

# **BETWEEN RACE AND EMPIRE**

**African-Americans and Cubans  
before the Cuban Revolution**

*Edited by*

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## The African-American Press Grets the Cuban Revolution

VAN GOSSE

Every white man who cuffs, beats, deprives and abuses even the lowest colored person, simply because he is white and the other colored, should have seized upon his consciousness the fact that it is possible for the tables to be turned. Castro has proved it in our time.

Ralph Matthews, *Baltimore Afro-American*, 1959

The American white man claims to be upset by the latest developments in Cuba. Only the fool can expect to exploit and oppress peoples over an extended period of time without provoking animosity and resistance.

Robert F. Williams, *The Crusader*, 1959

In the nearly four decades since the victory of the 26th of July movement on January 1, 1959, black North Americans have been the only consistent source of U.S. solidarity with the Cuban Revolution. African-American politicians such as Mervyn Dymally and Jesse Jackson have not shrunk from the metaphorical or real embrace of Fidel Castro, a tradition that extends back in time to the grandfather of modern black urban politics, Representative Adam Clayton Powell Jr. As recently as December 1992, the widespread extent of this sympathy was put on display when Bill Clinton nominated Spelman College president Johnnetta Cole to his postelection transition team. Cole had played a leading role throughout the 1970s and 1980s in the Venceremos Brigade, which tried to bridge the U.S. blockade on trade and travel with Cuba using delegations of ordinary citizens. Although conservatives seized upon this personal history to derail Cole's nomination, the episode highlighted the sympathies with Cuba that extended into the mainstream of black academic and institutional life.

Black America's solidarity was reinforced by the material support the Cuban government gave to black liberation struggles in Africa, starting in the early 1960s and reaching a climax during the late Cold War years. Neo-conservative U.S. strategists dismissed the thousands of Cuban troops in southern Africa in the 1980s as "Soviet proxies," but the confrontation with the South African army in Angola was seen by many with a personal stake in opposing white supremacy as an exemplary instance of internationalism. African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, undelineated this with his 1991 trip to the island, in the face of Cuba's international isolation following the Soviet Union's demise.

What is often forgotten now is that black American solidarity with Cuba began during the revolution's earliest days, before it dubbed itself "socialist" or "communist." One incident, of course, is still remembered with fondness or horror, depending on the source: Fidel Castro's weeklong stay in Harlem's Hotel Theresa during September 1960, when he bearded white America with a smiling ferocity, greeting its enemies, from Nikita Khrushchev to Malcolm X, as if he were the potentate at home in his domain and they the visitors.

The famous Harlem visit did not take place in a vacuum, however. It built upon a preceding wave of black interest and sympathy, largely journalistic, that began during the revolution's earliest days in power in 1959. At a point when the struggle to fulfill the amorphous promises of *Brown v. Board of Education* was at its most bitter, and Southern politics had been taken over by the White Citizens Council in most states, the sudden triumph in Cuba appeared to much of the black press as a metaphor for what needed to be done at home. This chapter examines the nuances of the black media's discovery of Castro and Cuba, both in terms of what it augured and what it tells us about black politics in the age of Eisenhower.

Despite or perhaps because of the heavy, highly favorable coverage of Castro's guerrilla struggle in the white press during 1957-58 (including the *New York Times*, *Time* and *Life*, *Look*, and even the ultraconservative *Chicago Tribune*), the major black papers ignored the issue. At most it was treated as a human-interest story, but one presumed to be of interest to black readers only to the extent that African-Americans were personally involved. Thus the only coverage of the Cuban rebellion in *New York's Amsterdam News* was two stories on black servicemen in the large group of GI's and U.S. businessmen kidnaped by Raul Castro's rebel column in July 1958.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there was considerably more coverage of Haiti than of Cuba

vana when Batista fell and chaos descended.<sup>5</sup> Its tone soon changed. By the next week, the *Afro* was pointing out that "but a short while ago" Batista had been hailed as a liberator by black or mulatto Cubans, and had "inspired the same type of interest throughout the darker world that the emergence of Christophe must have caused when he smashed the armies of Napoleon." Noting that now Castro was appealing to Cuba's nonwhite population, whose interests Batista had betrayed (a common theme), the *Afro* editorialist suggested that, "From where we sit it looks like the colored folk are coming into their own again." Then, after quoting Che Guevara's bitter comments on the U.S. government's having supplied Batista with bombs he used against his own citizenry, the writer concluded, "Oops! Looks like we picked the wrong side again."<sup>6</sup>

His interest clearly whetted by the stateside controversy over whether this was a revolution worth supporting, *Afro-American* editor Clifford Mackay flew to Cuba to sample the revolutionary intoxication first-hand, initiating a series of *cinéma vérité*-style travelogues that continued until late February. Mackay himself played a starring role as a stand-in for his black Yankee readers. Indeed, the January 24 issue focused simply on the fact that he had gone to Cuba, with a front-page photo of the intrepid editor standing in the island sun and grinning. Then, on January 31, Mackay wrote as if from Adam Clayton Powell's side, describing in considerable detail the peripatetic congressman's statements and doings in Cuba, and showing him in intimate conference with Fidel during their joint appearance before a Havana crowd estimated at one million. Citing Powell's bailing on the floor of Congress by the conservative Republicans Gordon Scherer of Ohio and William Springer of Illinois, Mackay also described the widespread scorn among Cubans for U.S. politicians who denounced Castro's executions but showed little concern for white terror at home.

That Mackay was genuinely affected by his experience is best indicated by one headline in that January 31 issue: "FANTASTIC! Inside Cuba—'Will Eliminate Discrimination'" (a quote from Castro himself). Indeed, a sense of euphoria runs through his writing as he speaks of the thousands of "bearded dark-skinned Cubans" in the 26th of July movement, striving "shoulder to shoulder with their lighter brothers," and admiringly quotes Castro's pledge of a "real democracy, not the synthetic kind." Mackay found nothing objectionable about the most notorious of the war-crimes trials, when Major Jesús Sosa Blanco was tried in a huge stadium under bright lights (provoking horror in much of the U.S. press and in Congress);

since Sosa was being shot for the "bloody slaughter of nine members of colored Castillo family," as a photo caption put it.<sup>7</sup>

The *Afro*'s coverage climaxed with its February 7 issue, much of which was devoted to happenings great and small on the island. A full-page photo spread focused on Havana vividly emphasized Cuba's blackness and especially the legacy of Antonio Maceo. The issue also featured Mackay's detailed account of everything from local prices for toothpaste, liquor, and cars to the visual qualities of Cuban women. An accompanying article in that week's *Afro Magazine* profiled "Castro's Right Hand Man," a black Cuban politician named Gabino Ullacia who suggested that the notorious segregationist and Arkansas governor Orval Faubus come to Cuba: "He get good example of democracy. Maybe he stop making war on children." Equally noteworthy in political terms, moreover, was that week's musings by the *Afro*'s featured political columnist, Ralph Matthews. Noting his "relish" at the "rather gory accounts" of the executions, Matthews made explicit the relevance of Cuba for North American Negroes who had suffered too long in silence: "Every white man who cuffs, beats, deprives and abuses even the lowest colored person, simply because he is white and the other colored, should have seared upon his consciousness the fact that it is possible for the tables to be turned. Castro has proved it in our time." For him, Castro was succeeding where the victors in the American Civil War had signally failed.

Not one traitor was strung up and the whole nation has been made a laughing stock because the descendants of these scoundrels have never laid down their arms, observed the rules of the country, admitted defeat or ceased to prosecute the rebellion at any time.

... What a price we have paid for this folly! A divided nation, a breeding ground for men like Faubus, Almond, Eastland and their ilk who make a shamble of constitutional law and mockery of democracy.

A few good tomb stones distributed on a states rights basis would have spared us all this.<sup>8</sup>

One might expect that Matthews was an exceptional voice, noteworthy only by comparison with the absence of any equivalent white enthusiasm for executions. However, a look at several other key black publications reveals a strikingly similar tone concerning not only the 26th of July's firing squads but other features of the revolution as well.

Like the *Afro-American*, New York's *Amsterdam News* at first responded to the revolutionary victory quizzically, focusing mainly on the local connection: in this case, Congressman Powell of Harlem, whom the *News* generally did not favor. Various stories in January 1959 noted Powell's claim to have provided key support to the rebels with House of Representatives floor speeches in March 1958 that exposed and led to a cutoff of military aid to Batista by the Eisenhower administration. History bears out the importance of Powell's role in this case, though the *News* reported rather nastily in a front-page news article that Powell was "Attempting to take some part of the credit of the Castro overthrow of the Batista government."<sup>9</sup>

The rapid shift to all-out fervor and blanket coverage came, as elsewhere, when black journalists went to see for themselves; a subhead on the front page of the January 24, 1959, issue announced: "Amsterdam News in Cuba!" In this case, not one but two *News*-men went to the island: M. A. Lockhart, the paper's publicity director, and John Young III. The former set the new, "you are there" tone with the portentous lead of his first article: "Officials of the Fidel Castro Cuban government assured me here today that there will absolutely be no toleration of racial discrimination in Cuba at any level under Castro."<sup>10</sup>

John Young's sensational pieces in the next three issues of the *News* overshadowed Lockhart's rather stately style. Even now, the photo on the top left edge of the January 31, 1959, front page remains shocking: in terrible close-up, a handsome, mustachioed young Cuban, eyes closed, swings at the end of a thick rope. The caption beneath blames a three-word message, "WHY CASTRO KILLS." This almost pornographic image, its meaning for this audience made specially piquant by the dead man's evident whiteness, was in fact a "teaser" for the featured story by Young just below, "Why Castro Can't Stop Cuba's Mass Killings." An even more brutal montage of photos depicting Batista's repression followed on an inside page: corpses hog-tied by the roadside; one of Batista's soldiers grinning, "torch in hand, while a dead prisoner burns"; the living displaying their ghastly stigmas; another head-shot of a corpse, with marks of torture stitched across face and neck. Young's point was in fact neither terribly original nor at all outlandish. He suggested that the executions, "when viewed with this background of atrocities," were strictly necessary in Cuban terms: "The Revolutionary Army and the whole population of Cuba, without speaking a word to each other, have decided that Batista and his leaders must never again rise to power. They believe that death—and only death—of the leaders and potential leaders can make this certain, certain, at least, in

their time." Young then suggested that "We Americans, including the people of Harlem, must bear some of Castro's responsibility" for the mass shootings since "we allowed our Government to aid Batista"; he added that "the U.S. Government has no excuse . . . it could have stopped these atrocities years ago." He concluded this piece with the hope that the "violent remedy for a sick Cuba" does "not kill the patient."<sup>11</sup>

By the next week any such equivocation was dispelled. Like Mackay, Young sharpened his focus on "The Negro in Castro's Cuba," and in the guise of front-line reporting, promulgated what amounted to a manifesto for internationalizing the civil rights struggle. Asserting at the outset that "The American Negro's strong interest in Cuba today is but further proof of his ever-widening interest in the Third Front of freedom fighting," he went on to announce that

It is a mark of his destiny that in the present world struggle between Russia and the United States for friendship of Colored Peoples, the mantle of leadership has fallen upon the shoulders of the American Negro. This leadership has made him increasingly sensitive to injustice wherever it may occur in the world.

It logically follows, therefore, that Cuba, with a great Negro population, should draw the active interest that has been manifested in Harlem during the present crisis.

Then, too, the Batista injustices of lynching and police state are so remindful of the identical practices now prevalent against the Negro in the South.

Young then quoted Castro's declaration on January 22, before a large group of international journalists, that "As Revolutionaries and idealists, we are against discrimination in any form." Young commented, "One look at the army men guarding Castro gave the impression that he really meant what he said. Probably no army on earth is as integrated as that of Cuba's Revolutionary Army."

In all of this Young was largely repeating in a more politically articulate fashion the observations made at this same time by others, already cited here. But at the end of this article, he returned to the theme of his title ("The Negro in Castro's Cuba") and made explicit the peculiar sense that many American blacks seemed to have that Castroism was going to settle some long unbalanced accounts, in Cuba first, and vicariously for many

others as well. Predicting that "the future looks bright" for people of color on the island, he gave the bluntest reason for optimism available then or later (and perhaps the most accurate): "Because most of the trained men who ran all the key jobs in Cuba are either executed, in jail or in exile."<sup>12</sup>

Positive as the coverage by the *Amsterdam News* was to this point, its solidarity became even more direct in the issue of February 14, 1959. Under the headline "Castro's Cuba Needs U.S. Help," John Young III assayed the significance of the "wide and sympathetic coverage given to the Cuban revolution by the Negro newspapers and magazines," detailing what he saw as the immediate, mainly economic needs of Castro's provisional government. He climaxed this final article written from Havana with what amounted to a premature call for a solidarity organization, much like what emerged a year later as the Fair Play for Cuba Committee:

Today, there is an air of freedom about in Havana, that is heady atmosphere [sic] for those who detest oppression.

That is why our press and other media ought to voluntarily make a contribution to Cuba's future, by urging tourists to go there now. This would constitute a sort of lend-lease goodwill towards a neighbor that needs our help and encouragement.

We citizens of the U.S. can help Cuba. At this time, there is an opportunity for some of our most responsible and courageous citizens to set up a new committee for Cuban-American friendship. . . .

Those Americans who now hesitate to embrace Castro and his new Cuba because of the executions might do well to recall that it was our own Thomas Jefferson who wrote:

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants!"<sup>13</sup>

There is little question that Young was not exaggerating when he described "wide and sympathetic coverage" in the American black press, even if not all of the major black papers went as far as the *Amsterdam News* or the *Afro-American*. Yet, the weekly news-and-entertainment magazine of black life, echoed the themes already made familiar. Between human-interest stories (it put a smiling black woman officer in the rebel army; Gladys Trava, on its February 19, 1959, cover), it reported the exciting prospects for black Cubans under the new regime:

During the days of rugged guerrilla fighting between the forces of Cuban Dictator Fulgencio Batista and the makeshift army of Fidel Castro, a new type of Democracy had been born. The age-old practice of discrimination had fallen in the wake of necessity, and the Castro forces had been completely integrated both in race, creed and color.

Last week, hosting 372 reporters for Operation Truth, Castro declared that his new Cuba would follow the same non-discrimination practice. Cubans had good reason to believe him.

Interestingly, this piece went on to devote most of its space to discussing which of the *batistianos* facing imprisonment or death were black, and how Batista had "gained some sympathy among Negro intellectuals because his mother was colored, and because he once opened the National Hotel to house Haiti's ex-President Paul Magloire." It pointed out that, nonetheless, "the workers (most of Cuba's estimated three million Negroes fall into that category) were chiefly among victims of the Batista regime," citing Gabino Ullacia (here his name was spelled "Bagino") as a prime example, and concluding that "there was a hope among Negroes that indeed, the new order of integration would prevail, and that the hard-won Castro victory would bring them new status and a new way of life in strife-torn Cuba." A striking example of the race consciousness of black journalism at this time is the sidebar feature, titled "Black Bravery," that ran right under the above-quoted story; a sequence of four photos showed the execution by firing squad of black lieutenant Enrique Despaigne, who had been found guilty of killing fifty-three Cuban civilians. Like Mackay, Lockhart, Young, and others, Simeon Booker of *Jet*, author of all these pieces, visited Cuba as part of Operation Truth.<sup>14</sup> As late as April 1959, *Jet* provided a rundown of how "Negro Cubans Benefit From Sweeping Castro Reforms," citing Castro's economic plans to benefit the very poor and his declaration that there was no such thing as a "pure Caucasian" and speaking with scorn of those who feared Castro's "radicalism."<sup>15</sup>

The reader, having noted the intensity of the coverage described in the preceding pages, may be surprised to discover that after the first two months of 1959, the flood of interest in the U.S. black press slowed to a trickle. Despite the continued controversy over Cuba, very few stories appeared until January 1960, when a group of African-Americans returned from a Christmas and New Year's Eve junket sponsored by the Cuban government.

Why this sudden fall-off in coverage? After all, there is no reason to think that black America suddenly lost interest in Cuba's revolution. One must look

instead to the episodic character of any foreign reportage in the black press; lacking the space and resources for comprehensive attention to foreign matters, it had largely taken advantage of the Cubans' largesse. Even more important, however, were the many competing demands for space—the profusion of newsworthy crises affecting black citizens of the United States during that year.

Always central in terms of political news, of course, was the frustrating effort to make any progress in desegregating the southern states, against the Dixiecrats' unyielding determination to protect white privilege. One good example of how the fight below the Mason-Dixon line could easily push Cuban news to the side is the absence of black newspaper coverage of Fidel Castro's triumphal visit to the States in late April 1959. At first glance, this absence seemed to signal real political estrangement. Some black papers did run a syndicated story on how "Castro Dodged Color Questions" during his trip, focusing on the arrest of Gabino Ulaica, the same "top Negro political leader" earlier profiled in the *Afro-American*.<sup>16</sup> But Castro's visit coincided with the killing of Mack Charles Parker in Poplarville, Mississippi, perhaps the last of the old-style lynchings whereby a black prisoner was simply taken from jail during the night and murdered; and it seems clear that the Cuban leader's visit simply paled by contrast with this horrifying event. In any case, Fidel made no special effort to reach out to black America on this particular visit. He spoke to students at Harvard and Princeton but not at Howard or some other historically black college campuses, and his trip uptown to Harlem would wait for another eighteen months, during which U.S.-Cuban relations drastically worsened.

Starting in September 1959, following Castro's attempt that spring to influence mainstream American public opinion by personal suasion, the Cuban Tourist Commission developed a new strategy for appealing to black America, which they evidently regarded as their best potential base of support in the United States. Late in the year M. A. Lockhart left the *Amsterdam News* and joined a public-relations firm that included former heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis as a partner and spokesman. Working through their prior relationship with Lockhart, the Cubans contracted with this firm to have Louis promote a major campaign of black tourism in Cuba. The first stage of this campaign, at the end of 1959, was a huge, all-expenses-paid Christmas trip to Cuba by a delegation of prominent black Americans. Louis and Lockhart were asked to focus on signing up other African-American sports celebrities, including Jackie Robinson,

Roy Campanella, and Willie Mays. In the end, none of these famous athletes went to Cuba that Christmas other than Louis, but seventy-two other black U.S. citizens did, and prominent among them were the publishers of several black newspapers, including the *Chicago Defender*, the *Cleveland Call and Post*, and the *Philadelphia Tribune*.

As the counsel of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee put it, interrogating one of Lockhart's partners eighteen months later, this "was an outstanding public relations stroke." This impressive group was photographed and released in the United States, and shown enjoying a lavish New Year's Eve at the Havana Hilton with Fidel, with Joe Louis at the center. (*Let* ran a photograph of Fidel looking deferentially at a smiling Louis with the caption "Two Strong Men.")<sup>17</sup> Upon their return, the newspaper owners filled their papers with eyewitness reports, such as those that ran in every issue of the twice-weekly *Philadelphia Tribune* between January 2 and 16, 1960.

Some may see this final junket as evidence that the interest of black journalists in Cuba was essentially opportunistic, and proof that they possessed little ideological consistency and were easily swayed by free trips and the "insider" treatment rarely if ever available in the United States. There may be an element of truth in this suspicion. Only a few black reporters, such as John Young III and later William Worthy (affiliated with the *Afro-American*), seemed to have a strong perspective on the possible relevance of Cuba's revolutionary process outside of Cuba. (Worthy was prosecuted by the Kennedy administration for his illegal trips to the island after the January 1961 travel ban was imposed.) Most of the others were simply attracted to Castro's iconoclastic celebrity and the egalitarian tone of the 26th of July movement.

But if the appeal of Castro to black journalists transcended formal politics, if he was to them as much a cultural as a political hero, then these writers (and their editors and publishers) were only responding to grassroots pro-Castro sentiments in urban black communities across the United States. This is the real import of the favorable coverage of the Cuban Revolution in the North American black press during 1959, and ever since. The desire to represent the Cubans' point of view, implicitly challenging the perspective of the white press, reflected an impulse toward Third World solidarity that in 1959, at the height of the decolonization drive in Africa and elsewhere, ran deep in black America. Cuba and Castro brought that impulse much closer to home, and in so doing indicated the ways in which the nascent anti-imperialism of African-Americans would surface power-

fully a few years later, during the era of "Black Power," the Black Panther Party, and the multiracial movement against the war in Vietnam.

#### NOTES

1. See "Marine Reveals How Cubans Kidnapped Him," *Amsterdam News*, August 2, 1958, 1, concerning Private First Class Joseph Anderson. This article did highlight Anderson's comment that "Those rebels got a lot of heart. They are not fighting for money," a common theme in all of the American press coverage of this hostage taking. See also the follow-up story on August 9, 1958, about another black New Yorker, Navy Seabee Albert Marthews.

2. *Amsterdam News*, January 24, 1959. The accompanying editorial was titled "Inconvenient," and began thus: "We think that United States officials should keep their hands off, and their mouths shut on the activities of Fidel Castro in Cuba. We don't know all the facts about Castro and Batista (and no one else in the United States does either for that matter). But if facts are worth official notice, they are worthy of consistency. And when United States officials criticize Castro for shooting down enemies of his government, it is not being consistent with its past attitude on such things." The editorial then went on to compare congressional outrage regarding Cuba to U.S. silence regarding the fact that "thirty leaders of the African National Congress were to go on trial for their lives Monday January 19, for treason."

3. See "Powell Demands U.S. Recognize Castro's Regime," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 10, 1959, as well as a photo with the caption "Scenes from Castro Triumph," January 17, 1959; and "Dictator Batista, Part Negro, Despised Dark-Skinned Cubans," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 6, 1959. (Editor John A. Saunderson recalled an earlier junkie to the island and concluded that "Fidel Castro, the new Cuban strong man, has to be better than Batista was, as far as dark-skinned Cubans are concerned. For if he is any worse, the darker peoples of Cuba will be in for partial serfdom and slavery all over again, and Castro may find himself where Batista is now."). Also see the *Atlanta Daily World*, January 3 and 4, 1959, with wire-service photos and stories on the front page, including a dramatic snap of Che Guevara resting among his troops.

4. *Chicago Defender*, January 17, 1959. Also see the January 31 issue for a large close-up photo of Castro and Powell talking.

5. See front-page story, "Bombing, Gunfire All Around Us," *Afro-American*, January 10, 1959.

6. *Afro-American*, January 17, 1959.

7. *Ibid.*, January 31, 1959.

8. Marthews quotes from the *Afro-American*, February 7, 1959. For the rest of the month, Macklay continued to file his "Inside Castro's Cuba" reports, mixing photos and mini-biographies of black members at all levels of the 26th of July movement with comments on room-service prices in the February 14 issue; more of the same appeared on February 21. After March, however, the *Afro's* coverage dropped off very sharply, as is discussed below.

9. *Amsterdam News*, January 10, 1959. Also see a January 17, 1959, article titled "Powell Aide Was Castro Fighter," focusing on Arnold Johnson, a Cuban-born insurance underwriter in Harlem who was a longtime associate of the minister-politician. (See Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* [London: Verso, 1993], 78-79, for a longer discussion of Powell and Johnson, and the latter's reported ties to American Communists.)

10. *Amsterdam News*, January 24, 1959. Lockhart may have been imitating the style of the famous *New York Times* correspondent Herbert L. Matthews in his 1957-58 pieces from rebel Cuba, which had helped make Fidel Castro one of the most famous fugitives in the world. The rest of this first-person article focused on the arrival of Powell and his tumultuous press conference defending Castro to the U.S. and world press, as well as Lockhart's own opinions and interactions with Cuban officials and others. The unstated subtext, of course, was that here was one front-burner story where black journalists and politicians were not relegated to the sidelines but given pride of place. As Lockhart repeatedly reminded his readers, "this reporter has been given a front row seat" at the upcoming trials, the ostensible reason why he and Macklay, along with nearly four hundred other international journalists, had accepted the provisional government's offer of an expense-paid trip to the island.

11. All quotations from the *Amsterdam News*, January 31, 1959.

12. All quotations from the *Amsterdam News*, February 7, 1959. Reinforcing Young's point, in this same issue M. A. Lockhart published his own conclusions as "Observation in Cuba." After describing in pedantic detail his personal schedule, including an airline flight to Venezuela with Castro ("served elegantly by two pretty stewardesses, one a Negro girl and I wonder whether she would qualify for a job with an American airline"), Lockhart declared that, "There is one thing of which I am sure, the Citizens of Cuba feel a new freedom that they have not felt before and are behind the new government of Senor Castro." He then stressed that "I personally experienced no discrimination whatsoever and was told by an official of the hotel, by the new tourists' commissioner and others that the American Negro would be welcomed to Cuba both as a tourist and a businessman." This latter statement may seem like a throwaway, but at a time when Miami was strictly segregated, it was a more radical declaration than any of Fidel's grand statements about brotherhood.

13. *Amsterdam News*, February 14, 1959.

14. See *Jet*, February 5, 1959, "Integration the New Order Declares Cuba's Fidel Castro"; also the editorial "Governor Bans Jim Crow in Cuban Province," February 12, 1959.

15. *Jet*, April 16, 1959.

16. See *Amsterdam News*, May 9, 1959. Otherwise the *News* ran a curious little boxed story on its May 2 front page on how Castro and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. had "missed" each other, letting its readers surmise why these two former friends had not met while Castro was in New York. Just above was a snapshot of Fidel at a huge rally in Central Park, with "Harlem businessman" Arnold Johnson peering over his shoulder. The *Afro-American* ran a photo on its April 25, 1959, front page of Castro kneeling and talking to two black children in Washington, D.C.'s Meridian Hill Park; one of them is tugging on the Cuban pre-

mier's beard. On May 6, 1959, the *Affairs* UN correspondent Charles P. Howard contributed a favorable report on Castro's appearance before the United Nations Correspondents Association. Compared to the voluminous and detailed reports in the white press of Castro's every move, this is very scant coverage.

17. *Jet*, January 21, 1960; also see Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*.

## Epilogue

DIGNA CASTAÑEDA FUERTES

When I was young, my father played *la bolita*. Poverty in the pseudorepublic caused everyone to play the *bolita* in the hope of getting a bit more money to take care of the family. My father, like Lisa Brock's grandmother, did win at times. And on one occasion he won pretty big, but that was a long time before the revolution and he is now passed. What is interesting, though, is that I had not thought about this activity in the context of my father until Brock and I began talking about the linkages between African-Americans and Cubans. In fact, although my work has long focused on slavery in the Caribbean, I had not really thought about race and pan-African ties after slavery until I chaired a panel at which Brock presented a paper critiquing Carlos Moore's book *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa*.<sup>1</sup> Moore attacked the Cuban revolution for being starkly racist, and Brock challenged his style and the method by which he reached his conclusions. While Brock and I agreed that Moore's work appeared disingenuous and unscholarly, Brock pointed out that African-Americans had long supported Cuba, and Moore's book might have a negative impact on that support. She also criticized Cuban revolutionary scholars for not having written more on race, leaving someone like Moore such an open arena. While all of this interested me, I did not completely agree for I felt that the revolution had done tremendous things for black Cubans; and I was not quite sure what Brock wanted us to do. Cuban scholars are proud of our African heritage and many of us are in fact working on the African contributions to Cuba.

I was somewhat taken aback, but pleased, when Brock asked if I would co-edit this book and solicit essays from Cuban scholars. She felt it needed scholars with Cuban perspectives able to draw upon Cuban-based documents, archives, and sensibilities. It became clear that we did not want an anthology that simply put black Cuban and black North American histories side by side but rather one in which each chapter addressed a nexus of interchange. The topic was fresh, and my hope was that it would contribute