Black Voices on Cuban Immigration: Miami African American Press and the 1980 Mariel Exodus¹

Monika Gosin, Ph.D. Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego mgosin@ucsd.edu

This paper investigates how the Miami Times, an African American newspaper in operation since 1929, reported on increased migration from Cuba during the Mariel exodus, and what it reveals about African American concerns about immigration and their own positionality in the United States. While most studies on Black attitudes on immigration policy demonstrate that African Americans are generally in support of immigration, the reports in the Miami Times analyzed in this paper reveal a much more conservative stance. Miami Blacks compared Cuban and Haitian immigration in 1980, asserting that white Cubans received preferential treatment denied to black Haitians who were arriving at the same time. The newspaper demonstrated more sympathy, however, when the Cuban immigrants depicted were of African descent. Thus, Black criticism molded itself to the organizing framework of a black-white binary despite the city's growing cultural diversity. This paper argues that the seeming disdain for Cuban immigration reflected in the newspaper is, upon closer

¹ An abbreviated and earlier version of chapter II, from my dissertation "(Re) Framing the Nation: The Afro-Cuban Challenge to Black and Latino Struggles for American Identity."

² See Schulman, Steven. "Introduction." P. ix.-xiii. In Steven Schulman ed. <u>The Impact of Immigration on African Americans</u>. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2004) for studies.

examination, a symptom of a more pressing desire of the Black population to challenge white supremacy and promote greater equality and acknowledgment of Blacks in the larger sphere of US culture. However, using the black/white frame to critique US racism denies the realities of how relationships between racial and ethnic groups actually work once they come in contact with one another, and ignores the complexity of how power works to maintain the status quo for powerful groups. As Miami continues to diversify today, "black" and "white" are increasingly unstable categories. The newspaper's conceptualization of immigration issues solely in the framework of "race" became problematic, as the simplistic construction of Cubans as "white" and of Haitians as "black," erased possibilities for new alliances and sites for protest in Miami, a city which continues to grapple with conflicts between its native and foreign born residents.

The 1980 Mariel exodus, when 125,000 or more Cubans were brought to the US by boatlift, was triggered when six Cubans seeking asylum used a bus to crash through the gate of the Peruvian embassy in Havana on April 1, 1980. One Cuban guard was left dead after the ensuing gun battle, but the embassy refused to cooperate with the Cuban government and surrender the gate crashers. The Cuban government responded by announcing it would remove the Cuban guards from outside the embassy and allow anyone seeking to leave Cuba to go to the Peruvian embassy. Within 72 hours, an unexpected and staggering 10,000 people

gathered at the embassy.³ In response, On April 20th, Castro announced that anyone who wanted to leave for the US could leave through the port of Mariel;⁴ through this one action the Cuban government could rid itself of political dissenters while also overwhelming the US, particularly South Florida, with large numbers of migrants seeking refuge.⁵

At the start of the Mariel immigration, the US government was favorable to allowing the new migrants to enter the US, but became more restrictive as time went on. Ever since 1959, when Castro came to power, the US had had an open door policy towards Cuban exiles, who, fleeing communism, came to be viewed as model US citizens who integrated well into US society because they were economically, socially, politically, and racially congruent with the dominant elite. However, the Carter administration became perplexed and indecisive as massive numbers of Cubans continued to arrive. Six thousand refugees arrived in the first week, and in May, 3,000 refugees arrived per day.⁶ Under the provisions of the Refugee Act of March 1980 which had passed just before the Mariel exodus began, the Mariels were not automatically accepted as refugees—their status was

³ Masud-Piloto, Felix R. <u>From welcomed exiles to illegal immigrants</u>: <u>Cuban migration to the U.S., 1959-1995</u>. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996.

⁴ The name "Marielitos" is derived from the fact the immigrants of this wave left through the Cuban port of Mariel. I use the term "Mariels" in attempt the avoid the derogatory connotation of "Marielitos."

⁵ Skop, Emily H. Race and Place in the Adaptation of Mariel Exiles. <u>International Migration</u> Review. Vol. 35, no 2 (Summer 2001): 449-471.

⁶ Masud-Piloto, Felix R. From Welcomed Exiles to Illegal Immigrants.

to be determined by review on a case by case basis.⁷ Many were given the status of "entrants," an ambiguous designation which did not extend constitutional rights and allowed the criminal justice system to hold Mariels without due process.⁸ The US struggled to accommodate the large numbers arriving and held many refugees in tent cities and on military bases as they worked to resettle them within US society.⁹ Thus the Mariels were treated more like economic immigrants than as political refugees, the way Cubans from earlier refugee waves had been treated.

A crucial factor affecting US policy and public attitudes towards the Mariels was that they were characterized as criminals and as "undesirables." This negative image of the Mariels was crafted in the Cuban press and magnified in the US press. Fidel Castro released some people viewed as undesirable (homosexuals, criminals, and mentally ill) into the population of those leaving as a strategic move to disrupt and complicate the US' immigration policy towards Cuban refugees. The move was in further protest of the US embargo and of the US'

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⁷ The act limited Cuban immigration by establishing a yearly quota of 19,500 Cuban refugees and required individual case reviews to determine eligibility for refugee status. They could become a permanent resident after two years. (Masud-Piloto, Felix R. <u>From Welcomed Exiles to Illegal Immigrants</u>).

⁸ Aguirre, B.E., Sáenz, Rogelio, and Brian Sinclair James. Marielitos Ten Years Later: The Scarface Legacy. Social Science Quarterly, vol. 78, no. 2 June 1997, p. 487-507.

⁹ Masud-Piloto, Felix R. From Welcomed Exiles to Illegal Immigrants.

¹⁰ Aguirre, B.E., Cuban Mass Migration and the Social Construction of Deviants. Bulletin of Latin American Research, vol. 13, no.2, 1884, p. 155-183; Bach, R. L. J.B Bach, and T. Triplett. 1981/2. "The Flotilla 'Entrants': Latest and Most Controversial," Cuban Studies, 11/12:29-48; Hufker, Brian and Gary Cavender. "From Freedom Flotilla to America's Burden: The Social Redefinition of the Mariel Immigrants." The Sociological Quarterly. Vol 31, no. 2 Summer 1990, p. 321-335), p.333.

overall policies towards Cuba.¹¹ Though these "undesirables" were but a small proportion of the people leaving Cuba (5% according to estimates), ¹² the Castro government played up the characterization of the Mariel immigrants as deviants in their media. The US public began to believe ever increasingly in Castro's characterization of the migrants as the US popular press unquestioningly accepted Castro's depiction of the Mariels. By mid May 1980, an ABC news survey showed the public did not want the Mariels: 57% of adult respondents said they should not be allowed to live in the US, 68% thought President Carter should not have let them enter the US, and 62% said Castro made the US look foolish when he sent the "social misfits." The nightly news also highlighted crimes involving Marielitos in Miami and reported on conflicts between Marielitos and the National Guard. Studies have found that, in fact, the crime wave occurring in Miami at the time had started before the Marielitos came to the US and was a result of drug trafficking. However, the press' continual reporting on the negative consequences of the exodus solidified the idea that the Mariels would be a burden to society.14

One major feature that distinguished the Mariels was the fact that the 1980 exodus brought many more black Cubans to the US than ever before. Maria Cristina Garcia observed that "The Cubans of Mariel were substantially different

¹¹ Fernández, Gastón A. The Mariel exodus twenty years later., p. 41.

¹² Percentage cited in Hufker and Cavendar, "From Freedom Flotilla to America's Burden."

¹³ Aguirre, et al. <u>Marielitos Ten Years Later</u>, see p. 494.

¹⁴ Masud-Piloto, Felix R. From Welcomed Exiles to Illegal Immigrants.

from those who arrived during the 1960s. They were about ten years younger, averaging thirty years of age. There were more blacks and mulattoes among them (from 15 to 40 percent, compared to 3 percent of the 1959-73 migration), and they reflected a wider geographic distribution." Estimates of the actual numbers of blacks among the Mariels vary but no estimates make them the majority.¹⁶ Regardless of the actual number of blacks among the Mariels, the wave came to be distinguished from earlier waves and in general according to their blackness. The characterization of the Mariels as black, in spite of the fact that the majority were white, is reminiscent of the US's one-drop rule, whereby one drop of black blood has a polluting effect, and makes one subject to the denigration blacks have historically received in the US. Several scholars point out that blackness was a key factor in the Mariels' stigmatization.¹⁷ The larger proportion of blacks among the new Cuban immigrants complicated the widespread construction of the Cuban exile community as white and highlighted the complexity of racial identities among Miami's Cuban and African American communities.

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¹⁵ María Cristina García Havana USA: <u>Cuban exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida</u>, 1959-1994. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

¹⁶ It is difficult to determine the actual number of blacks among the Mariels especially since the definition of "black" varies in the US and in Cuba.

¹⁷ i.e. Bach, R. L. J.B Bach, and T. Triplett. 1981/2. "The Flotilla 'Entrants': Latest and Most Controversial," Cuban Studies, 11/12:29-48. Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick, Unwelcome Immigrants: The Labor Market Experiences of 1980 (Mariel) Cuban and Haitian Refugees in South Florida. American Sociological Review, vol. 50, no.4 (August 1985, pp 493-514; Gonzalo R. Soruco. Cubans and the mass media in South Florida. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996, p. 10; ¹⁷ Thomas D. Boswell, James R. Curtis. The Cuban-American experience: culture, images, and perspectives Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984, 1983.

Race Relations in Miami and the 1980 Mariel Exodus

Like most southern cities, Miami was built upon a racist foundation with a political, economic, and social structure designed to exclude non-whites. This foundation set the stage for the explosive racial tensions and unrest that manifested in the 1980's. Since its incorporation in 1896, Miami's population consisted mainly of Anglos and Blacks. According to Florida Historians Marvin Dunn and Alex Stepick, major Miami newspapers such as the Miami Herald and the Miami Metropolis habitually referred to Blacks as "coons" and used similar epithets during the first third of the 20th century. 18 The first Blacks in Miami were immigrants from the Bahamas who arrived at the turn of the century, followed by native Blacks from other Southern states. It was Black labor that originally brought progress to Miami's economy, yet, Blacks were systematically excluded from Miami politics. Blacks were segregated into "Colored Town," now known as Overtown, an area that became a thriving business and cultural center between the 1900's and 1950's. 19 By the 1970's, the Black middle class grew to have a higher average per capita income than other Blacks nationally. But Miami's Blacks were the worst hurt in the nation when the recession of the 1980's hit.

¹⁸ Marvin Dunn and Alex Stepick III "Blacks in Miami" in Grenier, Guillermo J. and Alex Stepick eds. <u>Miami now!</u>: <u>Immigration, ethnicity, and social change</u>. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992).

¹⁹ Marvin Dunn and Alex Stepick III "Blacks in Miami."

Just when African Americans were beginning to experience a Miami without de jure segregation, the demographics of Miami changed dramatically after the Revolution in Cuba in 1959. With its close proximity to Cuba, Miami was a logical destination for Cubans fleeing Castro. Some Cubans already had business ties in Miami during the Cold War, and the US had an open door policy towards Cubans fleeing Castro's communist regime.²⁰ Between 1959 and 1962, an estimated 200,000 families with children under 18 years arrived in the US.²¹ The US provided unparallel federal and local support for Cuban exiles. These Cuban immigrants became known as the "Golden Exiles" because they were able to establish themselves in the US rather quickly compared to other immigrant and exile groups, and gained tremendous power and economic success. They were most likely to be White, as most blacks in Cuba were often of the poorer classes with fewer resources for such a move.²² As Cubans arrived in Miami, Anglos moved out, and Cubans swiftly overtook the city, gaining economic, cultural, and political dominance. Though African Americans had greatly outnumbered

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²⁰ Pedraza-Bailey, Silvia. "Cuba's Exiles." Before Castro took over, the US had established economic and political ties with Cuba through its industries (sugar mills, manufacturers, business forms, etc.). The elite executives and owners were most bound to this US interest in Cuban industry and therefore were more apt to believe the US would eventually be able to intervene in the Cuban station and restore order.

²¹ Perez, Lisandro. "Growing Up in Cuban Miami."

²² Stepick, Alex et al. <u>This land is our land: immigrants and power in Miami</u>. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Grenier, Guillermo J. and Alex Stepick eds. <u>Miami now!</u>: <u>Immigration, ethnicity, and social change</u>. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992).

Cubans in 1960, by 1990 there were more than twice as many Hispanics (987,394) than non-Hispanic blacks (371,691).²³

For African Americans, who have long been regarded as the primary racial minority group in the US, the Cuban migration to Miami was viewed with uncertainty as the newcomers had the potential for being competitors or allies. African Americans and Cubans have had a long history of amicable relationships with one another, for instance, according to Historian David Hellwig, 19th century African Americans were aware of racism in Cuba and supported Black Cuban struggles.²⁴ The 19th century African American press documented racism in Cuba and rather than blaming racism on white Cubans, asserted racism was the result of the influence of "the Anglo-Saxon style." Lisa Brock notes that before the Cuban Revolution, the US Black press was more anti-imperialistic than the white press. In addition, many prominent Black Americans opposed U.S. involvement in Cuba in solidarity with Cuban blacks.²⁵ Cubans also have historically aligned with African Americans. For example, in the 1930's, famous Black Cuban poet Nicolás Guillen and other black Cuban voices sympathized with the plight of African Americans in critiques of imperialism and racism against blacks.

²³ Marvin Dunn and Alex Stepick III "Blacks in Miami."

²⁴ David Hellwig. "The African- American Press and the United States Involvement in Cuba, 1902-1917" in Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes eds. <u>Between Race and Empire: African-Americans and Cubans before the Cuban Revolution.</u> Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998.

²⁵ Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes "Introduction." in Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes eds. <u>Between race and Empire</u>.

Furthermore, more so than other Latin American countries with significant black populations, Cuba has celebrated and relied on its black/African identity for the purposes of solidifying a national identity.²⁶ Yet despite this history, relations between the incoming Cubans and Blacks in the 20th century were strained.

Cubans were viewed by African Americans as possible allies at first, but as Cubans settled in and gained power in Miami, they became viewed by African Americans as rivals and as a new (white) oppressor.²⁷

The plight of African Americans in the 1980's intensified African

Americans' view of Cubans as rivals. According to Dunn and Stepick, in the

1980's the Black community was in crisis; they were the poorest Blacks in the

country and the most frustrated of Miami's residents. Blacks were 24% of

Dade's unemployed in 1980 compared to 17% in 1970, with a poverty rate

(29.8%) triple that of Whites (8.3%) and double that of Hispanics (16.9%). A

string of incidents of police brutality against Blacks spurred riots, the biggest

being the McDuffie riot which occurred in 1980. The McDuffie riot occurred after

the December 1979 McDuffie incident, when 33 year old Arthur McDuffie was

chased by cops after he came to a rolling stop at a red light and made an obscene

²⁶ Carmen Gomez-Garcia. "Cuban Social Poetry and the Struggle against two racisms" in Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes eds. <u>Between race and Empire</u>.

²⁷ Grenier, Guillermo J. and Alex Stepick. "Blacks and Cubans in Miami." In Jones-Correa, Michael ed. <u>Governing American cities: interethnic coalitions, competitions, and conflict.</u> New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001, p. 137-157, p. 156.

²⁸ Marvin Dunn and Alex Stepick III, "Blacks in Miami."

²⁹ Ibid.

gesture to a nearby cop. McDuffie was beaten to death by at least 6 cops while in handcuffs. Police claimed the death stemmed from accidental injuries during the chase. The resulting uprising lasted 3 days, with 18 dead, 804 million in damage, and 1100 arrests.³⁰ Facing volatile race relations and depressed job market, when a new group of Cubans began to arrive in April 1980 from Mariel, many Blacks were not happy to see them.

African American attitudes toward the Cuban influx occurred within a racial framework already clearly established in the US—where white is defined in opposition to black. In a climate where Blacks have historically been disparaged and systematically excluded from full citizenship in the U.S., immigrant groups may be viewed as competition. As scholars Guillermo Grenier and Alex Stepick have observed, the conflict between Blacks and Latinos in Miami is particularly intense and is unique compared to other regions of the country. They maintain however, that a study of the Miami context is important because national trends indicate Black and Latino relations in other cities may follow a similar pattern. Current day conflicts must be historically situated, and research on Blacks' initial reactions to the Cuban influx into Miami can be instrumental for understanding the current state of Black/Cuban relations in particular and Black/Latino relations in general.

³⁰ see Marvin Dunn and Alex Stepick III, "Blacks in Miami" for further details.

³¹ Grenier, Guillermo J. and Alex Stepick. "Blacks and Cubans in Miami."

³² Ibid.

A historical look at Black attitudes on immigration

Several economists and conservatives have used the case of African Americans to argue against immigration, claiming that immigrants compete with African Americans for employment and political recognition.³³ However, despite the substantial attention immigration issues receive in the US, there is surprisingly little scholarship examining black attitudes towards immigration.³⁴ Having been historically relegated to second class citizen status in the U.S., African Americans have had to fight to assert their own claims to U.S. citizenship. Thus the idea that the arrival of the new immigrants could mean potential competition for economic, social, and political resources presents a dilemma that pits African Americans' commitment to justice for Blacks against their commitment to the ideal of justice for all– including immigrants, especially those of color.

Existing scholarship on Black attitudes towards immigration reveal

African Americans have been ambivalent and even contradictory about
immigration over the centuries. In his study of Black press coverage of
immigration events and policy between 1917and 1929, historian David Hellwig
found Blacks were supportive of immigrants and immigration at the beginning of

³³ For names of prominent economists and conservative pundits in the conversation see Stephen Steinberg, "Immigration, African Americans, and Race Discourse." <u>New Politics</u>, vol. X, no. 3. 2006.

³⁴ Schulman, Steven. "Introduction." P. ix.-xiii. In Steven Schulman ed. <u>The Impact of Immigration on African Americans</u>. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2004.

the period. Blacks saw a resemblance between poor immigrants and themselves, and championed the idea that the US should be a haven for them. However, soon the immigrants were seen as a threat. The Civil War had curtailed immigration and expanded the nation's economy, affording free and newly freed Blacks new job opportunities, but the new immigrants soon became direct competition for these jobs. Blacks were dismayed also when the new immigrants did not naturally align with them or support their continued fight for equality. Rather, many European immigrants sought to distance themselves from Blacks in order to gain the benefits attached to whiteness.³⁵

When the immigrants in question were non-white, such as the Chinese who arrived between 1850 and 1882 or Mexicans during World War II, there was similar ambivalence, which was heightened by African American criticism of white imperialism and their desire to align with other people of color. On the one hand, some Black leaders and Black press adopted the discourse of other (White) nativists referring to these groups as "unassimilible or "disease-breeding heathens." Jobs were the point of contention again; some Blacks believed they were entitled to these jobs due to their status as native-born Americans and the debt the U.S. incurred during slavery. On the other hand, the Black press and

³⁵ Hellwig, David J. Black Leaders and United States Immigration Policy, 1917-1929. Journal of Negro History. Vol. 66, No. 2, Summer, 1981, 110-127.

³⁶ Fuchs, Lawrence H. The Reactions of Black Americans to Immigration" in Yans-McLaughlin, Virginia, ed. <u>Immigration reconsidered: history, sociology, and politics</u>. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 293-314.

prominent leaders such as Fredrick Douglas and Booker T. Washington decried the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the differential treatment of Irish and German immigrants compared to immigrants from China.³⁷ Focusing on the African American press during Woodrow Wilson's Mexican Policy between 1913 and 1917, Hellwig found, concerning immigrants from Mexico, that opinions varied. Although many Blacks were against Mexican immigration, the Black press also demonstrated that many other Blacks were critical of US imperialism in Mexico and supportive of Mexican immigrant rights. Blacks were particularly supportive of darker skinned Mexican leaders and rebels whom they viewed as being disparaged in a manner similar to Blacks in the United States.³⁸

Lawrence Fuch's study on Black attitudes towards immigration in the 20th century found Blacks were often negative towards immigration, but by 1980 Black opinion had dramatically shifted in favor of immigration. ³⁹ The Civil Rights Movement had clarified the moral priorities of Black leaders to fight against the oppression of Blacks and all other aggrieved groups. For instance, when Cubans began to arrive in Miami after the Cuban Revolution during the 1960's, some Blacks showed concern that Cubans would infringe upon them, but Martin Luther King warned against actions by Blacks that would work to create division between Blacks and Cubans. Prominent Black leaders such as Jesse

³⁷ Fuchs, Lawrence H. "The Reactions of Blacks to Immigration."

³⁸ Hellwig, David J. The Afro-American Press and Woodrow Wilson's Mexican Policy, 1913-1917, Phylon, vol: 48 no: 4, 4th Qtr., 1987, 261-270.

³⁹ Fuchs, Lawrence H. "The Reactions of Blacks to Immigration."

Jackson framed immigration issues as human rights issues and stuck closely by the Hispanic leaders on immigration policy. ⁴⁰ According to Gerald D. Jaynes, during the 1980's Black legislators were instrumental in passing bills in favor of immigrants. ⁴¹ Black and Hispanic leaders mutually supported the liberalization of the Immigration and Reform Act of 1986 (IRCA) so it would provide amnesty for illegal residents who had been in the US continuously since January 1, 1982. ⁴² Into the 1990's, the Black and the Hispanic congressional caucuses aligned with each other to oppose legislation against illegal immigration, and worked together to help pass the Immigration Act of 1990, which enlarged immigration quotas. ⁴³

Some scholars have argued that the support for immigration during the 1980s and 1990's reflected the ideals of Black leaders and not the general Black public. 44 However, late 20th century public opinion polls demonstrate Black public support for immigration. The 1992 Los Angeles County Survey, conducted by the Social Science Research Survey Center at UCLA showed that while African Americans were more likely than other Americans to believe immigration was detrimental to the labor market, the nationwide poll found Blacks were more supportive of immigration and immigrants than non-Blacks. About two thirds of all Americans said immigrants take jobs from native borns and more than three

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jaynes, Gerald D. "Introduction: Immigration and the American Dream."

⁴² Ibid; Diamond, Jeff. African-American Attitudes towards United States Immigration Policy." International Migration Review vol. 32, no 2, (Summer 1998), p. 451-470.

⁴³ Fuchs, Lawrence H. "The Reactions of Black Americans to Immigration."

⁴⁴ Ibid.

quarters of African Americans believed employers would rather hire immigrants over Blacks. However, African Americans were evenly split between those who favored increased immigration and those who believed there should be a decrease. On the other hand, other Americans favored decreased immigration by a margin of two to one. In addition, while the majority of White Americans were against bilingual education, African Americans were in favor of it by a margin of four to one. Manuel Pastor, Jr. and Enrico A. Marcelli cite a more recent and more favorable Gallup poll (2003): 49 percent of Whites were in favor of a decrease in immigration and only 11 percent said it should be increased. In contrast, while 44 percent of Blacks supported a decrease in immigration, a significant 20 percent supported an increase. Thus, the findings of scholars investigating Black opinions on immigration reveal a strong contradiction: while many Blacks oppose immigration when it infringes on their job prospects, they generally support the rights of immigrants.

Pastor and Marcelli argue Blacks believed the gains that could result from political coalitions with immigrants outweighed the other problems that could result from increased immigration. In their view, Black values about equality and humanitarianism may shape opinions more than economic realities.⁴⁷ Due to their

⁴⁵ See Jaynes, "Introduction: Immigration and the American Dream," p. 3 and 277.

⁴⁶ Pastor, Manuel Jr. and Enrico A. Marcelli. "Somewhere over the rainbow? African Americans, Unauthorized Mexican Immigration, and Coalition Building. In Steven Schulman ed. <u>The Impact of Immigration on African Americans</u>, see p. 119.

⁴⁷ Pastor, Manuel Jr. and Enrico A. Marcelli. "Somewhere over the rainbow?

unique position in the US as both minorities and as Americans, Blacks sought to align racially with the "other" but also desired to establish their rightful place in the U.S. nation.⁴⁸ The response to the Mariel influx in Miami in 1980 demonstrates a similar contradiction, complicated by the fact that Cubans, who were "other," were constructed simultaneously as "White" and viewed as a privileged group. Furthermore, the existence of black Cubans among the Cuban immigrants and the arrival of Haitian immigrants complicated African American notions of Black unity.

During the time of massive Cuban immigration, Haitians were also arriving in large numbers. The first Haitian boat people had arrived in Miami in September 1963, and then regularly after 1977 but from different social classes. When Francois Duvalier (Papa Doc) assumed power in 1957, the upper classes who were most threatened by his regime began to leave. By 1964 members of the middle classes also began leaving, and during the 1960s and 1970s some members of lower classes began to leave (primarily for New York). Between 1977-1981, 50,000 -70,000 Haitians arrived in Miami. Negative stereotypes about Haitians (as AIDS carriers, for example) spurred politicians to work hard at keeping them out. But Black activism was strong around Haitian immigration issues and helped defeat some government efforts to restrict Haitian immigration and incorporation into U.S. society. Black churches and civil and human rights

⁴⁸ Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes eds. "Introduction." Between race and empire.

agencies galvanized support for Haitian immigrants in the face of US policy that sought to send Haitian refugees back. ⁴⁹ In contrast to the Cuban cause, African Americans rallied around the Haitians because Haiti was viewed as an indisputably black nation with a tradition of activism around a black identity. In the opinion of many African Americans, the brutal regime and much poorer conditions within Haiti warranted as much attention from the US government as the Cuban case.

Miami Times Coverage of Mariel

The Miami Times, the most widely circulated weekly Black community newspaper in Miami, can provide insight into African American concerns during the Mariel crisis. The huge numbers arriving during Mariel and the tensions between the Cuban regime and that of the US made the Mariel crisis a top story in the mainstream newspaper, the Miami Herald and the Spanish language El Herald. The event however received little coverage in the African American Miami Times except in reference to Haitian immigration on which it dedicated much space and coverage. What it did cover, however, provides important insight into the tensions met by the Black community regarding the entrance of refugees from Mariel. The reception of the Mariels was shaped by African American civil

⁴⁹ Alex Stepick III, "The Refugees Nobody Wants: Haitians in Miami" in Grenier, Guillermo J. and Alex Stepick eds. <u>Miami now!</u>: <u>Immigration, ethnicity, and social change</u>. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992, p. 57-82. See this work for fuller discussion of the changes in immigration policy towards Cubans and Haitians in the 1980s.

rights principles, the US's historical treatment of African Americans, and local black experiences with Haitians and Cubans. A search for articles in bound newspaper archives and on microfilm covering the 1980 Mariel exodus and its aftermath between the dates April and September 1980 yielded only thirty articles—news stories, editorials, and letters to the editor. The content of the article was analyzed to determine prominent themes.

The most prominent themes in the coverage of Mariel were 1) Support for native born Blacks as Americans and opposition to foreigners or immigrants (i.e. Latinos) (26%); 2) critique of the US racial system and its preference for whiteness and denigration of blackness (22% of articles); 3) support for black Haitians and opposition to (white) Cubans (22%); 4) the necessity of unity among all oppressed peoples (20%); and 5) the unity of Black peoples in the African Diaspora (7%). There was much overlap, with several of these themes expressed within one article. The majority of the news stories, editorials, and letters to the editor expressed a fear that Cubans would push African Americans to the bottom of the US racial hierarchy, below Cubans and other immigrants; (i.e. an editorial of Aug 14, 1980 "Too many minorities blacks getting left out," and a September 11, 1980 news story "Illegal Immigrants displacing American workers"). Less than a generation removed from the civil rights movement with its promises of better days for African Americans, African Americans held a precarious position in the U.S. and sought to hold onto it in the face of changing demographics.

The first article referencing the Mariel events in the Miami Times was written on April 17, 1980 by an op-ed columnist titled, "Immigration Policies Should Be Colorblind." The article questioned the federal support of Cubans and the absence of support for Haitians. The article led with a powerful critique: "The immigration policies of this nation are prejudicial and anti-black." Further, the columnist said:

...I don't buy the US government's answers about one nation is communist and the other a dictatorship. If you are killed by the forces of a dictator you are just as dead as if it were by communist forces....I am not against Cuban, Nicaraguan, Vietnamese or any other refugees who are admitted to this nation. What I am totally against is the lily [sic] white immigration policies of these United States which has an unwritten chord which states, 'if you're white you're right, if you're black go back.' Write our US representatives and tell them to stop treating our Haitian brothers and sisters unjustly.⁵⁰

This op-editorial criticized the U.S. and its racist policies, but made it appear racism was experienced only by those with black skin (not by Cubans, Nicaraguans and Vietnamese). Cubans were discussed as Whites, therefore favored by the US government, whereas Haitians were constructed as the "brothers and sisters" of African Americans. Like many other articles that commented on Haitian immigration issues, the piece called for African American activism around immigration issues in support of Haitians as members of a black Diaspora. For instance, a May 8, 1980 editorial titled "Haitian Refugees Finally

⁵⁰ Thomas, Ricky. "Immigration Policies Should be Colorblind." (Op-editorial). <u>Miami Times</u>, 17 April 1980, p.6.

Noticed" opened with: "It took an inflow of 24,000 new Cuban refugees in the past week to bring attention to the 25,000 Haitian refugees who have been here among us for two years." While the piece called for the equal treatment of both groups, the wording of the lead sentence and much of the article served to dismiss the Cuban immigration in favor of a focus on Haitian immigration.

An op-editorial written by prominent Black leader Vernon Jordan, whose column appeared regularly in the paper, questioned the US policy assisting refugees from Communist countries and not from others such as the Duvalier dictatorship. He said, "Denial of basic human and political rights is hardly a monopoly of communist countries." Jordan asserted race was most likely the reason for the differential treatment of Haitians. He argued that while other minorities were discriminated against in the US, it was not as insidious as the "brazen racism against blacks." 52 Jordan's piece like many of the other editorials and new stories covering Mariel stood within a black/ white framework whereby new immigrants such as Cubans were not necessarily aligned with Blacks but rather received preferential treatment from Whites, or were viewed as being "foreign Whites." After 20 years living with the "Golden Exiles" in Miami, African Americans' frame of reference was colored by their dealings with the established Cuban community that had achieved substantial power and influence

⁵¹ Editorial. "Haitian Refugees Finally Noticed." Miami Times, 6 May 1980, p. 1.

⁵² Jordan, Vernon. "A Fair Break for Haitian Refugees." (Op-editorial). <u>Miami Times</u>, 5 June 1980, p. 5.

in Miami.

An editorial titled "America's Partiality to Cubans" asked the readers to consider whether the US should draw the line in helping the Cubans. As in Jordan's op-editorial, the article contrasted the racialized experiences of African Americans as worse than that of Cubans. The article claimed Cubans suffered less scrutiny than African Americans and that Cubans were rarely falsely accused of crimes as were African Americans. ⁵³ Ironically, as other research proves, the new wave of Cuban immigrants from Mariel (many of whom were black), were depicted as criminals within both Cuban and U.S. press. ⁵⁴

The Miami Times news stories and editorials often painted Cubans as foreigners in opposition to African Americans who, as native to the US, should have been entitled to the privileges of citizenship and to stand closer to Whites. For instance, an August 21, 1980 editorial, "Government should accommodate those Cubans wanting to go back," made claim to the US nation and to its "greatness" as it criticized the federal government for "sidestepping its responsibility" towards the refugees and leaving the mess to the local government to clean up. The article read, "It is inexcusable that American citizens are being victimized by the federal government's shoddy handling of the Cuban boat flotilla...It's time we remind Castro that he's not dealing with the thirteen original

⁵³ Editorial. "America's Partiality to Cubans" Miami Times, 1 May 1980, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Masud-Piloto, Felix R. From Welcomed Exiles to Illegal Immigrants.

colonies."⁵⁵ The article firmly established African Americans as part of the "we"–American citizens, who along with White Americans believe in preserving the economic and political interests of the nation.

An emphasis on the controversies of language in several articles established an opposition between Cubans and African Americans, reflecting why African Americans deserved more rights to the privileges of citizenship status than Cubans. A top news story titled "'No habla Espanol' costs black maids their jobs" (August 7, 1980) reported that a hotel manager fired Black maids because it wanted to hire Spanish speaking maids to better cater to the Latin American tourists who frequented the hotel. The article expressed the fears found in several other stories and editorials that claimed Cubans were taking jobs from Blacks, and that Blacks should fight against non-English speakers. A letter to the editor (October 9, 1980) from a member of the public complained that bilingualism has been used by Spanish speaking people to justify discrimination against Blacks. 56 Such articles complained that Cubans were forcing their way of life on everyone else and asserted that Americans should speak English. 57

One of the most scathing was a letter to the editor written by a reader titled "Cubans Should Not Be 'One Up' On Blacks" which read:

⁵⁵ Editorial, "Government should accommodate those Cubans wanting to go back," August 21, 1980, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Letter to the editor. "Bilingualism an excuse for discrimination." Miami Times, 9 October 1980, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Letter to the editor. "Immigrants insist on bilingualism." Miami Times, 6 September, p.39.

Spanish should not be crammed down Americans' throats whether Black or White. When refugees are invited into a person's home (America), they shouldn't rearrange the furniture (English language), after getting here, but they leave all cultural ties either at home or in that foreign country that they come from in order to adapt the culture of America namely, an appreciation for an English speaking society. They are both minorities but Cubans should not have one up on language whereby it is a liability not to speak Spanish.⁵⁸

The writer presented the metaphor of the United States as a house, a house where both Blacks and Whites belong, in part because both groups speak English.

Refugees however, can only be accepted in if they are willing to give up their own culture and adopt the culture of the US. The newspaper's assertion that African Americans "live in the house" denies the actual reality—African Americans continue to be excluded from full inclusion in the nation.

Although almost half of the articles covering Mariel and the influence of Cubans in Miami were generally negative, about a fourth of the articles also expressed positive opinions. These articles expressed a desire to preserve alliances between minority groups and to explain conflicts between the two groups with a critique of white racism. For example, an editorial "Bilingualism is here to Stay" (September 11, 1980) argued in favor of bilingualism, maintaining Blacks should accept the reality that (at the time) Dade County was 53% Latino. The editorial suggested bilingualism could be an asset and advocated that Black

⁵⁸ Letter to the editor. "Cubans Should Not Be 'One Up' On Blacks." <u>Miami Times</u>, 15 May 1980, p. 35.

kids learn Spanish as well. This editorial and other articles supportive of immigration demonstrated the complexity of the issue of Black/Cuban conflict and served as a reminder that there was no simple unified Black stance on the issue.

Several supportive articles were in the form of columns from Black leaders. Research has demonstrated that the actions of prominent Black leaders have been influential in swaying Black public opinion and political behavior. The Miami Times reports included stories about the NAACP's stand on immigration issues and ran columns by leaders such as Jesse Jackson, Bayard Rustin, and renowned African American scholar Manning Marable. A September 18, 1980 news story "NAACP Decries Anti-Bilingual Petition" discussed the greater Miami Chapter of the NAACP's opposition to a petition for an ordinance that no Metro money should go to projects using languages other than English. The NAACP argued that such an ordinance would not just affect the groups targeted (such as Spanish speakers) but would also affect African Americans and jeopardize events celebrating Kwanzaa (for example). The article contended that anti-bilingualism efforts supported white supremacy, something Blacks have been fighting against for centuries.

Civil rights leader Bayard Rustin contributed:

...the widespread hatred and animosity of blacks toward the Cuban and

⁵⁹ Pastor, Manuel Jr. and Enrico A. Marcelli. "Somewhere over the rainbow?"

Haitian refugees demonstrates that our economy of scarcity has at least [sic] succeeded breaking the natural bonds linking the oppressed, the old strategy of "divide and conquer" has been resurrected, and black people have been distracted from the real sources of their problems by those who use refugees as convenient scapegoats.⁶⁰

In contrast to most news stories and editorials, which gave the impression that no animosity existed between African Americans and Haitians, this op-ed was the only acknowledgment that conflict also existed between these two groups. Haitians too were arriving in large numbers, and were potential competitors for jobs. In addition, Haitians were not English speakers, yet there was little mention in the newspaper of conflict over language between Haitians and African Americans. The newspaper articles in the Times demonstrated an assumption that the blackness of Haitians presented a natural kinship between them and African Americans—a natural alliance that erased economic and other lingering conflicts. Including Cubans along with Haitians, Rustin asserted also a "natural" affinity between Blacks and other oppressed peoples, regardless of color, based on issues of social justice. He pointed to an outside source of conflict between the groups; the "powers that be," that manipulated and divided the groups using immigrants as scapegoats. Though his statements were not explicit, Rustin implied that the white power structure had not taken care of African Americans' concerns, which were exacerbated by the 1980s depression. According to his ideals, Blacks and

⁶⁰ Rustin, Bayard. "Tragedy in Miami: Oppressed vs. Oppressed." (Op-editorial). <u>Miami Times</u>, 5 June 1980 p. 5.

other oppressed groups should work together to bring about the changes that had not yet come into fruition.

Cuban Brothers and Sisters? Afro Cubans in the Miami Times coverage

The newspapers' simple binary between black and white, whereby the domestic conflict between native born Blacks and Whites was imposed on the foreign born "blacks"-Haitians and "Whites"- Cubans, was complicated by the larger presence of Afro Cubans among Mariel refugees. Often the paper asserted the main reason for the difference in immigration policy towards Cubans and Haitians was racism, rather than political ideology or economics, because Cubans were viewed as White. What to do then with black Cubans? If Cubans were white, but black Cubans were benefiting from the same liberal polices toward "white" Cubans, could US policy towards Cuban immigrants be simply attributed to racism? In 5 of the 30 articles, the newspaper did acknowledge the existence of black Cubans, pointing out that "the new Cuban refugees are bringing a far larger number of blacks than the original freedom flights of 10 years ago."61 When discussing blacks Cubans, the paper demonstrated more sympathy than it did towards "white" Cubans, and pointed out the racism experienced by black Cubans.

A news story "Black [Cuban] refugees forced from commandeered

⁶¹ Editorial. "Cuban Refugees and Haitian Refugees." Miami Times, 15 May 1980.

houses" (September 4, 1980) described the fate of 37 illegal black Mariel Cubans who had so few resources they resorted to squatting in abandoned houses and were then commanded to leave. The story painted a very sympathetic picture, starting with how one 23 year old woman, worried about how she would support herself and her unborn child, wanted to douse herself with gasoline and end it all. The story also said black Cubans received limited support from their own community, alleging the existence of a conflict between black and white Cubans. Similarly, a September 11, 1980 letter to the editor, "S. Florida's goal: keep out Haitians" claimed non-black Cubans were shunning black ones. The May 15, 1980 editorial "Cuban Refugees and Haitian Refugees" reported that black Cubans were also experiencing discrimination from Americans and being treated worse than white Cubans. The article noted that many black Cubans were being criminalized and sent off to be detained at Elgin Air Force Base in Pensacola and at Fort Chafee in Arkansas, highlighting the ways these Cubans suffered because of their blackness.

An op-editorial "Reflection" by Haiba Jabali (April 24, 1980)

demonstrated a desire to include black Cubans within a black Diasporic identity
whereby the concerns of black Cubans should also be the concern of African

Americans. Discussing important current events in the international black world
in the previous month, she critiqued the oppression of Blacks by other Blacks:

The suffering of Haitians are [sic] no different from the suffering of South

Africans or the Afro-Cubans or the Jamaicans, or the Afro-Americans. Like the Cubans who jammed the streets of little Havana in Miami in support of their fellow countrymen, blacks too should rally behind supporting each others efforts to break forth with human dignity, justice and freedom, and the basic necessities needed to live a decent life in today's world. 62

Her final thoughts affirmed a re-evaluation of Pan-Africanism and proclaimed, "together we will win." Haitians, Afro-Cubans, Jamaicans, African Americans are, according to this author, all in the same boat. Like the civil rights leaders who advocated unity among oppressed peoples, this author expresses an idea of a need for peoples in the African Diaspora to be united. Unlike others, this story was less antagonistic towards Cubans and presented Cuban activism as a model for African Americans. Yet despite the long history of African American and Cuban cooperation outlined earlier, in the Miami conflict between Blacks and Cubans, with the specter of possible cultural, economic, and political losses, appeals to afro-Diasporic identities were less of a concern for many African Americans. In the newspaper, only identifiably black Cubans were included within this Afro-diasporic family. 63

Discussion and Conclusions

While news stories and editorials in the Miami Times were often antagonistic towards Cubans, overall it was US policy itself that was being

⁶² Haiba Jabali. "Reflection" (Op-editorial). April 24, 1980, p.24.

⁶³ Each time the paper reported on black Cubans, a photo was included, perhaps to demonstrate the dark color, or 'black look' of the Cubans discussed.

criticized rather than Cubans as a group. The positions taken in the paper speak to African American struggles to assert a rightful claim of inclusion in the US nation and their "double consciousness" (W.E.B. Du Bois). ⁶⁴ African Americans have traditionally sought to frame race relations within a structural framework; hence they have often organized their struggle in a manner that is inclusive of other immigrant groups who, living in a white supremacists society bent on preserving the status quo, may share a similar history of racism and discrimination. However, the desire to make claim to the nation has contributed to the adoption by some African Americans of harsh nativist rhetoric when they perceive recent immigrants may be receiving preferential treatment. Black leaders and members of the Black public worried that the gains of the civil rights movement were being eroded and that immigrants would hasten this erosion by taking the jobs that African Americans, particularly the lower classes, could have. We must understand the embedded critique African Americans make about their continued disenfranchisement in the United States. Still, as Nicolas De Genova asserts, "...one of our critical tasks is to illuminate the ways that racially oppressed people do and do not make claims on Americanness. Do they disrupt, repudiate, subvert or endorse the hegemonic US social formation? Are their efforts enlisted in the service of sustaining the resilience of their own or other's oppression?... we must have the political courage to soberly assess not only the heroism of our

⁶⁴ Lisa Brock and Digna Castañeda Fuertes eds. <u>Between race and empire</u>.

organized mobilizations but also the mundane struggles of our alienated everyday life..."⁶⁵ This task will be increasingly necessary in our changing society and these questions must be asked to fully root out the hegemony in US social formations.

Interethnic conflict such as that between African Americans and Cubans in Miami speaks to this new complexity of race in the United States.⁶⁶ According to Sociologist Nicolas C. Vaca, relationships between Mexican Americas, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, and other groups were forged during the 1960's by a common commitment towards achieving Civil Rights goals. Vaca argues the Civil Rights agenda was set by African Americans and supported by other aggrieved groups. However the changes in the economy since the 1970's, US labor needs, housing discrimination, increased urbanization, and political competition has affected immigrant and Black populations in ways that jeopardize such alliances.⁶⁷ Highly visible racial conflicts such as the aftermath of Mariel or of the Rodney King verdict bring these concerns to the fore.

Edward Chang and Jeanette Diaz-Veizades insist theoretical perspectives analyzing the complexity of ethnic and racial relations in multicultural urban centers such as Los Angeles [and Miami] must simultaneously "address issues of

⁶⁵ Nicolas De Genova, ed. <u>Racial transformations</u>: <u>Latinos and Asians remaking the United States</u>. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006, p. 17.

⁶⁶ Vaca, Nicolas C. <u>The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and What it Means for America</u>. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004).

attitudes and perceptions, power disparities, the effects of demographic shifts, differences in culture and race, different histories of oppression and discrimination, and the position of racial conflict within the larger sociopolitical realm..."68 Chang and Diaz-Veizades discuss Black/ Latino interethnic conflict in South Central Los Angeles, an area whose once primary Black population has become displaced by the immigration of Latinos in the area. They argue housing discrimination, US labor needs, political competition, and demographic and economic restructuring of the 1980's promoted conflict between Blacks and Latinos.⁶⁹ In a discussion on the aftermath of the 1992 Rodney King incident, they reveal how the media constructed racial tensions in Los Angeles in ways that pitted Blacks and Koreans against one another and concealed the role of Whites. Koreans were portrayed as passive and silent and Blacks were portrayed as angry and vocal. Both characterizations relied on the belief in the specific pathologies of both groups. Claire Jean Kim makes a similar argument in her discussion of Black/Korean conflict in New York. 70 While the public often views interethnic conflict as a psychosocial problem between two groups, the scholars cited here frame interethnic conflict within larger social and structural issues.

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⁶⁸ Chang and Diaz-Veizades. Ethnic Peace, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Chang, Edward T. and Jeannette Diaz-Veizades. <u>Ethnic Peace in the American City: Building Community in Los Angeles and Beyond.</u> (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999).

⁷⁰ Kim, Claire Jean. <u>Bitter Fruit.</u>

Ethnic Studies scholars critique simplistic explanations of interethnic conflict that characterize them as merely "cultural differences" or "misunderstandings." They address the roots of interethnic/racial conflict by demonstrating the larger issues of power and of racialization projects at work and the influence of the movement of transnational capital that has triggered the new immigration and framed the relations between new immigrants and Blacks in the US. For example, Michael Omi and Howard Winant take the idea of race and place it within a wider understanding of processes of racialization and racial formations. 71 They say, "We define racial formation as the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed."⁷² According to the understanding of racial formation, race is both a matter of social structure and representation. Race can be produced as ideology through discourse and the meanings attached to race which become "common sense." It is important in their formation to see how racialization is a process, it is not fixed and shifts as it is historically situated. Thus, in terms of the changes in the nature of race after the new immigration we can see how preexisting racial ideologies can be rearticulated in the present. For instance, even though the new immigrants challenge the black/white binary since many of them do not neatly fit in the categories of either white or black, the black/white binary endures and is

⁷¹ Omi, Michael & Howard Winant. <u>Racial formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s</u>. New York: Routledge, 1994, p.1.

⁷² Omi, Michael & Howard Winant, p. 55.

used to contain the new immigrants in particular ways. For instance, in the current study, Cubans are constructed as "white" and Haitians as black despite having very different histories than White and Black native born Americans.

Understanding the ways racialization processes are rearticulated is important to avoid a position such as that advanced by some economists and right wing conservatives in the 1980's and 1990's about the effect of immigration on African Americans, that pits Blacks against immigrants.⁷³ For instance, sociologist Stephen Steinberg argues that capitalist interests have motivated the US to import skilled and unskilled labor rather than ease wages for native workers. Racism against Blacks he argues, remains unexamined since the new immigration contributes to a positive multicultural image of the US and politicians are able to highlight the diversity of America to deny existing racism. According to Steinberg, prevailing racism against Blacks is revealed in interviews with employers who demonstrated they actively discriminate against African Americans in favor of immigrants, because they considered immigrants better workers and less disgruntled than Blacks.⁷⁴ The critique of the institutional and systemic factors contributing to the labor choices of the US, and the conservative motives which compare African American losses and immigrant successes to prove the pathology of African Americans, is valid. However, this scholarship

⁷³ Steven Schulman ed. <u>The Impact of Immigration on African Americans</u>.

⁷⁴ Stephen Steinberg, "Immigration, African Americans, and Race Discourse." <u>New Politics</u>, vol. X, no. 3. 2006.

often reinscribes the same logic of "blame the victim" that it critiques by implying that the immigrants themselves are the problem. This construction of the debate includes African Americans within a nativist framework and does not discuss the positive role that immigration could have such as helping Black causes by promoting an overall emphasis on multiculturalism and cultural plurality. Pastor and Marcelli argue the latter, and say the new immigrants can help expand civil rights coalitions by promoting greater incentive for anti-discrimination efforts among employers, for example.

Claire Jean Kim's discussion of how Asians are placed in the racial structure of the U.S. is useful for a more nuanced understanding of findings in the Miami Times and the opinions of African Americans towards Cubans and other immigrants. In Kim's concept of "racial order," racial categories are reproduced relationally to other groups in a distinct order (but this ordering can be dynamic and continuous). She describes the racial ordering as not a single scale hierarchy but as a field structured by at least two axes: superior/inferior and insider/foreigner. Blacks and Whites she says are major anchors, Whites on top and Blacks as bottom and incoming immigrants are positioned in relation to these. She says, "Asian immigrants and their descendants have been 'triangulated' insofar as they have been racialized both as inferior to Whites and superior to

⁷⁵ Jaynes, Gerald and Fredrick McKinney. "Do Blacks Lose When Diversity Replaces Affirmative Action?" in Steven Schulman ed. <u>The Impact of Immigration on African Americans</u>.

⁷⁶ Pastor, Manuel Jr. and Enrico A. Marcelli. "Somewhere over the rainbow?

Blacks (in between Black and White), and as permanently foreign and inassimilable (apart from Black and White)."⁷⁷ Whites remain neutral or normative while Asians are placed in an intermediary position. Using this analytical frame, African Americans are positioned as "more American" than immigrants because they speak the dominant language and have adapted many of the customs of the dominant culture by virtue of their longer history in the US. In this way they are conceived of as being different from immigrants and perhaps sharing more claim to American citizenship than newer immigrant groups.

American Studies scholar Arlene Dávila notes for instance that advertisers view African Americans as the only "indigenous" minority in the US and places them closer to mainstream culture as in many ways part of the "general market."⁷⁸

However, because of the position they have held historically as "the ultimate other" against which whiteness was constructed, Blacks continue to hold a stigmatized position. Blacks have been set apart as particularly disadvantaged and the stigma attached to blackness that has developed since the English explored Africa in the 1500's has been particularly enduring.⁷⁹ Thus new immigrants (in particular Asians who have been conceived of as "model"

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⁷⁷ Kim, Claire Jean. <u>Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York</u> City. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 16.

⁷⁸ Dávila, Arlene. <u>Latinos Inc</u>. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2001).

⁷⁹ Noguera, Pedro A. Anything But Black: Bringing Politics Back to the Study of Race. In Percy Claude Hintzen and Jean Muteba Rahier eds. <u>Problematizing blackness: self-ethnographies by Black immigrants to the United</u> States. New York: Routledge, 2003; Jordan, Winthrop. <u>White over Black: American attitudes toward the Negro</u>, 1550-1812. (New York: Norton, 1977).

minority" and Cubans who have been constructed as "white" and "the Golden Exiles") can also be placed above Blacks in a racial hierarchy. Kim's work illustrates the stability of the position of African Americans at the bottom of the racial order despite the changes brought forward by new immigration. Her explanation can also help explain the African American "defensiveness" and critique of a US policy that appeared to favor other groups while still neglecting the concern of Blacks. The strategy of relying on racial identities for political mobilization that has been historically important for solidifying African American political communities in the past continues to be significant because African Americans and people of African descent continue to be disenfranchised in US society. But how will African Americans incorporate new immigrants of African descent, such as black Cubans who share a black racial identity, but have differential Spanish linguistic, Cuban national, and Latino ethnic identities within their struggle? Continued research in this area will yield important insight into how the growing complexity of race relations in the US will impact the social identities and mobilization strategies of various racial/ethnic groups in the United States.

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