Caribbean Studies
ISSN: 0008-6533
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Instituto de Estudios del Caribe
Puerto Rico

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Colored, caribbean, and condemned: miami' s overtown district and the cultural expense of progress, 1940-1970
Caribbean Studies, vol. 34, núm. 1, enero-junio, 2006, pp. 3-60
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COLORED, CARIBBEAN, AND CONDEMNED: MIAMI'S OVERTOWN DISTRICT AND THE CULTURAL EXPENSE OF PROGRESS, 1940-1970

N.D.B. Connolly

Abstract

In "Colored, Caribbean, and Condemned," N.D.B. Connolly offers a cultural history of the rise and fall of Miami's Overtown neighborhood, a community that, until the mid-1960s, held the distinction of being the largest and most prosperous "Colored" community in South Florida. Eventually decimated by highway construction and urban redevelopment initiatives, Overtown, as Connolly argues, was once a dynamic site of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American cultural mixing. And while Overtown's Caribbean qualities run afoul of the dominant scholarly trend to treat mid-century Miami as a typical "Southern" town, the death of Overtown comes as a consequence of what the author interprets as a typically "American circumstances: class-tensions within segregated communities, postwar suburbanizations, and the coming of more moderate forms of white supremacy in a post-"Jim Crow" nation. Best reflected in the living quarters, cuisine, and entertainment of an Overtown long gone, the truly diasporic nature of everyday life in Miami's Negro center now remains most vividly preserved in the recollections of those who witnessed firsthand Overtown's robust past and the coming of its vapid present. Connolly therefore uses these recollections in tandem with harder economic and sociological data to explore the economic, racial and "American" confiscation of what had once been a more-than-American community.

Keywords: racial formation, Miami, eminent domain, segregation, Afro-Caribbean, African-American

RESUMEN

En “De color, caribeño y condenado”, N.D.B. Connolly ofrece una historia cultural de la evolución del vecindario de Overtown en Miami, una comunidad que hasta mediados de los sesenta se distinguió por ser la comunidad “de color” más numerosa y próspera del sur de la Florida. Finalmente, fue devastada a causa de la construcción de una autopista y de algunas iniciativas de re-desarrollo. Connolly plantea que Overtown, en su momento, fue un lugar dinámico donde se mezclaban las culturas afro-caribeñas con las afro-americanas. Mientras que las cualidades caribeñas de Overtown resisten las tendencias dominantes que propone la academia al tratar el Miami de mediados del siglo veinte como un pueblo “sureño” típico, la muerte de Overtown surge como resultado de lo que el autor interpreta como circunstancias típicamente “americanas”: tensiones de clase dentro de comunidades segregadas, la sub-urbanización de la post-guerra, y la llegada de modos más moderados de supremacía blanca en una nación post-“Jim Crow”. Reflejado principalmente a través de los hogares, los rasgos culinarios, y los espectáculos de un Overtown ya desaparecido, la verdadera naturaleza diaspórica de la cotidianidad del centro negro de Miami se mantiene hoy en los recuerdos de aquéllos que vivieron el pasado robusto de Overtown y luego la llegada de su actual estancamiento. Connolly utiliza esos recuerdos en conjunto con data económica y sociológica para explorar la confiscación económica, racial y “americana” de lo que fue una comunidad más-que-americana.

Palabras clave: formación racial, Miami, dominio eminente, segregación, afro-caribeño, afro-americano

RÉSUMÉ

Dans son article *Colored, Caribbean, and Condemned*, N.D.B. Connolly présente une histoire culturelle de la grandeur et décadence de la banlieue d’Overtown à Miami, une communauté qui, jusqu’à la moitié des années soixante se différenciait des autres du fait qu’elle était la communauté « de couleur » la plus grande et prospère du sud de la Floride. Si elle fut finalement décimée par la construction d’une autoroute et par des projets de re-

développement urbain, Connolly affirme néanmoins qu'Overtown était autrefois un centre dynamique et de mélange culturel entre les communautés Afro-antillaise et Afro-américaine. Alors que les caractères antillais ont su résister aux tendances dominantes des Académiciens, qui cataloguaient le Miami de la moitié du 20éme siècle comme une ville « du sud » typique, la mort de'Overtown ne fut que la conséquence de circonstances typiquement « américaines » : des conflits sociaux au sein des communautés ségrégués, la sub-urbanisation de l'après guerre et l'arrivée de manifestations modérées de la suprématie des blancs de l'ère post « Jim Crow ». La véritable nature diasporique de la vie quotidienne dans le centre noir de Miami – reflétée notamment dans les familles, la cuisine et les spectacles d'un Overtown révolu – est préservée aujourd'hui dans les souvenirs de ceux qui ont vécu le passé robuste de cette banlieu, puis l'avènement de son actuelle stagnation. Connolly se sert de ces souvenirs, ainsi que des donées économiques et sociologiques, pour explorer la confiscation économique, raciale et « américaine » de celle qui fut une communauté plus-qu'américaine.

Mots-clés: formation raciale, Miami, domaine èminent, afro-antillais, afro-américain

Received: 2 December 2005. Revision received: 1 June 2006. Accepted: 2 June 2006.

Even the winter gets hot in Miami. And Bill Sawyer grew increasingly aware of this fact as he marched down the dusty stretches of Second Avenue trailed by his motley crew of migrant laborers. Wintertime was harvest time in western Miami, where oranges and vegetables needed picking and sugarcane needed cutting by recently arrived Bahamian and Jamaican hands (Shofner 1981:414). For Sawyer, wintertime was also hustle time in all that the term "hustle" could connote. His job, at least during the harvest season, was to knock on door after door in black Miami's Overtown district in hopes of finding food and beds for his regiment of migrant workers. During the late 1940s and 1950s, independent farmers and agricultural corporations in Florida employed over 4,000 Bahamians and Jamaicans each year, making

Sawyer's job of bed hunting as time consuming as it was financially rewarding.[1] "All day long, all night you would see me walking up and down the streets with crowds of people lined up behind me. I was… placing them in different places…that's how I made so much money." But Sawyer's employer during this effort was not the farming industry; it was the federal government. For, with so many laborers of African descent descending year after year on wartime and post-war South Florida (and with "too many" staying well beyond the harvest season), federal and local officials needed to be sure that these workers did not end up on the "wrong" side of town, which, at this time, meant all-white Miami Beach, Coral Gables, or any number of the emerging "whites only" suburbs in the Greater Miami area. Sawyer remembered well the exclusivity of these white spaces. "White people," he noted, "have always didn't want nothing to do with Negroes [*sic*]. So all these Negroes is coming in from Jamaica, from Nassau and different places in South America. I had to house them." But Sawyer, recognizing his importance in preserving the racial boundaries of Miami's Jim Crowism, proved ever resourceful in executing what government officials believed to be his patriotic duties. He noted that he "had enough sense" to know that, if whites "gonna treat me like that, I made up my prices for doing this[;] for years I did this for immigration over here in America and…I told them this bill comes to $400 or $500, $600[;] well only half of that went to the [expenses] and the other half came to me because [Immigration and Naturalization Services] wasn't hardly giving me anything." [2]

Sawyer's attempt to claim dignity and dollars from the jaws of Jim Crow may seem self-interested and at once comedic and tragic. The layers of his story, however, reveal much about the complexities of segregated black life in 1940s and '50s South Florida. To be sure, few enjoyed a job as unique (and lucrative) as Sawyer's, who made considerable financial gains through essentially duping the federal government. But his clandestine negotiation of officially sanctioned white supremacy typified a widespread habit shared by many South Floridians of African descent. Simply stated, seg-

regation's quotidian absurdities prompted blacks to seek equally quotidian victories. Sometimes this looked like Sawyer's fleecing of the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). Far more commonly, however, this came in the form of everyday community building—going to school, getting married, or owning a business in your own neighborhood. Indeed, this community-building provided the most proactive response to the power and authority of white supremacy. And, in no small way, it allowed individuals like Sawyer to run the self-interested hustles that effectively dulled the sharp indignities of Jim Crow (Dailey, Gilmore, and Simon 2000; Kelley 1996; Kelley 1993).

In a more collective sense, the agency of everyday life in black South Florida allowed the region's black residents to foster relationships across class and cultural lines; and, in this respect, Sawyer's story proves doubly instructive. Though he spent hours knocking on the doors of middle- and lower-income blacks and spent hours walking and sweating alongside day-laborers whose only possession may have been their clothing and that day's wages, Bill Sawyer belonged to black Miami's moneyed class. As the son of a prominent physician and hotel owner, he worked as the office manager of and lived as the heir apparent to The Mary Elizabeth, an 88-room hotel that, with a functional elevator and water system designed to prevent fires, proved to be *the* finest black-owned hotel in the entire southeastern United States.[3] Still, even with his uncommon government job and his relative affluence, Sawyer belonged to what seemed, from the outside, like a typical 1940s African-American community, one where blacks from across the class spectrum lived together, where economic *integration* accompanied racial segregation. Upon a closer look, though, his community was hardly typical. Unlike the majority of segregated Afro-America, this community was one where Cubans, Jamaicans, Bahamians, and American blacks shared fruit trees and family trees, clotheslines and bloodlines. Sawyer belonged to a community where blacks from across Africa's diaspora built viable institutions and espoused on American soil the same multi-ethnic,

cross-classed nationalism that peoples of color were building in other Caribbean locales (Osborne 2000; Price 1998). Perhaps most importantly, Sawyer belonged to a community that, to the recollections of many of its former residents, did far worse under the weight of postwar liberalism and integration than it ever did under segregation's shadow.

Yet, as interesting as it would be to tell, this is not Bill Sawyer's story; it is the story of his neighborhood, a little corner of the Atlantic World known as Overtown. I refer to Miami, in general, and Overtown, in particular, as part of the broader Atlantic World in part to transform South Florida in our historical hindsight, but more importantly to critique the scholarly and popular habit of treating black Miami as just another African-American ghetto in the historical meta-narrative of American urban decline. Overtown was a viable and valuable safe-house for a truly Atlantic culture, a "more-than-American" space sustained by the everyday community-building activities of ethnically diverse people of African descent. And it is only in recognizing the "more-than-American" qualities of Overtown that we can more accurately assess the cultural loss of a community tragically remade at mid-century by typically American forces.

Principally, this essay provides an account of Overtown's relationship to the spirit of progress that, in the hands of Anglo-American authority, used the building of interstate highways to turn a truly Atlantic community into an "American" one. Using oral histories, government records, images, and a range of other sources, I interrogate the cultural expense of what scholars often recognize as postwar growth liberalism, and I probe how both white and black elites sacrificed Overtown in order to re-create the modern metropolis, undo *de jure* segregation, and build a New South from the detritus of the Old. As we shall see below, the possibility of integration at mid-century and black political preoccupations with "middle-class" consumption weakened the economic and cultural ties that made Overtown a kind of Colored nation within a nation for its first fifty years. At the same time, the

very forms of state sponsored white supremacy that had unintentionally nurtured cross-cultural black cohesion through Jim Crow began to fold under new, postwar nation-making projects, projects that required whites to orchestrate more modern, "progressive", and clandestine forms of racism across South Florida. To my reading, the same tightly entangled forces responsible for Overtown's somewhat exceptional creation also hastened its collapse. Indeed, the birth, life and death of Overtown all suggest a frightening connection between regional economic prosperity more generally and the continual evolution of white supremacy across America's twentieth century. I therefore argue that the process of modernizing South Florida—and indeed America—required the violent modernization of communities such as Overtown, the modernization of race, and, perhaps most regrettably, the modernization of racism.

Drawing the Color Line in the Caribbean

With the building of the Florida East Coast railroad in the 1890s and the subsequent boom in South Florida real estate, Bahamians who had once come to southern Florida strictly for agricultural work migrated to the region in larger numbers to take advantage of considerable employment opportunities in domestic labor, tourism, and construction (Albury 1975:169). Through their labor and alongside black migrants from northern Florida, Georgia, and other parts of the Caribbean, they built the segregated landscapes of Dade and Broward Counties, constructing at once an all-white tourist infrastructure and the all-black communities that would provide much of the labor for that infrastructure (George 1978:436; Grenier and Castro 1999:277).[4] Jamaicans, a few Haitians, and scores of newly minted "Nassau niggers" (Bahamians) toiled under the gaze of southern Florida's freshly-squeezed Anglo-American racism (Mohl 1987:287). Indeed, through the 1940s and until the passage of postwar immigration prohibitions, the landscapes of southern Florida were barely-American environs. By 1920, when Miami contained a little over 29,500 residents,

roughly 9,200 of those residents (or 30 percent) were black, and of that total number of blacks, more than 4,800—or 16% of the city's total population—were Caribbean born (Vought 2000:57). As Miami entered the 1930s, Bahamians in the "Central Negro District" alone outnumbered all other "Colored" residents 10 to 1 (Dade County Manager's Office 1979:63). In fact, the large proportions of Caribbean-born blacks living in the communities of Coconut Grove, Goulds, Lemon City and Miami's "Central Negro District," caused many Bahamians to preserve their long-held notion of southern Florida as just another island in *their* archipelago (Mohl 1987:272, 282).

If we think of geography as demarcated by conceptual more so than legal boundaries, then it would seem that, with a near-majority of blacks in the region defining southern Florida as part of the Caribbean, Miami was very much like Amy Kaplan's (1993) description of the nation itself—a place whose "conceptual and geographic boundaries [were] fluid, contested, and historically changing" (15). In the eyes of whites, however, neither black inhabitants, black conceptions of geography nor black labor, whether immigrant or native-born, could determine Florida's geographic and cultural loyalties; for whites, Florida *was* America. It belonged to the (white) American people, and Florida's "communities," in the words of one governor, "adhere[d] to the finest traditions of American life"[5] (Shofner 411). So, despite the thousands of black workers that cleared the land, laid the rails, and constructed the dwellings, making the physical Florida into the conceptual "America" fell solely on the shoulders of whites and the authority that whiteness claimed. In the hundred years preceding World War I, the Florida territory fell, mile by mile, under the legal authority of the United States and the cultural authority of whiteness. In fact, one could argue that these authorities were one in the same. According to federal land law, Florida could not even join the Union until its *white* population reached 50,000, which it did in 1845 (DeWurst 1885:150; Baptist 2002:12). By the time this process of racial and geographic claiming reached

southeastern Florida in the early-twentieth century, it had ossified into what appeared to be a rigid system of highly evolved social rules and spatial boundaries—the now familiar color line (Woodward 1955).

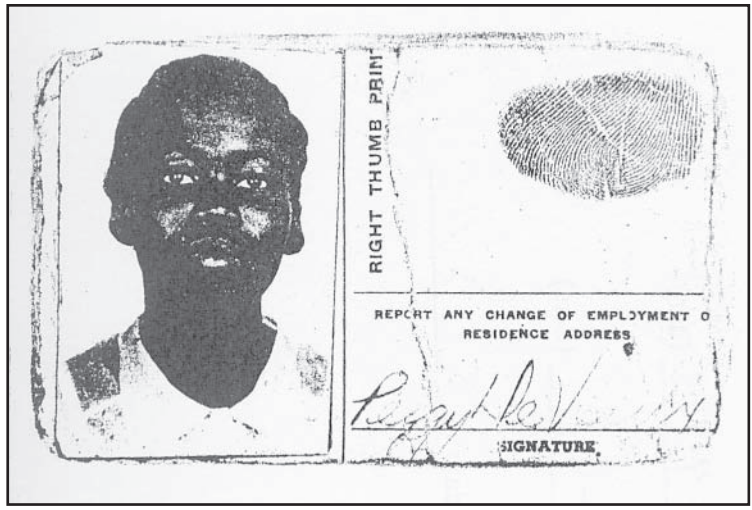
Miami's Central Negro District had been known as "Colored Town" in the 1920s and '30s and "Overtown" from the 1940s onward, but regardless of these vacillations in nomenclature, whites had a constant use for the Colored community. Overtown served to protect white privilege from residential Negro "invasion," provide black labor for white employers, and, perhaps most importantly, to "process" the thousands of Caribbean migrants who worked in the tourist and agricultural pockets that dotted the landscape of central and southern Florida.[6] Before Caribbean migrants picked or cut anything anywhere in Florida, folded a bed-sheet, or served a beverage, they passed through Miami's Overtown, which served as the bedroom community and site of informal "racial education" for workers awaiting immunizations, work assignments, or personal effects from the British Caribbean.[7] "How unlike the land where I was born," recalled one Bahamian immigrant "[in the Bahamas] colored men were addressed as gentlemen; here as 'niggers'" (Reid 1939:189). Overtown, as a neighborhood and space, was supposed to teach Jamaicans and Bahamians how to be "Coloreds" in America and how to respect the ostensibly unassailable power of whiteness[8] (Mohl 1987:296).

Whites protected this power by policing the boundaries between white and "Colored" South Florida, employing a legal and extralegal repertoire that included police brutality, highly publicized racial threats, and continual acts of vigilante violence. During the 1920s and '30s, for example, black deaths in Colored Town at the hands of white officers had become a common occurrence, with white officers frequently escaping prosecution (Tscheschlok 1997:440).[9] And, well into the 1950s, the Ku Klux Klan enforced the color-line with a theatrical zeal, organizing seasonal marches where literally hundreds of hooded Klansmen

would drive or march through and around the segregated spaces of southern Florida's various Colored communities (George 1978:445).[10] For the most part, though, such displays remained in the realm of theatrics, as blacks living outside of southern Florida witnessed racial violence with considerably greater frequency than those living in Dade and Broward Counties.

Far more common and extensive in South Florida were the racial curfews that city governments in Miami, Miami Beach, or nearby Hollywood used to force Negro workers back into Colored communities, usually after 6, 8, or 10 pm, depending on the city. Under these curfews, South Florida's white spaces, by and large, functioned as "sundown towns," no blacks allowed after sundown (Loewen 2005). As in the 1910s and '20s, white vigilantes and police during the 1950s routinely enforced blacks' nighttime restrictions. If caught on the "wrong" side of the color line after the designated hour and without permission, black South Floridians could expect any combination of arrest, harassment, police questioning or violence.[11] "It was made it known to us in no uncertain terms," recalled Joe Wheeler, "you shouldn't…be caught in the City of Hollywood after dark…That's the way it was…we knew this."[12] Black Miamians knew this of their city as well. Peggy McKinney recalled that, as an eighteen-year old black laundress who worked on Miami Beach, she had to always carry a special workers identification card in case the police caught her outside of the Central Negro District after 10 pm. "If you was stopped by the police, you had to show this card, that you were coming from work or whatever."[13]

Surprisingly, the City of Miami's work pass program actually began in 1941 as a surveillance initiative intended to keep Nazi spies and Communist organizers off Dade County's militarized beachfront and away from the city's working-class labor pool.[14] During the region's anxiety-ridden encounter with World War II, Miami's work pass program tracked the employment of nearly 60,000 black *and* white Miamians.[15] But, as fear of German invasion rapidly waned in the mid-1940s and as concerns over



The racial identification card of Peggy McKinney (Photo courtesy of the Black Archives, History & Research Foundation of South Florida)

communist infiltration became increasingly race-specific by the mid-1950s, *work* passes created in the battle to preserve democracy became *racial* passes in the battle to preserve the color line. And as continued postwar construction industries and increased suburbanization created a steady demand for black laborers and domestics, South Florida's now apartheid-like pass system became quite common and, sometimes, quite complex.

The passes themselves came in different forms. Sometimes a simple note from a white employer would be enough to save a black laborer from "an incident."[16] Other kinds of permission, like the above "police card" of Peggy McKinney, came from law enforcement organizations, making it (and the indignities of Jim Crow) much more "official."[17] In many instances, blacks and their white employers had to synchronize work shifts and transportation arrangements. North of Overtown helped its negroes somewhat by providing bus transportation from white neighborhoods a full two hours after the 6pm curfew.[18] When blacks worked shifts that went beyond 8pm, though, employers often took it upon themselves to drive their workers back to their segregated neighborhoods to

"make sure [they] didn't get into any trouble for any reason."[19]

The possibility of violence or "trouble" served an integral purpose within whites' larger campaign of intimidation and vociferous prejudice (Shofner 413; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People 1969:53-56; Dray 2002:344-45). But perhaps even more significant for the lives of black Miamians, this kind of control-through-space-and-spectacle essentially created "Negroes" as a social and racial category in South Florida by imposing state-sanctioned discriminations on Caribbean blacks and by reminding American blacks of their constantly subordinate position within the nation's racial taxonomy. By forcing seemingly "non-white" immigrants from the Caribbean to carry cards and stay on the "Negro" side of the color line, Jim Crow segregation also helped preserve the cultural integrity of the term "white" in that it saved whiteness from the unnecessary racial ambiguity that often arose when European "ethnics" followed "white"-American norms down the path to acculturation and naturalization (Guglielmo 2003). The color line in South Florida thus represented an attempt on the part of whites to conceal black ethnicity and affirm a biracial hierarchy that had whiteness as its apex (Reed 1989).

Given southern Florida's simultaneous location within the Caribbean basin and the United States, the history of the region fits well within that ever-growing body of work on Caribbean peoples and their experiences with American racism (Hoffnung-Garskof 2001; Ferrer 1999; James 1998). However, when most historians of southern Florida describe the unfettered white supremacy that hindered black lives well into the 1960s, they often do so to suggest that, prior to the Cuban Revolution, southern Florida had a distinctly "Southern" character, belonging more honestly to the Land of Dixie than the Caribbean basin (Stepick *et al*. 2003; Dunn 1997; Mohl 1990; Portes and Stepick 1993). Certainly, whites in both the American South and North often wed racialized violence and threats of such violence to their very idea of "America" and the nation (Patterson 1989:478; Sugrue 1998). Yet, in southern Florida, white supremacy had an unintended

effect, for, in tandem with the labor and life migrations of blacks from across the African diaspora, white racism, as made manifest through the color line, made considerable pockets of southern Florida as Caribbean as they were American.

Because of the spatial proximity between longtime residents and new arrivals, Overtown became a site of inter-cultural congregation and cohesion. Maude Newbold, herself the descendant of Bahamian immigrants, noted of her forbearers, "Bahamians who were already here opened their arms readily to the others coming from those Caribbean Islands…because they knew what happened to them when *they* came over […] so they stayed in the community together, they worshipped at the same churches, they helped one another during the '50s."[20] White dependence on black labor also presented black Floridians of every stripe with opportunities for self-determination and resistance that often fed feelings of race pride, a point beautifully affirmed by our introduction to Bill Sawyer. Segregated *by law*, black immigrants built social bonds *by choice* as they worked closely with American blacks to create truly multi-cultural spaces in which both groups found reprieve from racism's inhumanities. Suffice it to say that the legal boundaries of race consolidated the racial identities of black Americans and Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Overtown, thus imbuing "blackness" with a political value that became evident in everyday life (Marx 1996:200). Or, stated more simply, white supremacy helped black residents see themselves, in the words of lifetime Floridian, "as a Colored people."[21] Over time, racist categories intended to connote inferiority and homogeneity— "Colored" —became markers of racial pride and cultural heterogeneity— "a Colored people," "we called *ourselves* Colored People" [my emphasis].[22] This communal claiming of a racial label would occur in southern Florida's all-black spaces for at least another generation as white racism evolved and as "Colored" became "Negro" and "Negro" became "Black."[23]

Aside from affirming the relational and social making of race, the relationships that American and Caribbean blacks

built in Overtown have much to teach scholars who study such intercultural relationships (Lewis 1995:783). Since at least the 1920s—when W.A. Domingo, in an implied contrast to African Americans, described West Indians en bloc as "argumentative… great contenders for their rights and…inclined to be litigious" —scholars have located the differing political strength of African Americans and Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the latter's supposedly more-evolved sense of political self (Domingo 1925:345-6). More recent scholarship, such as that of Winston James (1998) and Mary Waters (1999), represents a noticeable departure from the essentialisms of Domingo's "New Negro" moment, as most have gained a greater appreciation for the relationship between group identity and history (Vickerman 1999; Kasinitz 1992). But even in the most contemporary scholarship, discussions of Caribbean-born radicals in the United States and the intra-racial tensions between African Americans and their Caribbean counterparts remain rooted in cultural absolutes that lean on, but never accurately define, that which seems essentially "American" and "Caribbean." Indeed, even in some of the soundest of relatively recent scholarship, cultural essentialisms have replaced racial ones, leaving it still academically permissible for some scholars to describe West Indians as "less obsequious toward whites than native blacks" (Mohl 1987:288; George 1975:185-6).

But, in mid-century South Florida, cultural absolutes prove nearly impossible to define, for the lines between the "Caribbean" and the "American" were blurry in some places and non-existent in others. Charles Johnson, a longtime resident of Miami recalled of the 1940's and '50s, "People come out of the Caribbean and they come to Miami and they marry with other folks there…that are of color…and they started living in these neighborhoods…Black Miamians are Caribbean peoples in the first place…not the second place."[24] Speaking in 1997, he continued, with considerable accuracy, "It's *still* kind of difficult to talk about 'Americans.'"[25] And *none* could accurately describe one group as more or less "obsequious" than another, even if that position claimed a vague

historical basis. Black residents of South Florida, like Michel-Rolph Trouillot's (1992) description of the entire Caribbean, "are inescapably heterogenous…multiracial, multilingual…multicultural, [and]…inescapably historical" (21). In fact, the culture that, under segregation, would *become* black Miami represented more than a simple intermarriage of neatly contained "Caribbean" and "American" cultures. This culture was, at nearly every turn, a contested process that, in response to white racism and an ever-evolving sense of black community, helped determine the form and content of southern Florida's segregated spaces. Neither an abstract "system" nor a "structure," the politics and process of culture- and race-making was simply *life* in black South Florida (Holt 1990; Kelley 1996). And just as it took a complicated web of official and unnoficial practices to contain and create "Coloreds" under segregation, it took an equally complicated web of spatial and social networks to sustain them.

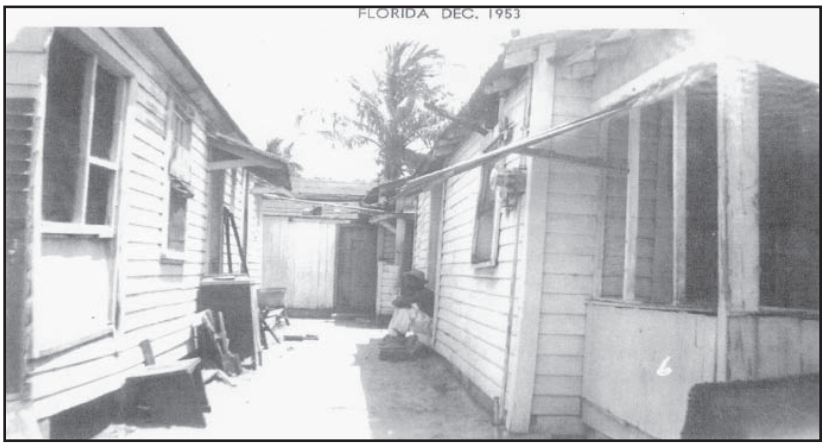
Understanding Overtown, South Florida's Colored Capital

To understand Colored life in Overtown, one must understand Colored living. The most common home and rental property in Overtown was the "shotgun house," an elongated, single-story dwelling made of wood with a door at either end of a central hallway. The term "shotgun" referred not to the actual shape of the house but to the belief that one could shoot a shotgun through the front door and have the bullets exit the backdoor without them ever hitting a wall. Containing roughly four bedrooms and built side by side, these houses allowed black Miami to house, on average, 150 people per acre during the 1950s—a density figure more than ten times higher than that of whites (Tscheschlok 1996:451; Institution of Government 1998:12). The homes were so close, in fact, that, according to one former resident, "somebody could reach out of their window and shake hands with the other person [next door]." [26]

Scholars in recent years have pointed to the structural similarities between shotgun houses in Overtown and those in the

Bahamas and West Africa as evidence of a truly Diasporic architectural form in North America (Driskell 1976; Fields 1989). Other descriptions of Overtown's shotgun shacks warmly recounted the "tiny alleys and row on row of tiny homes [as providing] a safe haven for those who were residents" (Dade County Manager's Office 1979:65). Many of the descriptions of shotgun houses written by experts during the 1940s and '50s, however, remained far less flattering and reflective. The City of Miami's public health officials, in fact, cited the shotgun house as the greatest cause of blight and disease, referring to it as "a serious threat to public health", and naming it as the primary drawback of an area that could best be described as "congested with crime and infected" (Tscheschlok 1996:460; International County Regional Planning Commission 1960:2; Vought 2000:58). And not all of Overtown's residents appreciated the density of Colored living. One Bahamian immigrant in Ira Reid's 1939 study, *The Negro Immigrant*, for instance, noted feeling disillusioned when he encountered "an unpainted, poorly-ventilated rooming house" (189).

But, for ten dollars a week and a measured tolerance for shared outdoor plumbing, Overtown's spatial density—or "intimacy"—offered more than a place for the economically meager to lay



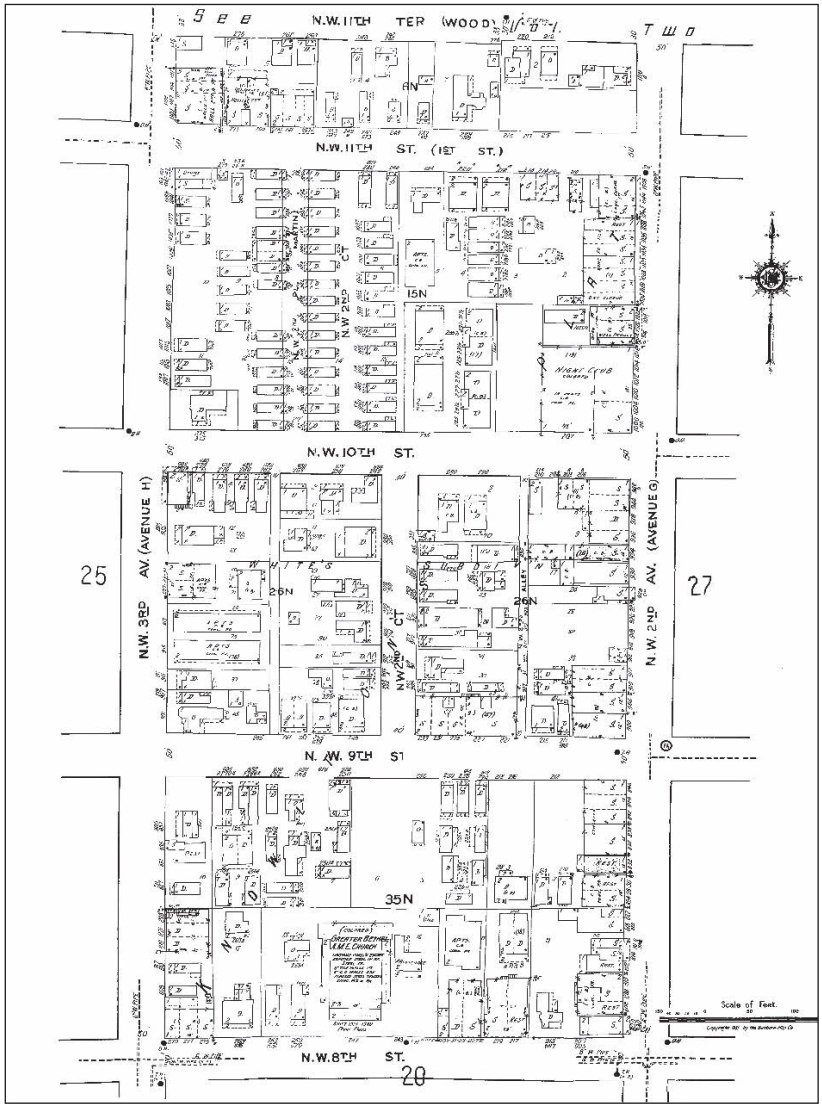
The Shotgun Houses of Overtown, 1953. (Photo courtesy of the Historical Association of Southern Florida, African American Collection)

their heads; it allowed residents to live, in what may now seem like familiar terms, "as a Black people."[27] When one lived "two steps away from the next apartment door," remembered one former shotgun house inhabitant, it became "very hard for you [to] not get along and not to have a good relationship with the person that you lived close to."[28]

Former residents' somewhat romantic recollections of community cohesion, however, should not be taken to suggest that residential density made Overtown a happy "golden ghetto." Indeed, the shared neighborhoods of Colored lawyers and laundresses in segregated cities such as Miami did not guarantee that blacks viewed each other even as equals, much less as extended family. Certainly, much of segregation's intent as an institution was to create a monolithic and inferior Negro mass. And one of segregation's unforeseen consequences had been its ability to nurture an environment of social responsibility where, as described below for instance, wealthy blacks built affordable homes for the less fortunate when the government officials would not (Waters 1997:75).[29] But neither of these qualities prevented blacks from creating social hierarchies within Jim Crowed communities. As Joe Trotter (1993) and others have cogently argued, the realities of class difference often led to the active pursuit of better housing on the part of the black middle class and the concentration of the black poor in certain impoverished sections of the Colored enclave (Gilmore 1996; Lewis 1990; Frazier 1957). Still, with the white supremacist city planning keeping the size of Colored neighborhoods to a minimum, preachers, plumbers, and prostitutes could not get too far from each other, even when the quality of their housing significantly differed.

Through the 1940s, in fact, Overtown's rows of shotgun homes were often owned by well-to-do blacks who lived on the same or adjoining lots with the poor and working-class blacks for whom they provided housing. For instance, Miami's first black millionaire and by far Overtown's most affluent residents, Dana A. Dorsey, made his fortune by providing real estate for blacks in Overtown. He lived out his days in a two-story, Bahamian-style,

wood-frame house on NW 9th Street, just one lot east of NW 3rd Avenue, while many of his poor and working-class tenants lived in shotgun houses less than two-blocks away on NW 2nd Court, between 11th and 10th Street. The proximity of these residences is evidenced on the map below.



Overtown's Good Bread Alley and surrounding blocks. (Image courtesy of the Sanborn Map Collection, Florida State Archives)

While much of black Miami contained tightly packed housing, the particular stretch of houses on NW 2nd Court, nicknamed "Good Bread Alley," was among the most densely populated areas in all of Overtown. As such, it became a profound site of race- and diaspora-making, serving a hungry Colored public. For starters, "Good Bread Alley" was the place to get cornbread, conch fritters, or freshly caught blue crabs, cooked up on the street and served with rice; or, if one had a taste for something sweet, "Good Bread Alley" was *the* place to get homemade coconut candies.[30] But despite the Island and Southern cuisine that one could no doubt find in "Good Bread Alley," this nickname did not refer to the delicious smells that would occasionally waft from the windows and porches of Overtown's homes. "Good Bread," it seems, served as a sexual reference, referring to prostitutes who would, through their night-labor, offer many male laborers a welcomed and intimate reprieve from the day's demands[31] (Painter 2002). So common was prostitution in "Good Bread Alley" that some landlords refused to house young, attractive women out of fear that their presence would increase vice in the neighborhood. Most women who lived on and around 2nd Court, of course, were not prostitutes—at least not solely—and, rather than follow the Great Migration northward, many African-American women from states such as Virginia and Georgia moved to "Good Bread Alley" and nearby blocks to work in the better paying restaurants of Second Avenue and to gain employment as domestics and laundresses in the still-growing tourist economy of Miami Beach.[32] As was true across the Jim Crow South, those women who did domestic and laundry work crossed the color line almost daily (Hunter 1997). And, despite white fears of occasional black criminality, it often proved far more perilous for black women and men to enter white spaces than it did for whites to enter black ones.

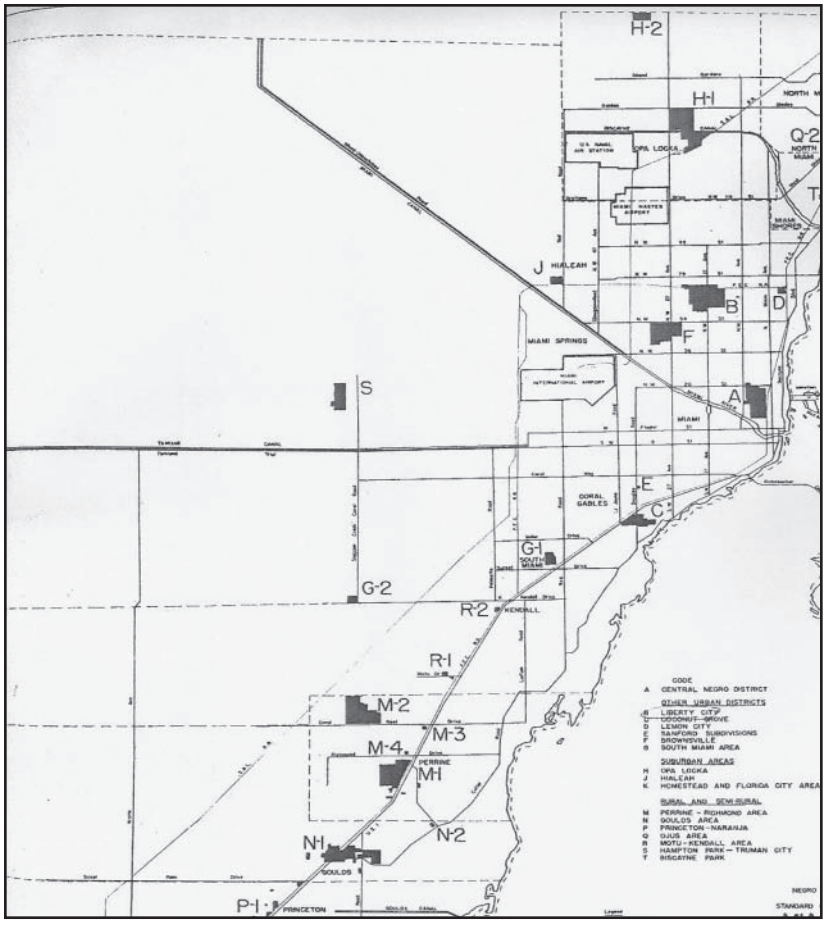
As South Florida entered the 1950s, the gradual desegregation of communities outside of Overtown held the promise of tremendous possibility, particularly for well-to-do blacks living in Dade and Broward Counties. For those blacks with the financial means to move to Miami's slowly-integrating suburbs in the

1950s—Liberty City, Opa-locka, and Carol City—these neighborhoods seemingly assured improved living conditions, "freedom of movement, open housing, and possible access to better schools and a wider range of job opportunities" (Planning Department Research Division Report 1982:27-8).[33] Under American capitalism, however, "better," almost always came down to a question of who could consume and afford what (Cohen 2003; *Race Relations Law Reporter* 1967). In voicing his own residential aspirations, retired lab technician Andrew Robinson summed up nicely the Colored consumer mentality when it came to escaping the poverty of black Miami: "A man wants his own home, his own lawn, and maybe a pool. Where in Overtown could you have a pool?"[34] According to the work of William Julius Wilson (1987) and others, the black middle class, in their desire to make good (or "better") on the country's egalitarian ideals, used the "civil rights revolution" of the 1960s to distance themselves from systemic black poverty (Hirsch 1993:93). But we must always keep in mind that this residential revolution had roots in the 1940s, as postwar questions about the justness of American democracy and the government subsidies of the New Deal began helping select Coloreds from across middle-class America in their efforts to undo the legal foundations of residential segregation (Weiss 2005). In South Florida's version of this national trend, the very pursuit of a modicum of residential integration set in motion a broader process of economic segregation in Overtown and southern Florida's other black enclaves. This class-based separation had thus become evident decades before Overtown's formal collapse, as the push for racial progress slowly bled African-American and Afro-Caribbean "haves" from the Central Negro District, resident by upwardly-mobile resident. Joe Wheeler recalls the process vividly:

> We would go to Overtown…and you could see that deterioration had set in, because all the earners had left. People who were earning money, teachers, and people like that. You know, the average people…I don't think that the place was ever brimming to the top with [professionals]. I just think they had average people, with jobs, spending their money in Overtown.[35]

Middle-class blacks who did not go to Liberty City or Opa-locka found their way into southern Dade County, Hallandale, Hollywood, Carver Ranches, and other smaller black communities in neighboring Broward County.[36] Some black churches lost their wealthiest members, certain black schools lost many of their best teachers, and the diversity that had made South Florida's black neighborhoods truly Atlantic spaces gradually unraveled as nationally specific cultural ties began ever so slowly to replace racial and economic ones.[37] Since at least the 1910s, small numbers of Miami's poorest whites had resided in Overtown, which may come as little surprise when one considers that 1) the Central Negro District had by far the cheapest rents in the area and 2) that the residential restrictions of the color line never applied to whites. The more startling fact is that, by 1960, homeowner flight from Overtown had become so extensive that the overall number of whites living in the Central *Negro* District (1,686) had exceeded the total number of Overtown residents (black or white) who owned their own homes (868) (Morrison 1962:47). The roughly 39,000 residents of Overtown who had suffered for decades through the color line found themselves at the start of the Sixties exposed to the new problems of the "dollar line", as the consumer politics of black homeowners had begun turning the once class-diverse black neighborhood of Overtown into a decidedly working-and lower-class neighborhood.

But the steady out-migration of middle-class blacks could not completely strip Overtown of its economic fortitude, because, even as black homeowners moved out, black business-owners kept most of their offices, restaurants, hotels, and nightclubs within the Overtown community. Like Negroes elsewhere in America during the 1940s and '50s, blacks in Miami participated in the broader process of city/suburb separation that was sweeping across the urban centers of United States (Weiss 2005; Jackson 1985). Consequently, Overtown served as the urban business center of an expanding network of black rural and suburban communities (denoted by the letter "A" on the map on next page).



Dade County's Colored Neighborhoods, 1951. (Image originally published in Reinhold P. Wolff and David K. Gillogly.1951 *Negro Housing in the Miami Area*)

In 1955, for instance, Overtown's segregated economy consisted of over three hundred and fifty separate and viable businesses, with the most numerous of these being medical services and doctors (21), eating places and restaurants (27), groceries and small markets (34), and barber shops and beauty salons (44) (Institute of Government 1998:19-20). It also had its own legal structure, which included a small black police force and South Florida's only "all Negro" municipal court.[38] "Overtown," in the

memory of one resident, "use[d] to be a vibrant, self-contained community. The people didn't really have to go out of their community for the services that they needed."[39] Because of their ability to found and sustain a community economy and a community legal system—indeed, a kind of "Colored" state—former Overtown residents remembered the black communities of 1950s South Florida as spaces where people realized what Stokley Carmichael and Charles Hamilton (1967) would later call "Black Power." Without the overt political trappings of its fierier counterpart from the late 1960s, the softened and everyday nationalism of black South Floridians carried a political value that was like the rioting to come; it was unevenly executed and ill-defined, but political to its very bones.

The dynamism of Overtown also made it a well-known haunt for both blacks and whites who visited Miami simply looking for a good time. In fact the "Overtown" moniker actually came from the rhetorical habits of whites and middle-class blacks who traveled "over town" from nearby suburbs to shop, address legal concerns, visit the dentist, or enjoy "Colored" entertainment.[40] Clayton Harrell, a black Georgia railroad worker turned Miamian, remembered,

> "If you came to Miami [and] then…you came back to…your old town [in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi] …you was the talk of the community, you know, you've been to Miami. You have been to the bright lights and the big city of Miami…Overtown was the bright lights, it was the big city. The lights never went out in Overtown." [41]

And despite the contrived exclusivity of all-white spaces of work and leisure, white tourists and local white teens and twenty-somethings often enjoyed Overtown's "bright lights," as word of mouth brought white curiosity and capital to black Miami's more "authentic" Colored and Caribbean culture. Bernice Sawyer, wife of the same Bill Sawyer from the opening vignette, remembers how "*all* of Miami" frequented their lounge at The Mary Elizabeth.[42] Aside from coming to hear the "jam sessions" of some of

the greatest African-American entertainers of the age—among them, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Nat King Cole—a "great White traffic" would come to black Miami to enjoy Trinidadian limbo shows, Cuban music, Bahamian and Haitian cuisine.[43] "The whites would be mingling with the black and they would have fun, you know, dancing and eating and just having a good time"[44] (George 440).

In fact, these moments of cross-racial entertainment represented just one more example of the state determining racial experience in South Florida. Zoning laws on Miami Beach required that all taverns and nightclubs close at 1am; but, the City of Miami allowed Colored lounge owners like the Sawyers to purchase licenses that authorized their establishments to remain open until 5 am. This zoning discrepancy provided Bill Sawyer and other black hoteliers with a financial windfall that proved far more consistent and fruitful than Sawyer's seasonal government employment with the INS.[45] "My club was packed," he recalled, "jammed [with]…nothing but white people…white and Colored would be in there all night long and all day long."[46] Sawyer's Mary Elizabeth also gained increased national and international exposure when, in 1949, boxing World Champion Joe Louis announced his retirement from its halls, and when the hotel hosted the Miss Latin America beauty pageant on July 23, 1950, where Miss Puerto Rico won that year's crown before a decidedly multi-racial audience.[47]

During the day, though, the Caribbean-American culture that whites enjoyed at night seemed almost invisible to white eyes as, more often than not, poverty became the most obvious characteristic of southern Florida's black neighborhoods. "The houses were not nice," remembered William Horvitz, a former real estate developer and white Broward County resident. "But," he continued, "it wasn't a place where you were afraid to walk down the street."[48] James and Nancy Dee, also white, admitted that, as teenagers, they rarely went through what they knew as "Colored Town." They, nevertheless, remembered black South Florida as a

place where they and other white teenagers went to buy (but rarely drink) alcohol. "That's about the biggest vice any of us had."[49] To be sure, by white standards, most blacks in southern Florida were poor in the 1940s and '50s; a manufactured shortage in consistent middle-class back employment assured as much.

In considering accounts of identification cards, Jim Crow busing, and racial "crossings," one must remember that the color line was more than streets and curfew. Segregation was even more than a vehicle for black cohesion and racial self-determination. It was a thoroughgoing, everyday assault on one's livelihood and self-esteem from which no "Colored" in South Florida could fully escape. While it may be true, for instance, that the diversity of segregated spaces allowed the all-black schools of 1950s South Florida to enjoy Spanish and French student publications and a pan-Caribbean faculty, the fiscal discrimination that accompanied segregation had left even the most premier of these schools woefully under-funded, as former students recall never having a new book, only "hand-me-downs from other schools" (Andrews 1999).[50] South Florida also had more than its share of that quintessential marker of imposed Negro inferiority, the "Colored Only" water fountain.[51] In the curfew-protected commercial areas of Hollywood and downtown Miami, black women could not try on dresses in the stores, having instead to either estimate their sizes or, in some rare instances, buy the dresses, try them on at home, and return them if they proved an ill fit.[52] Equally ill-fitting for the black body politic, the myriad markers of overt white supremacy became the focus of black community leaders as the 1950s wore on, and much effort from both blacks and sympathetic whites went towards exorcizing the spirit of Jim Crow that continued to haunt black life in South Florida (Mohl 2004).

This brings me to an important point about scholarly treatments of black politics in South Florida. When framing the black experience in America in general or black resistance to white supremacy in particular, historians of twentieth-century America focus largely on the histories of organized political bodies, be they

local organizations, labor unions, or the more amorphous and ill-defined national "movements" of the so-called Civil Rights and Black Power eras. But, with only an episodic presence within the overlapping historiographies of civil rights activism and organized labor, the activities of blacks in twentieth-century South Florida do not fit neatly within standard historical definitions of black radicalism (Hall 1994/5:12-13). To be sure, black political organizations such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the National Urban League had a presence, to varying degrees, in southern Florida since the 1920s (Vought 2000).[53] Also, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and, to a lesser extent, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) *did* represent, albeit inconsistently, select majority-black labor unions in Dade and Broward Counties well into the 1960s (Lichtenstein 1998:10; Tscheschlok 1997:46; Tscheschlok 1996:453). Nevertheless, as in most things, there is a marked difference between an organization's existence and its accessibility and political potency. For though there exists a growing literature on local organizations and individual radicals such as James Nimmo, Theodore Gibson, and Elizabeth Virrick, strong anti-communist sentiment among white elites and at the South Florida grassroots rendered many labor and civil rights groups ineffective in their collective responses to local government and decentralized white authority in South Florida (Mohl 2001; Shell-Weiss 2002). More relevant for this discussion, the ability of blacks to control the uses and preservation of urban space never became a formal political platform for any radical organization that existed in South Florida at mid-century, as concerns over consumer and wage-earner rights dominated narrowly-bound "civil rights" conversations at both the national and local level. [54]

In fact, any concessions gained by blacks from the City and County Commissions of Miami and Dade County came less from civil rights groups and more from the small-scale political negotiations made between five- or six-person groupings of black and white elites. When blacks demanded and gained increased wages

in service jobs (1943), black law enforcement officers (1944), access to beach swimming (1945), improvements in black housing (1948), black representation on the judicial bench (1950), or an end to racially motivated violence in residential neighborhoods (1951), they looked, not to formal organizations, but to middle-class "race representatives" to bring these issues before city bureaucrats and powerful and professedly progressive white lobbying groups such as the Miami Chamber of Commerce, the Coconut Grove Committee on Slum Clearance, or any number of white women's clubs.[55] Long before various topics of Colored concern would become city- or county-level "issues," though, American- and foreign-born Negroes in Overtown and surrounding black enclaves would debate, quarrel, and reach resolutions in churches, meeting halls, rooming houses and kitchens across South Florida, well beyond the view of local white politicos and the white media.[56]

Unfortunately, however, because of the dearth of a formal, public, and coherent "black" politics in government documents or in Miami's newspaper of record, the *Miami Herald*, most scholars tend to characterize the 1940s and 1950s as apolitical for the region's Coloreds, or, somewhat more accurately, they see the era as containing only the social and political antecedents to the urban rebellions that engulfed black neighborhoods in subsequent decades.[57] To be sure, the most costly consequence of this intellectual tradition has been the library of history on postwar South Florida that consistently treats rioting as *the* defining feature of blacks' political agency. Though a historiographical obsession with the politics of rioting reflects a much larger trend in African-American history, some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that the absence of a coherent *leftist* tradition at the grassroots has encouraged among black South Floridians a *riotous* tradition that, since the mid-1960s, has included at least seven hemorrhages of disorganized, yet politically inspired, violence (Harris 1999; Tscheschlok 1996; Portes and Stepick 1992; Warren, Stack, and Corbett 1986; Porter and Dunn 1983; Marable 1980). Few, of

course, would feel comfortable describing the urban explosions of late-twentieth-century South Florida as any kind of "tradition." Nevertheless, many scholars, out of what seems like a mitigated respect for the racially oppressed, have shown great comfort in praising the politics of rioting, simultaneously offering paeans and eulogies of a "proactive protest measure" that, by their own admission, does not "create a single new job or enhance black representation in local government" (Tscheschlok 1996, 460; Warren *et al*. 631).

In order to move a discussion of black politics beyond the confines of riot politics, one must engage the everyday lives of black Miamians prior to the 1960s because it was under the aegis of Jim Crow that South Floridians of African descent made important and proactive political statements about race, class, and self-hood (Haynes 1995:10-11). For starters, the fact of economic *aggregation* under racial *segregation* allowed Miami's blacks to exercise measured levels of community control and participate in city-wide discussions, albeit white- and bourgeois-dominated discussions, about the fate of their communities. The reality of black South Florida's diversity—both of the cultural and economic kind—suggests that it was more than the threat of white violence that kept blacks from rioting in the decades immediately following World War II. Indeed, based on the recollections of black South Floridians living in the area during the 1950s, one could argue quite convincingly that a powerful everyday politics emerged among segregated blacks, a politics that provided a range of responses to white supremacy, and one that both celebrated the oneness and defied the homogeneity implied by the term "Colored." However, without more scholarship on the politics of 1940s and 1950s South Florida and without further explorations of the variations of Jim Crowism extant in the broader Atlantic World, this point remains woefully under-explored in the fields of Caribbean and American history.

What we do know, however, is that the Jim Crowed America of Klan marches, segregated water fountains, and sundown towns

eventually fell limp before black agency and the juggernaut of white-dominated "progress" (Brands 2001).[58] By the mid-1950s, a new and increasingly modern "Sunbelt" South was thoroughly in the making, partially in response to the international pressures of the Cold War and partially in response to the postwar affluence that federal subsidies and private investment had brought to the poorer corners of the nation. If South Florida hoped to board this locomotive of modernity, it needed a racial climate progressive enough and an urban and suburban infrastructure sleek enough to navigate the new world that was accompanying postwar economic growth (Shofner 426). Given the historical interdependency of race and economics that had governed the "old" Florida, this "new" Florida would carry with it a more modern, progressive, but no less racist urban regime as well (Holt 2000).

The Fall of Overtown and the Unseen Price of Progress

In the summer of 1956, Florida's congressional representatives, select mayors, and a sizable contingent of voters pushed for and passed a State referendum that would create a metropolitan government for Dade County, believing that a more regional approach to governance would prevent tensions between various city governments, ease residential sprawl, and encourage, on the whole, a more modern and efficient governing model (Wolff 1960:vi; Inter-County Regional Planning Commission 4-6; Grenier and Castro 278; Warren *et al*. 627). Thanks in large part to an over-hundred-year-old debate on State's rights in the South, Dade County's "metro" idea enjoyed considerable support among white southerners who believed in the power of "home rule" and saw the necessity of this rule to citizens who "don't wish to get all their orders from Washington" (U.S. Congress 1957:5). But Dade County's new "home rule charter" did more than sate the pleadings of Southern States-righters; it became, for some, a political poster-child of the (newer) "New South" and America's ever-modernizing Union (Sofen 1963:3; U.S. Congress 1957).

In 1950s South Florida, Dade's city politicians saw the

metropolitan government as a means of attracting federal moneys for national defense and growth programs while rejecting those funds directed at social programs and anti-poverty efforts (Schulman 1994). Mayor Kenneth Oka of Miami Beach, for example, believed that the metro government would bring modernity and the benefits of postwar liberalism to his "Garden of Eden" in the form of newer, more modern roads (U.S. Congress 99). The metro government, he argued, would have "enough power and strength to control arterial highway traffic, and *do anything that is necessary* [to prevent traffic congestion]" [my emphasis] (U.S. Congress 101). The Mayor of the City of Miami, Randall Christmas, also stood behind the metro idea, but Miami's official position on the matter had much to do with Miami Beach's dependence on downtown's under-funded waste management, water, and tourist infrastructure. As simply stated by a Christmas representative, "There was no Miami Beach without Miami" in 1956 (U.S. Congress 114). And, because of the dependencies that white Miami had nursed on black domestics, laundresses and laborers, there had historically been no Miami without Overtown. That, however, was about to change.

To the contentment of politicians from both Miami and Miami Beach, the State's new metro statutes gave Dade's County government enough power to please white politicians on both sides of Biscayne Bay, granting the body jurisdiction over "all county-wide functions"—comprehensive planning, roads and traffic control, zoning, parks, urban renewal, and building codes (D'Alemberte 1991:129; Inter-County Regional Planning Commission 8-9). And it seemed that Dade County wasted no time in stretching its new political wings, as its first official action included one of the most significant land-use initiatives in the history of southern Florida, the State, and the country. In the mailboxes and on the doorsteps of homes and apartments across Dade County, a new state suddenly appeared. The highways were coming, and with them Northern capital, a new regional identity, and, most importantly, progress.

As early as the 1940s, barbershop and beauty parlor conversations in Overtown and across black South Florida entertained rumors of the highways' imminent arrival, but few had any idea of the project's scope or the effect it would have on the lives of black people throughout the region.[59] To help control the rumor-mill, the City of Miami held a series of public community meetings in various churches and schools around Overtown. The meetings outlined the building of two highways: Interstate 95, which would run north/south and connect southern Florida to the rest of the country, and Interstate 395, which would, among other things, run east/west and connect Miami Beach to downtown Miami and the Miami International Airport. Used primarily to celebrate the benefits that these projects would bring to Broward and Dade Counties, these meetings were advertised in the *Miami Times*, Florida's most-renowned black periodical, as well as on the radio; and, occasionally, the Mayor of Miami himself, Randall Christmas, would be in attendance to answer questions from local blacks and provide his endorsement of the project.[60] Those residents who attended these meetings and queried the Mayor won assurances from the City that it would grant public-housing priority to any persons displaced by the highway's construction.[61] But, black Miamians had no sense of just how many people the highway would displace and how much housing would be needed. More importantly, these meetings never covered a crucial planning detail. Apparently, federal and local legislators had originally planned for I-95 and I-395 to run through land owned by the white prominent businessman Ed Ball of the Du Pont Corporation. The meetings also left out the fact that, in August of 1962, it was Ball, with the help of Governor Farris Bryant and the Miami Chamber of Commerce, who "encouraged" the Florida State Road Department to redirect the highways through Overtown in the first place (Institute of Government 49, 54, 55; Mohl 1990:154; Mohl 1989a:145; Mohl 1989b:75). Combined with the general culture of corporate secrecy within South Florida's Chambers of Commerce and City and County Commissions, a political preoccupation with

desegregation left much of black Miami's radical community unconcerned with land-use issues and ignorant of the political and economic spoils that white elites divvyed up behind closed doors: building contracts, government subsidies, and similar forms of corporate welfare and local kickbacks accompanying highway development in the region. The campaign to displace black Miamians from Overtown thus represented more than the sterile politics of highway-building; it rang as a sophisticated, racially mediated and highly impersonal orchestra of private interests and federal, state, and municipal authority.

As we have seen, the era of Jim Crow segregation in South Florida has much to teach historians about the financial foundations of racism, given the necessity of black labor and black spaces to the broader economic viability of the region. Likewise, the racist implementation of growth liberalism, as manifested by highway development, also had a basic economic logic governing a more "progressive" white supremacy. Aside from it serving as a giant servants quarters for white Miami, Overtown in the 1950s seemed utterly expendable to white politicians and bureaucrats because, when compared to nearby white communities, it brought very few tax dollars into the City of Miami's coffers. This was due, in large part, to a little-known tax law on "homestead exemption" that prohibited the City from levying taxes against any property assessed at less than $5000, an exception that, because of consistent slum conditions, included all but few homes in Overtown (D'Alemberte 105-6; Inter-County Regional Planning Commission 2). Though one may never fully unravel the overlapping racial and economic motivations that justified the impending condemnation of Overtown in the minds of white politicians, the State's "homestead exemption" policy made it in the City's economic interests to replace the majority of housing in Overtown with an interstate highway, as the latter would spur increased business development in downtown Miami while encouraging white suburbanites from the far reaches of Dade and Broward Counties to spend their dollars in the city's burgeoning entertainment economy. Ironically,

many black business owners, such as hair-salon-owner Opal King, believed that they too would benefit from the increased urban/suburban contact that the highway would bring.[62] But, as King recalls, black business owners knew so little about land use and federal road projects that many operated under the mistaken impression that the interstate highway system would bring consumers through—not over—their community.[63]

Through the interstate highway project and under the guise of the state, the authority of whiteness literally reshaped the South Florida landscape with a colonial deliberateness, moving unevenly, imperfectly, and, indifferently (Stoler 2001:863). But, it did not do so without a level of black complicity, most often reflected by black apathy or an inability of Negro radicals—either locally, nationally, or internationally—to frame racial issues as spatial issues. T. Willard Fair, longtime head of the Miami Urban League, remembered white indifference toward Overtown well. The interstate highway, he contended in 1997, was "part of progress. It has nothing to do with blackness or poverty or location." "What it speaks to," he continued, "is the mistake *the system* made in terms of practicing racism…so it wasn't about race, it was about where you were located because of race."[64] But in 1957, the Miami Urban League, like other organizations with narrow definitions of black rights, unwittingly belonged to "the system." As the preeminent organization on black urban issues, the Urban League offered little in the way of recommendations when it came to preserving the culture and community of an economically weakened Overtown, choosing instead to affirm the certainty of Overtown's demise while defending the growing assumption that highway construction equaled progress (Hott and Lewis 1997). In fact, Raymond Mohl (2002), undoubtedly the most credible and prolific historian on race relations in urban South Florida, recounts how, in 1957, the Greater Miami Urban League actually supported the interstate expressway as "necessary for the continued progress of our city" (79). Similar points could be made about the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Congress

of Racial Equality, and any number of race-conscious leftist organizations during this period. At the same time, the editorial position on the highway taken in Miami's preeminent black weekly, the *Miami Times*, was that "with the expansion and progress of a city, there is little you can do about it" (Mohl 2002:79). Even when the social and cultural cost of the highway to Overtown became obvious in 1960, the *Times* maintained a perspective rooted in the broader political sentiment of growth liberalism, "We are living in a progressive state. We cannot afford to take a backward step'" (Mohl 2002:79).

Contrary to the 1940s, when the trenchant nature of racial segregation had caused black elites and their white allies to focus simple on civilizing segregation, the successful war against fascism and the apparent successes of Brown v. Board (1954, '55) had made the possibilities for segregation's utter destruction much more real by the 1950s. As a result, the City's pre-highway "progress" meetings seemed to have little connection to the more pressing struggle against segregation and the lingering indignities facing Miami's Negroes. "I don't recall whether I knew anybody that actually went to those meetings," noted Judy Nelson. "But," she continues, "the general consensus was that it [the expressway] was going to be a good thing for the community."[65] And for those who missed the poorly attended and vaguely informative "progress" meetings, the highway rumors that hairdressers and barbers exchanged on their shop floors became true only when the evictions started occurring and the City's condemnation notices started arriving.

While it did pay some respect to the social and economic differences between Colored renters and Colored owners, the attempt by a white-controlled state to expunge Overtown of its remaining inhabitants carried comparable consequences for Negroes of all class backgrounds. One Overtown tenant who had lived in her apartment for over forty years received her eviction notice on Christmas Eve, instructing her to be out in thirty days.[66] The City of Miami treated Overtown's few lingering homeowners

with slightly more respect, sending deed-carriers letters on *City* letterhead outlining the *County's* plan and enclosed with a check backed by *federal* funds. As property-owner Rachel Williams remembers, "They sent us [a] notice and a check for $7000 for two double lots…and, at the time, we were not educated to the point to know that we didn't have to take that…and most of us got these checks from the city and we thought we just had to move."[67] Depositing the City's checks served as proof of sale; and while the occasional resident sold his or her property by choice, rarely were residents aware of (and rarely did the City offer) the full value of one's residential property.[68] Truly, the evictions, checks, and the almost unceasing pressure to sell embodied the very authority of the state, representing an inter-governmental concert at its most simple and most profound level. This, as the City's notices intoned, was "the power of eminent domain" (*Eyes on The Prize* 1990).

Under the precedents of three postwar State Supreme Court decisions, the State of Florida, in 1953, passed its provisions for "eminent domain." This diminutive legal term granted enormous power to the State Department of Roads, including the authority to condemn all lands that it deemed necessary for building or repairing "existing, proposed *or* anticipated roads in the State highway system or…roads system" (Highway Research Board 1957:57).[69] Prior to the late 1950s, "eminent domain" policies could exercise only minimal influence because any multi-city projects needed permission from every municipal government involved. This is where Dade County's new metro government came in. The charter for the metro government contained a "supremacy clause" that allowed the body "in cases of conflict [to] supersede all municipal charters and ordinances" (U.S. Congress 34). In tandem with the State's "eminent domain" policy, the metro government had all the authority it needed to preempt local political resistance as it condemned "any material and property necessary for such [road-developing] purposes" (The State of Florida 1955:Ch.337.27). Massive tracts of Overtown became such "property," I-95 and I-395 such a "purpose."

During the 1950s and '60s, decades where highway building became a top priority for federal and local governments across the country, the combination of land purchases and evictions decimated the all-black enclave economy that had sustained the multi-cultural and multi-classed spaces of black Miami over the previous sixty years (Mohl 1989b:76; Schulman 1994). Between 1950 and 1970, the City of Miami's overall population increased by nearly 36,000, but population in Overtown, according to one report, went from 29,253 to 15,935, a drop of nearly half (Institution of Government 90). Another report charted the steady drop in Overtown's population from decade to decade, claiming that the community which housed more than 60 percent of Dade County's total black population in 1950 held only 28 percent in 1960, 11 percent in 1970, and less than 5 percent in 1980 (Planning Department Research Division Report 27,31). The official number of persons displaced remains a mystery, however, with so many undocumented renters and black Caribbean immigrants living in Overtown during the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. For this reason, some estimates of black displacement reach as high as 30,000 (Mohl 1993:130-32). Though black neighborhoods in Broward hardly experienced the kind of disruption that Overtown residents knew during the highway's construction, the project had regional consequences as the "bright lights" of black Miami dimmed and the "calculus of highway engineering" exploited the under-classed, under-informed, and improperly-raced with a frightening precision (Rose 1990:107).

Known as a "sociological disaster" among local leaders on both sides of the now-*de facto* color line, the interstate highway and "eminent domain" represented the cultural power of whiteness wrapped in the material power of "progress" (Mohl 1989b:75-6). "You couldn't fight it," recalled Maude Newbold; "[the highway] destroyed the cultural, the spiritual, the educational concept of the entire community. We lost our neighbors, we lost our friends, we lost our relatives, it was like death…it destroyed us."[70] Sonny Wright remembered, "That expressway…was the beginning of the end…they took [my landlord's] house and other people's houses

'in the name of progress.'"[71] "Eminent domain" pared down the complexity of black life, packaged black neighborhoods for sale, and, in the words of one resident, "sold them to white folks."[72] As white authority had done at Florida's 19th-century founding as an "American" territory, so had the white authority of the *American* domain claimed Overtown mile by mile, "modernizing" an area that many experts considered "outmoded, outdated, and outflanked" (Ryan 1967:15). At the speed of modernity and in a cloud of construction noise and dust, the everyday labels of Jim-Crow colonialism had been replaced by the less obvious ones of growth liberalism—exit ramps, overpasses, and the hum of "progress" moving overhead at 65 mph.

Many believed that building I-95 and I-395 through and on top of Miami's "Central Negro District" would provide a discernible public good, razing deleterious slums whose degradation, in the eyes of many, defined Overtown and most of black South Florida. Of course, the overcrowded shotgun houses of Overtown's "Good Bread Alley" fit the City's definition of "slums," making them among the first markers of black Miami to go (U.S. Congress 42). Ralph McCartney, a former Overtown resident, remembered the day that the city came to enforce their new "building standards":

> All the little shotgun shanties but two were torn down and there was one white guy on a tractor or bulldozer, another white guy standing on the street and…the one on the bulldozer asked the guy on the street, "You want me to get these now?" The guy on the street said, "No, you can get those after lunch"…I cried because there was one white man who had the power to say to another white man "Finish wiping out this Black history [after lunch]."[73]

After I-95's completion in 1969, city officials, knowing they enjoyed the support of black Miami's most elite voices, reserved the right to evoke "eminent domain" on all black-owned property that impeded progress or failed to meet the City's fluid and vague "minimum [building] standards" (Institution of Government 60;

U.S. Congress 41; Inter-County Regional Planning Commission 11). And, in 1982, in a case of historical "collateral damage," the City of Miami tore down Bill Sawyer's Mary Elizabeth Hotel for the purposes of "urban renewal," making the then-sixty-year-old hotel the last great casualty of progress and eminent domain.[74]

Conclusion

If the cultures of the Caribbean basin and the American South were to have a child during the twentieth century, that child could be called Overtown. But, by the early 1970s, Overtown had become one of many "American" black communities to fall under the axe of progressive growth liberalism, as highways, urban development initiatives, and a rapidly transforming economy turned a more-than-American space into a vacant beltway of merge lanes, medians, and memories. In the decades that followed Overtown's demise, city, state, and federal officials would use a number of measures and programs to placate black discontent, including the job placement and training programs and "Model Cities," a Johnson-era "Great Society" initiative (U.S. Commission of Civil Rights 1982:188; Keig 1967).[75] But most of these governmental efforts, like South Florida's "First Under-Expressway Park" pictured on next page, would remain regrettably under-funded and prove tragically inappropriate for the larger social and structural problems that literally overshadowed the future of black Miami.

That the City of Miami used federal funds to build this park on the very ground where "Good Bread Alley" once stood seemed only to affirm the frightening continuities between the state-sponsored discriminations of Miami's Jim Crow past and its ostensibly more "progressive" future.

Whether South Floridians of African descent perceived it as progress or regress, as a product of individual or of institutional racism, the interstate highway was clearly both an *object* and a *moment* in the lives and memories of many blacks in Dade and Broward Counties. Aided by the massive influx of middle- and working-class Cubans, the interstate highway projects of the late-

"Under-Expressway Park," Overtown, July, 1969. (Courtesy of the Black Archives, History & Research Foundation of South Florida, Inc.)

1950s and 1960s placed black Miami at a profound disadvantage just as the more streamlined and white-collared economy of "Sunbelt" South Florida began to take shape. Add to this the irony that even after decades of struggle, negotiation, and organizing culminated with the storied 1960s, "integration" never really happened. Having succumbed to massive white flight, the "exclusive" white working-class neighborhoods of nearby Liberty City, Opa-locka and Carol City became majority-black neighborhoods less than fifteen years after the landmark *Brown* decision. Even after a 1970 court order helped integrate schools and Dade County's remaining public institutions, 92 percent of Miami's blacks remained in segregated neighborhoods (Mohl 1990:47).[76] And by effectively expelling the commercial remnants of Overtown's black middle-class, Miami's "expressway-building era" also set conflicts in motion that plagued relations between black communities and white officialdom for generations (Mohl 1989b; U.S. Commission

on Civil Rights 308-9). So, after Jim Crow helped create South Florida's most vibrant "Negro" neighborhood—Overtown—the federal highway project destroyed it, taking with it the pan-Atlantic sense of community that had provided the social and economic glue which held this and similar Colored communities together. Formerly spaces of considerable economic and ethnic integration, black neighborhoods became largely blighted spaces and *American* black people became the ostensible cause of that blight (Croucher 1999; Trotter 1993; Ho 1991; Wilson 1987; Lehman 1986). Stated most simply, the Colored enclaves of the 1940s and '50s splintered into class enclaves of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s and South Floridians who were rapidly becoming "people of color" ceased to be "a Colored people."

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Smith, Beulah, interviewed by Alix Milfort, 8/25/97

Thompson, Roberta, interviewed by Electra Ford, 8/29/97

Williams, Rachel, interviewed by Electra Ford, 8/19/1997

Interviews from the African American Library and Cultural Centers' *Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide." All conducted by Kitty Oliver, Hollywood, FL.

Abrams-Heyder, Susan, 11/1/99

David, Claude, 9/08/99

Dee, James and Nancy, 10/28/99

Dent, Joyce, 10/25/99

Dietz, Sam, 9/28/99

Eichner, Sandy, 9/28/99

Graham, Henry, 8/26/99

Horvitz, William, 8/5/99

McIntyre, Dorothy, 9/15/99

Merritt, Marvin, 9/13/99

Mills, Reeta, 8/5/99

Robbins, Leonard, 10/29/99

Sweeting, Errol, 10/23/99

Wheeler, Joe, 9/24/99

Notes

[1] During World War II, for instance, the British Colonial Government in the Bahamas allocated 5000 Bahamians to work in various parts of the United States and aid in the production of food for the war effort. And, of this amount, 4,696 were brought into Miami from Nassau in 1943; Correspondence from Col. Philip G. Bruton, Director, Army Corp of Engineers, to Pat Cannon, U.S. House of Representatives, October 13, 1943 and Correspondence from Albert Maverick, Jr., Office of Labor, War Food Administration, to Col. Buie, February 19, 1944, Record Group 224, Records of the Office of Labor, General Correspondence, Aug. 1943-Dec. 1944, Entry no. 6, box no. 11, "6-R15 Florida July-December 1943" folder, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter NA).

[2] Bill Sawyer, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/25/97, 10-12, the Black Archives, History and Research Foundation of South Florida, Inc. (hereafter BAHRFSF).

[3] Bernice Sawyer, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/25/97, 9, BAHRFSF; "Miami's Mary Elizabeth Hotel Finest in the South." 1948. *Miami Times*, December 14, 13.

[4] Peggy McKinney, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Alix Milfort, 8/14/1997, 2, BAHRFSF.

[5] Jerrell H. Shofer cites these words of Governor Fuller Warren, written in 1951, in his description of the forced labor camps of Florida, a labor arrangement that, Shofer cogently argues, harkens to the "traditions" of slavery; Jerrell H. Shofner. 1981. "The Legacy of Racial Slavery: Free Enterprise and Forced Labor in Florida in the 1940s," *The Journal of Southern History* 47 (3): 411.

[6] Correspondence from F.D. Mott, Health Services Branch and Philip G. Bruton, Director of Labor, War Food Administration, July 3, 1944, RG 224, Records of the Office of Labor, General Correspondence, Aug. 1943-Dec. 1944, Entry no. 6, box no. 10, "6-R15 Bahamas" folder, NA; Correspondence from George E. Winston, Manager, U.S. Sugar Corporation, to C.O. Dickey, Chief of Operations, Office of Labor, War Food Administration, March 31, 1945, RG 224, Records of the Office of Labor, General Correspondence, 1945-47, Entry no. 8, box no. 3, "Camps 11-1 United States Sugar Corporation, Florida 1945" folder, NA.

[7] The Department of Agriculture, for instance, used the black-owned Dorsey Hotel in Overtown to process the property of deceased Bahamian workers; Correspondence from Albert Maverick, Jr., Acting Chief, Operations Branch, to H.W. Rainey, Chief of Operations, Atlanta, GA, August 14, 1945, RG 224, Records of the Office of Labor, General Correspondence, 1945-47, Entry no. 8, box no. 10, "Laborers 9 Personal Property" folder, NA; Correspondence from Col. Philip G. Bruton, Director, Army Corp of Engineers, to Claude Pepper, U.S. Senate, October 13, 1943, RG 224, Records of the Office of Labor, General Correspondence, Aug. 1943-Dec. 1944, Entry no. 6, box no. 11, "6-R15 Florida July-December 1943" folder, NA.

[8] According to Mohl's research for instance, every November 5, black immigrants from the British West Indies would parade down Miami's streets in observance of British holiday Guy Fawkes Day, a day on which subjects throughout the British Commonwealth, since the seventeenth century, have burned the so-named traitor in effigy. Upon learning that Guy Fawkes was a white man, however, City of Miami officials outlawed the holiday in the 1930s, believing it inap-

propriate for "Negroes" to burn any white man in effigy, no matter how long the tradition.

[9] Letter from R.H. Johnson to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, January 8, 1929; *Miami Herald*, November 11, 1928, p. 2; January 10, 1929, p. 1, *The Papers of the NAACP*, "Administrative File, Police Brutality, 1937-1939", part 8, series A, reel 14, frame 569, Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

[10] Dorothy McKellar, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/4/97, 8, BAHRFSF; Leonard Robbins, *The Kitty Oliver Collection,* "Crossing the Racial Divide," interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 10/29/99, digital archive, African American Library and Cultural Center, Ft. Lauderdale, FL (hereafter AALCC).

[11] Roberta Thompson, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Electra Ford, 8/29/97, 22, BAHRFSF; Claude David, a white Hollywood resident remembers, "When I was a kid, a black after sundown, you couldn't see a black in the city of Hollywood, they'd all go to Liberia. If they were working in a hotel, they had to have a written slip or permit or something to get back or the Chief of police would question them and all that stuff," Claude David, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide;" interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 9/08/99, AALCC.

[12] Joe Wheeler, "Crossing the Racial Divide."

[13] Peggy McKinney, "Tell the Story," 10.

[14] As early as November of 1936, the City of Miami Beach had instituted the work pass program, a program, thanks to race curfews, with far more immediate racial implications and one that Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and Hollywood later emulated; Correspondence from Lt. C.O. Huttoe to H. Leslie Quigg, *et al*., December 27, 1941, Office of the Miami City Clerk, December 30, 1941, *Resolutions and Minutes of the City Commission*, box 28, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL (hereafter SAF).

[15] According to the testimony of Police Chief Leslie Quigg, the Police department had "about 60,000 fingerprints and photographs, and probably 100,000 cards on file, different things on file;" sworn testimony of H. Leslie Quigg, Suspension Hearing transcripts, May 18, 1944, Office of the Miami City Clerk, *Resolutions and Minutes of the City Commission*, Box 30, SAF.

[16] M. Athalie Range, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/28/97, 16, BAHRFSF.

[17] Joseph H. Dames II, "Tell the Story," 39.

[18] Sam Dietz, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide;" interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 9/28/99, AALCC.

[19] Claude David, "Crossing the Racial Divide;" "When we started hiring employees, like dishwashers, the buses on the beach quit running at 8 p.m. Most of the colored people we used lived in Liberia. Well, after 8 p.m., there were no buses. We stayed open until 12 midnight. By the time they cleaned up and closed up, it was 1 a.m. and then, we had to take them home;" Sam Dietz, "Crossing the Racial Divide."

[20] Maude Newbold, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/29/97, 11, BAHRFSF.

[21] Leome Culmer, "Tell the Story, " interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/13/1997, 5, BAHRFSF.

[22] Leome Culmer, "Tell the Story," 5.

[23] Clayton Harrell, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/14/1997, 20, BAHRFSF.

[24] Charles Johnson, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Alix Milfort, 8/22/97, 46-7, BAHRFSF.

[25] Charles Johnson, "Tell the Story," 38.

[26] Leome Culmer, "Tell the Story," 9.

[27] Radie Jackson, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Yvonne Daley, 9/3/1997, 8-9, BAHRFSF; Clayton Harrell, "Tell the Story," 20.

[28] Clayton Harrell, "Tell the Story," 20.

[29] Reeta Mills, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide;" interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 8/5/99, AALCC; Doris Dorsette, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Yvonne Daley, 8/29/1997, 10, BAHRFSF; First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Miami, "Slum Clearance and Public Housing in Greater Miami." 1950. *Miami Herald*, April 17, 1C.

[30] Joseph H. Dames II, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Electra Ford, 8/21/97, 14, BAHRFSF; Peggy McKinney, "Tell the Story," 8/14/1997, 4, 33.

[31] Leome Culmer, "Tell the Story," 5.

[32] "Black women that were working as a maid in Georgia for $2.50 a week could come to Miami and work for $5.00 to $7.00 a week," Norvell A.S. Holyfield, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Alix Milfort, 8/13/1997, 6, BAHRFSF; Radie Jackson, "Tell the Story," 8-9; "Best Southern Refuge." 1948. *Our World*, January, pp. 19.

[33] "Property Owners Fight Negro School and Housing Project." 1952. *New York Amsterdam News*, September, 6, 5.

[34] Rachel L. Swarns. 1993. "Exodus From the Inner City: How a Success Story Spawned a Tragedy," *Miami Herald*, September 5, 1A.

[35] Joe Wheeler, "Crossing the Racial Divide."

[36] Roberta Thompson, "Tell the Story," 21.

[37] "Integrated Church to Open in Miami." 1965. *New York Amsterdam News*, April 17, 32; Rachel Williams, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Electra Ford, 8/19/1997, 17, BAHRFSF.

[38] Peggy McKinney, "Tell the Story," 37; "Appointed Judge of Miami, Florida, all-Negro Municipal Court." 1950. *Journal and Guide*, May 6, 24.

[39] Judy Nelson, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza and Alix Milfort, 8/18/1997, 14, BAHRFSF.

[40] Author interview with Wilhelmina Jennings, at her home, 2/3/06 (interview in author's collection); Opal King, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/20/1997, 15, BAHRFSF.

[41] Clayton Harrell, "Tell the Story," 15-6.

[42] Bernice Sawyer, "Tell the Story," 11.

[43] George Littlefield, "Tell the Story Project;" interviewed by Devoune Williams, 8/12/1997, 23, BAHRFSF.

[44] Bernice Sawyer, "Tell the Story," 11.

[45] "60-room Sherman Hotel in Miami, Florida purchased by A.L. Symonette, a Negrobusinessman [sic], for $150,000." 1961. *Jet*, vol. 19, February 23, 49.

[46] Bill Sawyer, "Tell the Story," 20, 29.

[47] "Champion Louis Retires." 1949. *Miami Times*, March 5, 4; "Miss Puerto Rico Crowned 'Miss Latin America'." 1950. *Miami Times*,

July 29, 2.

[48] William Horvitz, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide;" interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 8/5/99, AALCC.

[49] James and Nancy Dee, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide;" interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 10/28/99, AALCC.

[50] Unlike their fairer-skinned countrymen, black Cubans fell short of Jim Crow's racial standards for housing, forcing them to live in Overtown with other Florida "Negroes" and making Spanish a common language in the black enclave; Roslyn Davis Clark, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Yvonne Daley, 8/18/1997, 8, BAHRFSF; *The Papers of the NAACP*, "Teachers' Salaries, Florida, Dade County, 1941-1945," part 3, series B, reel 6, frame 126; Charles Johnson, "Tell the Story," 15, 72-73; Helen Franks, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide," interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 9/17/99, AALCC.

[51] Henry Graham, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide;" interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 8/26/99, AALCC; William Horvitz, "Crossing the Racial Divide."

[52] Maude Newbold, "Tell the Story," 23; Dorothy McIntyre, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide," interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 9/15/99, AALCC.

[53] *The Papers of the NAACP*, "General Office File, Labor, Florida, 1954-1955," part 13, series A, reel 3, frame 667-70; Talmadge Willard Fair, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Devoune Williams, 8/28/97, BAHRFSF.

[54] The author's forthcoming doctoral dissertation (2007), addresses this point with considerably greater depth; "By Eminent Domain: Black Communities, White Authority, and the Making of an American South Florida, 1925-1970." Department of History, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

[55] Miami Chamber of Commerce, Minutes of the Industrial Management Council Executive Committee, August 24, 1943, *Committee Meetings Minutes vol. 2 (1941-1946)*, Minutes of the Special Labor Study Committee, November 22, 1943, p. 5, November 26, 1943, *Committee Meetings Minutes vol. 2 (1941-1946)*, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Papers, Charles W. Tebeau Library, Historical Association of Southern Florida (hereafter HASF); "First Negro

Police," Annie M. Coleman Collection, "Law Enforcement" box, BAHRFSF; Dorothy J. Fields, "Ann Coleman," "Local Politics and Elected Officials" box, BAHRFSF; "Friendship Garden and Civic Club: '52 Years of Liberated Leadership,'" "Collective Personalities" box, BAHRFSF; Miami Chamber of Commerce, Meeting Minutes of the Inter-Racial Committee, January 26, 1945, *Committee Meetings Minutes vol. 2 (1941-1946)*, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce collection, Charles W. Tebeau Library, HASF; Coconut Grove Citizens Committee for Slum Clearance, "They Said It Couldn't Be Done: 14th Anniversary Report to Members," (no year provided), Elizabeth Virrick Collection, box 14, "Scrap Book," HASF; Father Theodore Gibson Collection, BAHRFSF.

[56] Only the black-owned *Miami Times* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, which had John A. Diaz as the paper's full-time Miami correspondent, would occasionally capture this dynamic political process at the neighborhood level. But with much of the pre-1948 records of the *Miami Times* having been lost, little evidence, outside of oral histories, remains about black local politics; Appendix II, "Interview No. VII. The Revered Edward Graham, Pastor, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Miami, Florida," in Arthur Chapman. 1986. "The history of the black police force and court in the City of Miami," Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL: 125; "Organizational Heads Table Recommended Inter-Racial Policy." 1949. *Miami Times*, January 1, 1.

[57] Joyce Dent, *The Kitty Oliver Collection*, "Crossing the Racial Divide;" interview conducted by Kitty Oliver, 10/25/99, AALCC.

[58] "City Government Stands by Anti-discrimination Policy in Night Clubs of Miami." 1955. *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 18, 1, 4.

[59] Opal King, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/20/97, 43, BAHRFSF; Dorothy J. Fields. 1982. "What Can We Tell the Children," *Miami Times*, December 16, (no page number provided). "Business and Labor" box 1, BAHRFSF.

[60] Opal King, "Tell the Story," 39.

[61] Bernice Sawyer, "Tell the Story," 31.

[62] Opal King, "Tell the Story," 39.

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] Talmadge Willard Fair, "Tell the Story," 11-12.

[65] Judy Nelson, "Tell the Story," 10.

[66] Norvell A.S. Holyfield, "Tell the Story," 25.

[67] Rachel Williams, "Tell the Story," 21.

[68] Edward McKinney, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Stephanie Wanza, 8/30/97, 39, BAHRFSF.

[69] The court decisions that influenced the States provisions on "eminent domain" were as follows: *Inland Water Ways Development Co. v. Jacksonville*, 160 Fla. 913, 38 So.2d 676 (1948); in which the court upheld the contention that an electric generating plant had the right to take into account its future business in determining what land was necessary for its business; *Carlor Co v. City of Miami*, Fla., 62 So.2d 897 (1953), in which the court argued that it was the duty of public officials "to look and plan for the future." In this case, that "future" meant acquiring land necessary for the construction of what would become Miami International Airport; *Dickson v. St. Lucie County*, Fla., 67 So. 2d 662 (1953), in which the court sustained the belief that public officials, in acquiring rights-of-way, could acquire land necessary to meet the road and rights-of-way needs for both current and future road projects.

[70] Maude Newbold, "Tell the Story," 25, 29.

[71] Sonny Wright, "Tell the Story," 19-20.

[72] Rachel Williams, "Tell the Story," 25.

[73] Ralph McCartney, "Tell the Story," interviewed by Devoune Williams, the Black Archives, History and Research Foundation of South Florida, Inc., 8/14/1997, 42.

[74] Bill Sawyer, "Tell the Story," 44-5.

[75] "Summary of Program Costs: Dade Model City Program: U.S./HUD Comprehensive City: Demonstration Program Grant ME 09-002," in *A Report of the Model City Program*, "Model Cities Program" box, BAHRFSF.

[76] Maude Newbold, "Tell the Story," 7; Dorothy Gaiter. 1976. "Toil For Equality Is Not Yet Finished," *Miami Herald*, July 4, 5L.