri (2003, p. 1) asks in her introduction to the edited volume *Marginal Migrations: The Circulation of Cultures within the Caribbean*, 'what kinds of pan-Caribbean identities, conflicts, alliances and hybridities emerge' when we take intra-Caribbean migration into consideration given that ideas about Diaspora and globalization are primarily drawn from the experience of movement from periphery to metropole? Furthermore, how do understandings of Diaspora and globalization themselves change if we follow Sid Mintz's (1998) mandate to historicize these processes? Pursuing this area of inquiry also contributes to understanding Caribbean diaspora by developing, as Nancy Foner (1998, 2006) suggests, a comparative analysis of Caribbean migration across time and space. Such analyses shed light on the ways in which racial ideologies, political climate, and economic opportunities of both the home and host countries inform transnational practices.

Examining the case of Afro-Cubans of anglophone Caribbean descent,³ this article considers current debates about such practices. It supports the argument for historicizing transnationalism and adopting a broader definition of this phenomenon, one that includes a diversity of transnational behaviors and accommodates shifts over time and space (Foner 1998; Mintz 1998). As such, the article seeks explanation for the recent resurgence of English-speaking Caribbean associations and attempts to re-establish

connections with the ancestral home in the historical precedent of such actions. In addition to illuminating the continuities and discontinuities in transnational practices over time, I argue that this case of West Indian Cubans expands the notion of the transnational social field itself beyond the sending and receiving countries as those first- and second-generation English-speaking Caribbean immigrants living in and around Guantánamo and working on the US naval base created a field that included Cuba, their country of origin, and the United States. Furthermore, this case clearly, and perhaps dramatically, demonstrates the primacy of the state in regulating this process. It also provides insights into how second and third generation immigrants, who are very rooted in their national identity, can become agents of transnational and Diasporic practices, constructing bridges to their ancestral home.

El Puente/the bridge: anglophone Caribbean migration and development of a transnational community

From the anglophone Caribbean to Latin America and back again

The title of this paper was inspired by an exchange that I had with a former president of the British West Indian Welfare Centre's Young People's Department in Guantánamo, Cuba. Edward,⁴ the grandson of immigrants from St Kitts and Montserrat, had been quite active in attempting to awaken interest in the British West Indian immigrant origins of some Cubans and to deepen existing institutional ties between Cuba and the English-speaking Caribbean. This effort was the local manifestation of what was occurring on a national level; namely, after losing its primary source of economic and ideological support, Cuba was reaching out to the international community, including CARICOM states.⁵ As the descendants of those British West Indian immigrants who traveled to Cuba during the early twentieth-century economic boom, Edward reasoned, they were a natural bridge between Cuba and the English-speaking Caribbean.

Of course, when Edward's grandparents migrated to Cuba, one couple among hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean who traveled to Cuba and other destinations throughout Latin America, there was no CARICOM because these states existed as British colonies, colonies in which freedom for the formerly enslaved was frustrated. The oft-given explanations for the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth-century flight of people from the English-speaking Caribbean to Latin America and the United States include high unemployment and underemployment, generally low wages, and population pressure, particularly in Barbados (Chomsky 1996; Knight 1985; Marshall 1985). Central to this predicament was the political economy of sugar, with Jamaica, the most populous of the colonies, being particularly hard hit by the industry's decline (James 1998, p. 16). Related to the development of industrial capitalism, the severe contraction of the sugar industry in the mid-nineteenth-century British Caribbean □ a process that was accelerated by the British Sugar Duties Act of 1846, which eliminated the guarantee of a British market for Caribbean sugar resulted in a shortage of adequate opportunities to support a life not marked by destitution.

Further exacerbating this crisis for peasant laborers was legislation that favored large landholders and the transition from sugar to large-scale banana cultivation (James 1998;

Scarano 1989). As the sugar industry in the British Caribbean collapsed, reducing the number of sugar estates from around 2200 in 1838 to 800 in 1900, Lorenzo Dow Baker, the American founder of the Boston Fruit Company (later to become the United Fruit Company, which later thrived in Central America in part as the result of imported British Caribbean labor), used his political connections to buy and lease large tracts of land in Jamaica, eventually gaining a monopoly on banana cultivation. Peasants who were fortunate enough to acquire small tracts of land, which were sold at a greater cost and decreased in availability as the end of the century approached, were then forced to accept the price that Baker set for bananas, some even becoming tenant farmers on Baker's estates (James 1998, pp. 19–21). Similar to the sugar estates where owners complained of labor shortages, the banana plantations paid starvation wages, arguably leaving laborers in a situation disturbingly similar to slavery (James 1998; Knight 1985).

As though low wages and various efforts to wrest land from squatters and undermine attempts to buy property were not enough, this black majority was confronted by a myriad of other challenges to self-determination and even mere survival. For example, the importation of Asian laborers, disproportionate imposition of taxation, implementation of debt peonage, high cost of basic commodities, and the deeply entrenched color/class hierarchy seriously compromised the hoped for impact of emancipation (Mintz 1974; Newton 1984; Rose 2002; Welch 2002). The formerly enslaved responded to these circumstances in various ways, one of which was to try their luck outside of the confines of British colonial society. Pulled by the promise of employment and/or higher wages offered in Latin American countries being infused with foreign capital, they migrated abroad, providing much of the labor in the construction of the Panama Railroad in the 1850s and Panama Canal between the 1880s and 1914, on the banana and sugar plantations of Central America and Cuba in the early twentieth century, and in the homes of foreign and native elites as well as fellow West Indian migrants in need of domestic and sexual services (Newton 1984; Petras 1988; Putnam 2002).

Migration and the Cuban context

Even though Cuba kept some of the best migration statistics in Latin America, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to calculate the exact number of immigrants who arrived in Cuba from the English-speaking Caribbean and were a part of 'a migratory field that expanded to include new sites of economic dynamism as the decades wore on' (Putnam 2002, p. 11). One reason for this, as Juan Pérez de la Riva points out, lies in the very definition of 'immigrant' used by the immigration authorities. They defined immigrant as 'all persons arriving at the port with a third class ticket who did not have the sum of thirty dollars at the time of disembarkation' (1975, p. 75). Thus, those who traveled as passengers but planned to look for work in Cuba were not counted; or, perhaps, as Pérez de la Riva points out, may have been counted twice. Also, people who traveled back and forth, who did not come directly from their island of origin, who were hired and brought in directly by contractors whose companies kept and held records of worker entry and exit, and who entered the country illegally, all contribute to the inaccuracy of the numbers of people who migrated to and settled in Cuba.

That being said, demographers and historians of this period estimate that, between 1898

and 1938, more than 140,000 British West Indians entered Cuba, the majority of them being males from Jamaica (Estévez 1988; Giovannetti 2001; McCleod 2000; Pérez de la Riva 1975; Wynter 2001). The entry points in Cuba for Jamaican immigrants were Oriente in the east and Camagüey, the adjacent province that stretched westward. Though the numerical dominance of Jamaicans is an important characteristic of the migration as is indicated by the persistent use of the terms 'jamaicanos' to refer to all migrants, it must not obscure the presence of the other islanders from throughout the British colonies.

Mining the general migration statistics, it becomes clear that this was a period of great movement from all over the world to Cuba. It also reveals the extent to which the British West Indian presence was felt in Cuba at different moments changed during a 40-year period that was characterized by surges and lulls in migration and returns. In terms of the origins of those entering Cuba, McCleod states that 'according to Cuban government statistics, of the estimated 1.29 million immigrants who entered Cuba between 1902 and 1935, 781,311 (or 60 percent) were from Spain and 311,216 (or 24 percent) were from Haiti and the British West Indies' (McCleod, 2000, p. 17). Between 1908 and 1911, 13,685 Antilleans came to Cuba, constituting the second largest migrant group in Cuba after the Spaniards, but this was prior to the real migration boom. Indeed, over half of the total migrants of the first three decades of the twentieth century entered between 1916 and 1920 due to the conditions created by the First World War (Giovannetti 2001, p. 43). Just as with the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution that shifted the burden of world sugar production onto Cuba, the suspension of European beet sugar production due to the war led to a sugar boom and thus an increased demand for labor. This demand resulted in a geographically concentrated influx of black laborers who had a definitive presence on the eastern portion of the island.

From the frying pan into the fire?

The world that Caribbean immigrants walked into was in many ways a hostile one and the dreams that they came in search of fulfilling were ever elusive. In spite of the fact that wages, when given, tended to be higher than those received in their islands of origin, immigrants still had to endure harsh conditions. These included low and inconsistent wages, artificially inflated prices, media campaigns portraying them as dangerous savages, brutality and imprisonment by Cuban police and rural guards, ridicule and harassment by the Cuban peasantry, and abuse at the hands of managers. Though black men enjoyed universal male suffrage and thus politicians at least took Black Cubans into consideration as a decisive voting block, black foreigners had no leverage within the political system. The only recourse for English-speaking Caribbean immigrants was to appeal to the British Consul as subjects of the Empire. Apart from this largely inadequate protection, they had no formal defense against Cuba's deeply entrenched fear of black foreigners, a fear that had bloody consequences for people of African descent, native and foreign, on more than one occasion (Chomsky 2000; de la Fuente 2001a, 2001b; Giovannetti 2001; Helg 1995; Naranjo Orovio 1997).

Not only were black immigrants held responsible for the economic crisis gripping the nation in the 1920s and early 1930s, but also, in the minds of some, they were associated

with and blamed for any revolt or disorder that took place (Giovannetti 2001, p. 74). This was so particularly if the unrest had to do with black Cubans asserting their right to full citizenship within the political sphere. The Liberal Revolt of 1917 during which time anywhere from 14 to 50 British West Indians were executed and many more beaten, robbed, and humiliated was a particularly vivid example of the revival of the racial fears that had led to and clearly persisted after the 1912 massacre. Thus, for some, their dream turned into a nightmare as they were maligned, beaten, jailed, deported, and even murdered.

Economic exploitation at the hands of North Americans and Cubans, wealthy and middle class alike was widespread. In agricultural settings, this exploitation often occurred through coercion and shows of force. In her review of migrants' letters received in Jamaica, Wynter found that accounts of companies preventing workers from leaving by taking their passports, stopping trains that picked up workers wanting to leave the estate, and setting out patrols that abused and returned anyone found leaving were not uncommon (2001, p. 170). She also unearthed reports of Jamaicans being brutally beaten by rural guards upon refusing to cut sugar cane and being subjected to raids during which their private property was confiscated. Estate owners used rural guards to eject workers from plantations when they demanded their wages. Indeed, one of the most blatant economic offenses and common grievances of laborers was nonpayment of wages. On many estates, a system in which workers received vouchers instead of cash forced workers to purchase goods at the estate store or cash them at the company store at a 20 percent loss (Wynter 2001, pp. 193, 197). Even outside of the estates, they often encountered economic injustice as shopkeepers would charge Jamaicans one and a half (and Haitians twice) as much as the regular price for goods and services (Giovannetti, 2001, p. 114).

There was also widespread social injustice in the form of racial segregation. The United Fruit Company, great outpost of American empire that it was, was notorious for implementing a Jim Crow system among its laborers and in its towns (Bourgeois 1989; Chomsky 1996; Newton 1984; Pe rez 1999; Purcell 1993). In this arrangement, rigid occupational and social hierarchies were racially stratified. In Cuba, an estimated 27,000 people lived on United Fruit property alone where housing, transportation, shopping, and recreation, as well as basic necessities like food and water, were provided and thus controlled by 'the Company', which enforced racial and national segregation. Immigrants were frequently trapped between a native population that resented their presence, accusing them of taking jobs and threatening to beat them if they worked, and a managerial class representing big business that would punish them for not working and fail to compensate them adequately for their labor (Giovannetti 2001, p. 123). They exercised the option to seek the protection of diplomatic representatives, mobilizing their identity as British subjects and affiliation to a global center of power in order to combat such abuses (Charlton 2005). Unfortunately, more often than not, these representatives failed to make the abuses suffered by these black British subjects a priority. While being English speakers generally gave anglophone Caribbean immigrants access to jobs that were unavailable to native Cubans and other black foreigners, their blackness, foreignness, and class position meant that they were vulnerable and subject to economic

and social insecurity.

The world that they created

In part a response to this vulnerability and in part a consequence of the impulse for cultural reproduction, the immigrants, some 65,000 of whom remained in Cuba after 1933, founded and developed their own institutions.⁶ Mutual aid societies, churches, schools, fraternal lodges, Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) chapters, and recreational centers sprouted up throughout the island from the beginning of the twentieth century. These institutions acted as mediators between the immigrants and the authorities as well as vehicles through which they created community within Cuba and inserted Cuba into regional and global networks developed by those who shared an island, West Indian, and/or black identity. Though many immigrants intended to go home some day, in the mean time, their children needed to be educated, their spiritual and social needs met, and their rights and dignity as workers, as black people, and as human beings had to be protected. Confined within the pages of marriage and baptismal records, meeting minutes and pamphlets, as well as photographs of families, coworkers, and events is a record of the local and transnational practices that allowed them to do so. For anglophone Caribbean Cubans, family is the fundamental basis for their connection to their origins and is an essential element of their transnational networks. There are two related points that emerged from family narratives that are particularly relevant to the current discussion: the first is the tendency toward endogamy and the second is that this entailed partnering with people or the children of people from their island of origin as well as from across the anglophone Caribbean. Both indicate the maintenance of a distinct community, one that continued to identify strongly with 'home'. In my research, I began many a conversation and most interviews with questions about the family who migrated to Cuba. Those who had documents and photographs, brought them out to share with me their foreignness. From the pre-Revolutionary period, there were old black and white studio photographs of stone faced patriarchs dressed in suits, standing next to their new bride or seated and surrounded by the children who would come from a legal union. Others, sepia colored and crumbling, featuring determined-looking women, sometimes with young children at their sides and on their laps, document the family before their passage to Cuba. Still others documented the daily lives of individual family members as they participated in cricket teams, patronized small West Indian-owned businesses, worked on the Base, or were laid to rest in their caskets.

The tendency of West Indian immigrants and their children to marry □ and perhaps simply find partners □ within the group can be attributed to a range of factors. Among these was the desire to retain English fluency, an ability that was critical to their livelihood. English was not only the dominant language of home and the language of the most powerful empire on earth at the time, due to the North American presence in Cuba, it was also the language of opportunity. Indicative of this dynamic was the proliferation of private English primary schools in the British West Indian communities attended by children brought to or born in Cuba.

Indeed, all of the first generation research participants who were school age prior to 1959 attended English primary schools. The importance of being able to communicate in

English cannot be overstated as not only did this connect children to their families, but also, with the US and British economic presence, gave them an advantage in a competitive labor market. Thus, it was not only receiving an education, but an education in English that was critical to the immigrants. Furthermore, by maintaining their own educational institutions, they did not have to confront the racial discrimination that permeated the Cuban public schools where students of color were barred from activities that involved representing the school in public events and were consistently given lower grades than whites (de la Fuente 2001a, p. 148).

The church was another institution that played a dominant role in the lives of immigrants and their descendants. British West Indians accounted for 80 percent (825) of the baptisms performed at All Saints' Episcopal Church between 1906 and 1929. Of the 42 Episcopal congregations in Cuba in 1924, more than half had British West Indian congregations. The choice of a church had implications for the sort of life and identities that the immigrants either came from or else wanted to create for themselves in Cuba. Though there were a variety of churches, including the Pentecostal and Seventh Day Adventist churches, British West Indians gravitated toward three Protestant churches: Episcopal, Baptist and Methodist (Giovannetti 2001, p. 194). The Episcopal Church was the church of the upwardly mobile in the British Caribbean colonies and its proliferation among immigrants in Cuba is indicative of two things: the aspirations toward middle-class respectability of the mainstream and the legacy of North American Protestant missionaries who found West Indians rather than Cubans to be the beneficiaries of their civilizing mission in Cuba. An active church life was integral to 'betterment' as spiritual uplift was intertwined with social and economic mobility.

Often connected to the church were mutual aid societies, ethnic associations, and fraternal lodges that were integral to the social and economic lives of the immigrants. One of the most important tenets and functions of the institutional infrastructure of the British West Indian immigrant communities was mutual aid. Collectivity was one response to structural vulnerability and thus the immigrants pooled their resources, believing that this gave them a better chance of withstanding the economic and social brutality of their environment. While distinct mutual aid societies sprung up throughout the immigrant communities, the activities of other associations, such as the lodges and churches, indicate that mutual aid was an important function of most if not all organizations. In times of illness, death, or financial crisis it was the duty of the directorate of one's association, the brothers of one's lodge, or the members of the church to collect money or use available funds for burials, to help out the families of the deceased, and pay for medicines, legal fees, and other expenses.

In explaining why and how English-speaking Caribbean descendants began to revitalize their cultural institutions during the most severe moment of the Special Period, Edward and Melvina, both former presidents of organizations, described the urgency about which they came together to provide each other support, in the tradition of *los anglo fonos*. 'It was beautiful', Melvina recalled, 'there was one person in charge of all of the descendants in their neighborhood and they had to report to [the leadership] who lived there. On holidays, we brought baskets of personal items and some food to the elders and,

if they were sick, we visited them and tried to get them what they needed. Everyone in the association contributed so we helped each other.' Edward described similar efforts to provide support to others of English-speaking Caribbean origin, admiring the dedication that those who came before him had to taking care of their own, particularly in times of duress.

The Centre, as the most prominent association in Guantánamo, was a gathering space in which such organized efforts to support immigrants occurred. For instance, it was the institution that represented immigrants, acting as a mediator between them and the local Cuban authorities as well as the British diplomatic apparatus. In addition, the Centre maintained a primary school and provided medical consultations and legal advisement. It was the epicenter of social activities, hosting wedding receptions and celebrations ranging from Christmas and Easter to Emancipation to Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. Furthermore, as with other associations throughout the island, there is evidence of ongoing connections with other people from the English-speaking Caribbean world. For instance, they received visitors from a parallel institution in Boston, hosted a reception for a cricket team from Jamaica, provided disaster relief after a hurricane in Montserrat, and even donated money for the building of a hospital in Jamaica.

Indeed, this hospital project, initiated in 1955, reflects both the thinking on their part that they may return to Jamaica in their later years and need quality medical facilities, and a philosophy of economic self-sufficiency promoted by the Garvey Movement. The belief in racial solidarity and black pride was embedded within community discourse and manifested itself in the proliferation of United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) chapters in Cuba. Cuba had at least 50 UNIA divisions, second only to the number in the United States, and Garveyism in Cuba continued to thrive into the late 1920s, after it had gone into decline in the United States (McCleod 2000, p. 127). Though none of the participants in this research or their family members were active in the UNIA, Estévez Rivero's research on Garveyism in Santiago reveals that there were 150 founding members of Santiago's UNIA (2003, p. 71). Its mission was to 'promote the spirit of pride in the black race and love amongst members of the race, to help those in need, to promote Christian feelings, found universities, institutions, and secondary schools in order to improve the culture and education of black people, to create businesses and industries with the intention of carrying out commercial exchange between Africa and America' (p. 72). In the case of West Indians in Cuba, the emphasis on mutual aid and economic empowerment was situated within an ideology of black nationalism, which directly challenged the dominant discourse of black inferiority, a discourse that made West Indian immigrants particularly vulnerable in the somewhat tumultuous environment of early twentieth-century Cuba. This overall vulnerability and insecurity was one of the forces behind the development of these local institutions, an act that simultaneously established Cuban roots and maintained a link to the social and political world outside of the island.

Guantánamo: expanding understandings of the transnational social field before 1959
With the global economic crisis initiated by the 1929 crash of the stock market, the opportunities in Cuba dwindled and the resentment against immigrants, black and white,

intensified and gained legal momentum. Some immigrants who were able took their families and moved on in search of better living conditions elsewhere. Others were subjected to the 50 percent Law passed in 1933 which demanded that 50 percent of the workforce be native born. Those who remained suffered through harsh economic times as is evident in the meeting minutes of their institutions. However, the endurance of some paid off as the US decision to expand the Guantánamo Naval Base at the outset of the Second World War proved to be an employment boom for anglophone Caribbean immigrants and their Cuban born children.

Jobs at the Base were highly coveted as many were secure, relatively well-paying positions that provided a pension. Though some of the jobs available were for unskilled laborers such as restaurant, commissary and warehouse workers, the skilled tradesmen among the anglophone Caribbean community were sought after to power the expansion of the Base. Thus, mechanics, blacksmiths, electricians, masons, etc. were needed and there were even opportunities for West Indians and their Cuban-born children to work in offices, retail stores selling expensive equipment such as cameras, and as managers of the recreational facilities. Although there were native non-West Indian Cubans working at the Base, and indeed the Base employed people from all over the budding North American empire, people of English-speaking Caribbean descent were a main source of labor.

In determining what constituted the transnational social field of these particular immigrants and their Cuban-born children, it is critical to consider the extent to which the United States, in the form of the Guantánamo naval base, acted as a third player on this field. The naval base, established in 1903 with the signing of the Platt Amendment and expanded considerably during the Second World War, is technically US soil. At its height in the early 1940s, it employed 13,000 people and, after the war, had a workforce of approximately 3,500 (Lipman 2009, p. 6). West Indians were often preferred workers to Cubans and held a disproportionate number of jobs at the naval base, a fact that was the source of discontent amongst non-West Indian Cubans who wanted equal access to the more stable employment that the base offered (Lipman 2009, p. 47). Like most large military bases, it is a miniature of a US city complete with golf courses, bowling alleys, clubs, medical facilities, financial institutions, residential sub-divisions, schools, and, most recently, fast-food restaurants. As people who lived and/or worked in this replica of the United States in Cuba, West Indians and their Cuban-born children were traversing three social worlds: that of their home country (which was an outpost of the British Empire), Cuba, and the United States. As historian Jana Lipman pronounces, 'the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo Bay is a transnational space' (2009, p. 5).

Indeed, West Indians who worked on the Base physically crossed the border between nations each time they left it and were quite literally transnational, moving between the social, material, and political worlds of Cuba and the United States. With the thousands of workers armed with their chapas (badges those living in Cuba received once hired on the Base) who made the daily commute across the frontera came currency, goods (pilfered and bought), ideas, and cultural experiences. Their salaries, which supported not only families in Guantánamo, but also those in Santiago and other cities, were a form of

remittances: money earned in one nation that is sent to and spent in another.⁷ Their identification badges might be likened to passports and the carrying of shoes, toys, food, liquor, and other material goods that workers bought on or stole from the base to give to their loved ones living off of the base is akin to today's practice of sending barrels back home. During the Cuban revolution, base workers smuggled supplies to the rebels in the Sierra Maestra, a practice that smacks of the involvement in the political life of 'home' that is one manifestation of contemporary transnational practices. Many of the more recent immigrants are identified as transnational actors because they earn a living in the US or other metropolitan area while their social, spiritual, financial, and political lives are based in their home country. Could we then consider those Base workers in the same light: earning money in 'America' (i.e. the US naval base) that supports their life and the lives of their loved ones outside of 'America'?

Such questions are interesting and potentially significant for understandings of what constitutes the transnational social field. In this instance, this field includes not only 'the country of origin and the country of settlement' as identified by Basch et al. in their seminal 1994 text (p. 1), but also the country of 'occupation'. Caribbean immigrants in Guantánamo, some of whom worked on the naval base and perhaps all of whom felt its economic and social influence, built social fields that linked their countries of origin, Cuba, and the United States. People in Guantánamo were transnationalized before the revolution not only because of the ties that they maintained to their countries of origin, but also because of their connection to the base.

This question of the inclusion of the US in the transnational social field is also relevant for other Latin Americans of Anglo-Caribbean origin, particularly when we consider areas in which the US has had a dominant military and/or economic presence. For instance, in the case of Panama, the Canal Zone was located within Panama but was controlled and operated by a commission appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt. This commission established a racially segregated enclave that attempted to replicate the social divisions characteristic of the US Deep South, where most of the project managers were from (Newton 1984). A similar dynamic existed in agricultural enclaves set up by US companies, the most influential being the United Fruit Company. Like those individuals who lived and worked in the Canal Zone, employees of 'the Company' when it operated solely on Central America's Atlantic Coast were spatially, socially, and economically isolated from the country in which they worked (Gordon 1998; Harpelle 2001; Purcell 1993). In the cases of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, it was not until well into the middle of the twentieth century that populations in these areas began to become incorporated into the nation. Thus, the US was perhaps a more influential player in the transnational social field in which Caribbean immigrants and their children operated.

Becoming Cuban: post-1959

Casualty of the revolution: community disintegration

Similar to other Latin American countries in which the consolidation of state power involved attempts to include into the nation groups that had previously been spatially and ideologically outside the nation, the transition in the anglophone Caribbean community in Cuba definitively demonstrates the power of the state and international politics to

regulate transnational practices. Shifts in the transnational social field of West Indian Cubans in the period following the 1959 revolution must not only be placed within a national context, but also an international one as Cold War politics had a direct impact on the lives of Cubans of English-speaking Caribbean origin. During this early period of the revolution, among the changes that occurred at a frenetic pace were the deterioration of Cuba's relationship with the United States and the splintering of the population that had been briefly united around the ousting of Batista. After initially backing the rebels, the United States quickly withdrew support of the revolutionary government and the escalation of a hostility that has been maintained for more than 50 years ensued. The shift in alignment that Cuba's revolutionary program necessitated had a tremendous impact on a country that had been so closely linked to the US. Cubans had to reorient themselves economically, politically and culturally while preparing to ward off military aggression and sabotage. In this intense climate where Fidel Castro declared that 'with the revolution, everything and without it, nothing', Cubans were faced with the choice of whether or not to support the transformation that was taking place. At the same time that many Cubans rejected the changes and left the country, there was a process of investment in revolutionary society. This investment was due to, among other things, opportunities for social mobility created by the redistribution of the society's resources in the effort to eliminate social inequality. For some people of English-speaking Caribbean descent, this meant becoming fully Cuban.

With the Cuban Revolution, the immigrant communities found themselves in a peculiar position, one that became increasingly contradictory as Cuba's relationship with the United States deteriorated. At the same time that they experienced the revolution as a route to greater possibilities, it raised fundamental questions related to their ambiguous position in Cuban society. At the onset of the revolutionary struggle, there was at least one generation born on Cuban soil and thus some level of incorporation into and investment in their adopted country existed even for those who imagined 'going home' some day. As the 1950s came to a close and the revolutionary movement resulted in political unrest and increased brutality of the Batista dictatorship, some people left the country, others participated in the struggle, and others focused on earning a living and maintaining their families and communities.

Ironically, just as the Batista regime had done, the revolutionary government also sought to eliminate ethnic institutions, closing down those that could not produce years and years of records of their activities. The English-speaking Caribbean institutions were by no means singled out; rather, they were simply one branch in Cuba's social landscape whose presence did not support the refashioning of civil society. As de la Fuente (2001a) observes of the Black Cuban social organizations, 'the revolution's integration program left little room for racially defined voices or institutions to persist, much less thrive ... the black societies were ... eradicated together with numerous other associations □ civic, fraternal, professional, and mutual aid □ that supposedly obstructed the process of redefining Cuba's civil society along lines deemed to be appropriate by the revolutionary government . . .' (p. 281).

In the years immediately following the victory of the revolutionary forces in 1959, many

of the English-speaking Caribbean institutions shut their doors due to a combination of factors. First, as part of the subjugation of ethnic and racial difference in the interest of national unity, the elimination of potential hotbeds for counterrevolutionary activity, and the consolidation of power, the revolutionary government closed down most ethnic associations. Second, as a segment of the population that was closely associated with the United States and its imperial presence in Cuba, English-speaking Caribbean immigrants and their Cuban-born children were under more pressure to demonstrate commitment to Cubanness, which precluded strong bonds with cultures of origin. The younger generation ceased speaking English and going to church, and turned away from ethnic institutions. They were busy taking advantage of educational opportunities and building and being incorporated into revolutionary society's emergent mass organizations. At the same time, many of the older generation of original immigrants began returning to their island of origin, another Caribbean island, or the US as Cuba and its neighbor to the north became increasingly polarized.

Guantánamo in focus

Guantánamo in particular was a contentious space upon which the escalating hostilities between the United States and Cuba played themselves out, impacting the lives of English-speaking Caribbean communities. The border between the naval base and Cuban soil became increasingly militarized as was evidenced by the construction of a wall and guard post on the Cuban side as well as incidents in which military personnel exchanged fire (Lipman 2009; Miranda Bravo 1998). Workers bore the brunt of this animosity on a daily basis, enduring strip searches on their way to and from work and, ultimately for many, being terminated from their employment. In 1964, Cuba temporarily cut off the naval base's water supply in response to the US's detaining Cuban fishermen found fishing in US territorial waters. The US, in turn, made some 2,000 base workers choose between exiling on the Base and living in Cuba thereby losing their jobs and pensions. Fifteen-hundred chose to remain in Cuba and 445 chose the Base while some 750 workers were allowed to travel back and forth, undergoing an extensive security procedure at the 'border' (Lipman 2009).

However, in spite of □ or perhaps because of □ the position held by people of English-speaking Caribbean descent in Guantánamo, the West Indian Welfare Centre remained one of the few ethnic associations that did not meet its demise with the revolution. Though its membership dwindled and, during one period in the 1980s, the leadership decided to accept members of Haitian and non-West Indian Cuban descent in order to prevent the institution from completely collapsing, the Centre has remained a community fixture throughout the revolutionary period.

While the institution did not close, the connections to family and friends who either left the country or exiled on the Base were stigmatized. Illustrating the pivotal role that the state plays in regulating transnational connectivity and, in the case of revolutionary Cuba, nearly torching the transnational social field, communication between people on and off the island was silenced. Edward provided one poignant example of the pain that some people endured as a result of this polarization. Edward's father was a relatively prosperous Base worker who had chosen to exile on the base and eventually migrated to

Puerto Rico after his retirement. Edward recounted how one of his uncles who held a position in the Ministry of the Interior had to separate himself from the family because of its close connections to the Base. He recalled:

Certain relationships, including with your own family . . . were prohibited. For example, my Uncle R., after entering the Ministry of the Interior, he separated from our family. Why? Because my father worked in the naval base, my Uncle B. worked in the naval base, my Uncle T. worked in the naval base, my aunt was religious, so he separated from the family. He was over there and the family over here. The first time my father came to Cuba in 1980, after he exiled on the Base in 1972, I remember walking with him to visit a friend of his and my Uncle R. was on the sidewalk at a cafeteria at the time when he had a position with the Ministry of the Interior. We came on the sidewalk and when my Uncle R. saw that it was us coming, we were about 50 meters away, he left and entered into the Ministry because it was prohibited for him to have contact with people abroad. And I remember that my father, when this happened, my father quickly crossed the street as he had recognized [my uncle] immediately though they hadn't seen each other for years . . . I said 'look, that was my uncle R.' and he said 'yes, didn't you see what he did?' and I said 'yes' and he said to me 'what a thing, my God, let's go, let's go cross the street'. And we crossed another street and he said, and I remember he made this expression 'why, God, why does it have to be like this . . . let's cross because I didn't come here to cause problems for anyone' . . . My father until today has this pain. (Author interview with Edward, 28 June 2005)

This illustrates the power of the state to constrain transnational behaviors on an individual and familial level. At the institutional level, in this case, during the early years of the revolution, the state identified those living within and around Guantánamo as a potential threat to national security. Their geographic proximity to the naval base, which allowed for successful and thwarted attempts at exile on the part of those Cubans disenchanted with revolutionary society, as well as the related social and financial ties made them suspect. Links to family and institutions in the English-speaking Caribbean, which suggested an identity not exclusively Cuban, were frowned upon by a state whose agenda it was to consolidate their revolution in part through cultural unification and homogenization.⁸

Ironically, at the same time that there was this strict severance of transnational ties, for people in Guantánamo, the proximity of the Base led to unexpected movement of information and cultural material as residents of the city could access the television programs beamed to the Base via satellite. I discovered this when having a more casual conversation with Edward that centered around our favorite musicians. In speaking about his love of Luther Vandross and other R&B singers, he recounted how, every Saturday morning during the 1970s, he and other people in his neighborhood would crowd around a television and watch Soul Train.⁹ Taking full advantage of this lapse in media control, they listened to the music and practiced the dance moves of black America, thereby participating in, however briefly, a world outside of revolutionary Cuba.

Conclusion

As we have seen, there are various factors that have influenced the transnational practices of Afro-Cubans of anglophone Caribbean origins. The national economic and political crisis stimulated an opening to transnational connections that was exemplified by the intensification of regional cooperation, thus illustrating the powerful role that the state plays in facilitating interconnectivity. The important role played by the Cuban state in regulating the connections that Cubans of English-speaking Caribbean descent had with their ancestral homelands clearly supports those critics who challenge the notion that transnationalism involves superseding the national. As Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004, p. 1178) observe, people who live and/ or invest in more than one place 'do not make their communities alone . . . [as] states and state politics conducted within their borders fundamentally shape the options for migrant and ethnic trans-state social action'. States control the permeability of borders, the terms of national belonging, and state-state relations, all of which regulate the movement of people, goods, ideas, etc. across national territories. Not only is the Cuban state implicated in West Indian Cuban transnationalism through such regulation, but also through its agenda of regional cooperation. However, in order for the state to capitalize upon such connections, individuals and communities must first have some rooting in an identity outside of or in addition to their national one. There must be an Old 'El Centre' in order for the next generation to found a Young People's Department; there must be someone interested in keeping the pages of fraternal lodge binders in tact; someone who teaches their children the English greetings, exclamations, and sacred sayings that they recall; someone who can point to who planted that ackee tree and which jamaicano family lived in which house in the neighborhood.

This particular group of black Cubans remained attached to the anglophone Caribbean origins of their parents and grandparents; through their family histories, personal archives, ethnic associations, and physical landmarks, they retained their past, integrating it in to their present. As I have pointed out, there have been shifts over time that have either nurtured or suppressed this connection, but it has remained nonetheless and is a testament to two phenomena. One is the availability of immigrant origins for a segment of Afro-Latin Americans to capitalize upon under increasingly harsh economic and social circumstances. The other is the persistence of pan-Caribbean identities that Shalini Puri suggests are created through intra-Caribbean migration. Indeed, I would expand this migratory sphere to include Latin America as the infusion of Caribbean immigrants into Latin American societies has created a more layered cultural and racial matrix. This layering must be taken into account in analyses of Afro-Latin American subjectivity in order to move beyond this question of the primacy of national versus racial identity. Among other things, the case of Afro-Cubans of English-speaking Caribbean descent illustrates that identification as Cuban is not mutually exclusive to ethnic or racial identification. As Foner (2006), p. 117) found in her comparative analysis of West Indian immigrants across time and space, 'West Indians immigrants may embrace both their racial and ethnic identities without contradiction, although one identity may be more salient than another depending on the particular context and circumstances'. This multiplicity is reflected in transnational practices, supporting a broader definition of transnationalism that can include sporadic, selective, and/or strategic actions on the part of subsequent generations. The hotly debated significance and impact of these actions is entirely dependent upon the political and economic contexts in which they take place.

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Notes

1. The Special Period refers to the moment in Cuba's history following the Soviet Union's collapse and subsequent withdrawal of economic support. The Cuban economy was catapulted into a severe depression as it lost its primary trading partners and the United States tightened the embargo, leading to widespread scarcity of basic goods and massive unemployment.
2. This phrase comes from Audrey Charlton's dissertation research on Jamaicans and Barbadians in Cuba through 1959. She quotes one of her Jamaican informants who remarked that 'Now Kasia [a neighbor whom she liked] proud to know she fadah [West Indian]. She outlooking. It now dey feel proud again' (2005, p. 4).
3. In this article, I use the terms Afro-Cubans and Cubans of color interchangeably. As the racial composition of Anglophone Caribbean immigrants was predominantly 'black', the Cuban-born descendants of English-speaking Caribbean immigrants would be classified as Afro-Cuban, something that was consistent with my observation of those involved in the revitalization effort. Indeed, all but one of my informants refer to immigrants from the anglophone Caribbean as negros (blacks) and therefore I also use the term 'black Cubans' to indicate the racial identity of West Indian Cubans as a group.
4. All names of research participants have been changed. 5. An abbreviation for Caribbean Community, CARICOM states include Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, St Lucia, Belize, and Suriname. 6. This is a rough estimate of the number of people who did not return to their islands of origin or move on to some other destination based upon census data. Charlton (2005) estimates that 30,000 remained after 1940. 7. Prior to the Cuban Revolution, the US government reported paying out seven million dollars a year in base worker salaries (Lipman, 2009, p. 158). 8. According to Eugene Godfried (2000), this meant the suppression of ethnic identities for all Cubans. As he states 'the official position which over-emphasized the "Cuban" citizenship of the citizens has estranged the immigrants of "white" color as well as "black" color as is the case of Haitian, Jamaican and other Caribbean and African nations'.
9. Soul Train was an iconic variety show running from 1971 to 2006 that featured African American musicians and dancers.

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