

## Paradise Lost: The Evolution of the American Visitors' Perceptions of Cuba and Cubans between 1898 and The 1930s

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### Abstract

This research looked at the attitudes and ideologies of American tourists and visitors to Cuba since American occupation in 1898 through the 1930s. Contacts between Americans and Cubans during these almost four decades were frequent and intense. Despite their frequency, however, much less have been written concerning these contacts than about economic dependency, sugar, and race. Few scholars dwelled into how tourists and visitors projected American influence and how they evolved Cubans' self-image and national consciousness. Through the study of these evolving attitudes on both sides, this research highlights the importance of personal contacts fostered by the tourist industry and how they shaped identities.

**Keywords:** Cuba-Cuba-1898-1930s; Perceptions of Cuba; American Tourists-Tourism-Pre-revolutionary Cuba

### Introduction

This paper focuses on the American attitudes about Cuba and Cubans. The relations between the two countries were never fair and balanced given the obvious differences in size, population, and the much earlier independence and development of a national consciousness in the United States. Nonetheless, American interest in Cuba and Cubans has always been deep and out of proportion to an island of its size and population. The American and Cuban connection has always been of interest to scholars who have written multiple articles and books about the complex linkage between the two countries. Less research is available about how the direct contact between Americans and Cubans on the island affected the self-identity of the governing and economic elites and the racial relations on the island. The central thesis of my research is that the Cubans were deeply influenced by the intense contact with American visitors and American culture and these constant and intense relations affected and modified the Cuban self-image and national consciousness particularly among the elites. This self-image and the desire for modernity by the political and economic elites impacted race relations on the island as well.

As a result of the point of view of this research, it will rely mostly on American sources regarding Cuba and on Cuban documents prepared for American investors and visitors to the island nation. I investigated as my primary sources multiple travelogues by American travelers during different decades as well as different articles about Cuba published by the National Geographic Magazine, The New York Times, and other American publications since before the military occupation through the 1930s. Most of the primary sources used were not only written narratives but also photography and illustrations. They provided evidence of the effort and interest to appeal to the growing American middle and upper class tourists that became a critical component of the hospitality industry as it developed into one of the biggest and fastest service industries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tourism became an important source of foreign revenues for the Cuban economy as the island became one of the most popular attractions for American tourists due to the geographic proximity to the United States. Americans imagined Cuba as culturally different and exotic but not dangerous or foreign. For many other Americans, the travelogues, articles, and photographs presented the only opportunity to know the outside world, Cuba included. As a result, these sources helped to create a widely recognized image of Cubans.

Illustrations, mass produced magazines, and photography became associated with modernity not only in Latin America because they also enthralled American readers by providing them an image of other regions and areas. These new communication methods epitomized what Robert M. Levine referred to as "modernity [1], it combined the aesthetic of art with the precise world of science; and it was widely fashionable in Europe."<sup>1</sup> Europe and North America became synonymous with cultured modernity across Latin America. Latin Americans perceived European and North American progress and innovations as both cultural and technological paragons of modernity. Photographs and illustrated magazines recorded not necessarily reality, but rather provided an image of what the photographers and writers wanted to convey. As a result, these tools became an extremely important source to study the changing perceptions that Americans had about foreign lands. Simultaneously, these instruments, together with travelogues and the narratives supplementing visual instruments, gave us invaluable tools to analyze the changing metaphors of how the press, government, and as a result, a large portion of the traveling public saw Cuba.

The Cuban economic and business elites understood English for the most part and had access to the same sources of information, particularly in a nation as close to the United States as Cuba. These processes of increasing familiarization and acculturation among the Cuban economic and business classes intensified during the nineteenth century as the United States became Cuba's main economic partner as well as the location chosen by most Cuban who went into exile during the island's fights for independence. These elites placed great importance on how outsiders in Europe and North America perceived

<sup>1</sup>Robert M. Levine. *Images of History: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Latin American Photographs as Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 5.

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them, their fellow citizens, and their country. The opinion in the industrialized and modern world affected their attitudes about the racial and ethnic minorities that made up a substantial percentage of the lower classes. Therefore, American and Cuban elites used race or hid it as the case arose. Cuba for North America had added importance since most Americans saw it, correctly or incorrectly, as their creation. The United States government and press tended to mitigate or completely omit the effort of Cubans in their long wars of liberation coinciding with the American era of imperial hubris. As a result, they had a vested interest in their first imperial project. Although sovereign, the United States could still influence Cuba through the constitutional limitations imposed during the first three decades of Cuban independence. This power increased the relative importance of Cuba to Americans as compared to other countries and affected Cuban attitudes including racial ones. While race and racial prejudice was a constant during the four decades of our research, changes occurred in both countries and these changes in attitudes led to slow transformation race relations and in racial ideologies [2].<sup>2</sup> In the particular case of Cuba, the growing importance of tourism and a more assertive nationalism in the 1930s slowly led to a greater appreciation of the contributions of all segments of the population to a national culture that accepted and promoted Afro-Cuban contributions to the concept of Cubanidad.

Since the triumph of the 1959 Cuban Revolution and particularly since the island became again a top Caribbean destination for tourists in the 1990s, many authors have published works about Cuba's socialist experiment and animosity vis à vis the United States. The island is now a source of endless fascination and mystery. These authors contrast, often superficially, an imagined past enveloped in gambling, American Mafia, and easy sex to a current revolutionary period that is already longer than its republican past. The fact is that we must reexamine pre-1959 Cuba and Cuban race relations given the almost six decades elapsed since the demise of the Republican era. I will probe and present a more nuanced and complex view of how Americans "understood" Cuba and how Cubans reacted to these American perceptions over the first four decades of the republic. This research supplemented the recent body of work dealing with American influence in the Cuban national project during the republican period and how it affected the self-image of the governing elites in the new republic. Scholars such as Louis Pérez explored how American culture and the American governing elites influenced the development and evolution of Cuban identity and the Cuban national project. Other scholars such as Alejandro de la Fuente and Aline Helg looked at how the development of the national project and identity influenced the Afro-Cuban population and how they attempted to modify it through their agency and to their advantage. I explored and analyzed how American visitors defined Cuba and Cubans and how their opinions and views impacted the governing elites' plans and ideas. Travel and close contact created very intense relations and many in the United States believed this to be a new way to project power and influence as opposed to the old traditional European empires. The American project was not as interested in outright military control over large territories. Rather, the United States wanted to project power through the promotion of American technology and popular culture together with economic control and

these certainly included American visitors [3].<sup>3</sup> Tourists and their close contact with the locals was an essential component of this plan. The Cuban governing elites were very much aware of the importance of these contacts and wanted to have as much agency as possible as a way of influencing these visitors.

## 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Intentions and "Possession"

The development of Cuban national identity accelerated during the mid-nineteenth century in no small measure by the acquisition of American values. Cubans used these acquired values as a counterweight to the view of the old Spanish Empire as a decadent and decrepit entity. Spanish immigrants and even more strongly, their children, who eventually became the backbone of the Cuban upper and middle classes, adopted the emerging Cuban national consciousness heavily influenced by American values and ideas. This occurred for many among these immigrants despite the advantages provided by their race and the promotion of their immigration to the island in an effort to blanquear or whiten the island's population. In addition to the obvious case of José Martí who was the son of Spaniards, many Spaniards and their descendants joined the fight for greater autonomy and eventual independence for the island [4].<sup>4</sup> A quote from Robert T. Hill in his article Cubais evidence of the intense and close relationship between two countries particularly among the elites: "Notwithstanding the disadvantages under which the Cubans have labored, they have contributed many members to the learned professions. To educate their sons and daughters in the institutions of the United States, England, and France has always been the highest ambition of the creoles of Cuba and Porto Rico. The influence of their educated men is felt in many countries, the most distinguished professor of civil engineering [5], two leading civil engineers of our navy, and the most eminent authority on yellow fever in our country belonging to this class."<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the differences, the fact is that the geographical proximity of both nations bound them to a permanent and close relationship whether the formal relations are friendly, interrupted, imperialistic, or even imagined. White creoles and Spaniards in Cuba were part of the contradictions in Cuban society before and after independence. The riches brought about by the plantation economy brought them into conflict with the interests of the Spanish colonial authorities. This would lead to the eventual rupture between Cuba and Spain. The elites were getting culturally and economically closer and closer to the United States, their principal customer. Business, proximity, and the attraction to American culture were stronger than those from distant Spain.

Since the early mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, Americans often thought of Cuba in proprietary terms, if not necessarily as an integral part of the United States at least as economically and increasingly politically bound to it. In pre-bellum United States, many among the Southern elites saw Cuba's acquisition as a way to maintain the balance of power between slave-free and slave

<sup>2</sup>Louis A. Pérez in *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press) is probably the most persuasive and complete analysis of how Cuba became a laboratory of sorts in the creation of a new American empire intended to compete with the older European empires but yet different and more dependent on cultural, economic, and technological penetration and control.

<sup>3</sup>Jennifer Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013) described the conscious efforts by the American government and economic leadership to promote American visitors and tourism as a way of projecting American culture and fomenting familiarity and good neighborliness between the United States and other nations particularly in the Western Hemisphere.

<sup>4</sup>Juan A. Rodríguez and Coralia Alonso Valdés in *Presencia Castellana en el Ejército Libertador Cubano: 1895-1898*. (Junta de Castilla y León, 1996) provided a detailed study of the particular participation of Spanish Castilians in Cuba's liberation army. Although not all Spaniards participated or even supported independence just like many Cuban-born islanders, these first generation Spaniards joined their fellow Cubans in their struggle for nationhood.

<sup>5</sup>Robert T. Hill. "Cuba." *National Geographic Magazine*, vol. 9, no. 5 (May 1898): 229.

states. The Northern elites also desired the acquisition of the island located at the gate of the Gulf of Mexico, as the key to controlling an area the United States perceived as essential to its security. Possession of Cuba would "complete" [6] the United States in much the same way as the expansion towards the Pacific Ocean and beyond.<sup>6</sup>

In reality prior to 1861, acquiring Cuba would have upset the balance between slave and Free states. This reality thwarted the intentions of the 1854 Ostend Manifesto where several American ambassadors in Europe met to formalize in writing the need and strategic reasons for the acquisition of Cuba by either purchase or war. The reality of a deeply divided nation put the potential annexation of Cuba in the backburner until later in the nineteenth century pending the resolution of the slavery battles, both philosophically and physically, in the United States.

The Cuban wars of independence starting in 1868 and the end of slavery in the United States rekindled American interest in Cuba for geostrategic and business reasons. While many Americans sympathized with the Cubans' independence dreams, many among the United States ruling and economic elites were fearful, that Cuban independence might thwart the possibility of possessing the island. The first war of independence between 1868 and 1878 ruined many among the Cuban elites allowing for further economic penetration by American economic interests. This coincided with the end of the "conquest" of the American West and fears that, without additional markets, United States factories would produce more than what Americans could consume. In addition to fears of overproduction, there were also powerful men, among them future president Teddy Roosevelt, Alfred T. Mahan, and Indiana Senator Albert J. Beveridge who were concerned about the world power status of the United States at the time that most of the world was already partially partitioned by the major European powers and the rising Japan. These men wanted an imperialist destiny for the United States and they feared it was getting a late start in the international land grab. A world-class navy was an essential part of this imperialist dream. Naval powers needed coaling stations in strategic locations for their large naval forces as a mean for fueling their fleets in times of conflict. Cuba was an essential component of this plan. The following statement made by Senator Albert J. Beveridge during the 56<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1900 subsequent to the acquisition of United States possessions after the 1898 war with Spain summarized quite well the ideals and goals of these imperialist ideologues:

Mr. President, this question is deeper than any question of party politics; deeper than any question of the isolated policy of our country even; deeper even than any question of constitutional power. It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master

is upon us: "You have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things [7]."

Albert J Beveridge senator from Indiana between 1899 and 1910 was one of the leading imperialists of his age and a strong ally of President Theodore. He was typical of the imperialists of this period, a progressive in internal politics and a firm believer in the white man's burden ideology used by imperialists of the time to give a moral veneer to expansionist plans of the United States. This was not unlike the same "burden" faced by other imperialist countries who justified their expansion and conquests on their need to civilize and help the other. These imperialists counted with the support of newspapers such as The New York Times and the new yellow journalist tycoons of the 1890s personified by William R. Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, who not only supported the Cuban cause and made it known to the mass of the American people, but also supported American imperialist dreams. This dichotomy of support to Cuban independence against a perceived old and decrepit empire and the imperialist's dreams of the rising nation made the Cuban independence fighters both hopeful and nervous [8].<sup>8</sup> A New York Times article titled Cubans Against Annexation from June 3, 1893, quoted Enrique Trujillo, the editor of El Porvenir one of the Cuban revolutionary papers in New Orleans as saying: "All the Cubans are opposed to any annexation scheme, and will not agree to give any part of the revolutionary fund for that purpose. I have not heard of any movement among Cubans to induce the United States to buy Cuba, and do not believe that there is any [9]."

Cubans, particularly among the members of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano, were concerned that any protracted conflict with Spain could lead the Spanish to sell the island to the United States or lead them to intervene rather than allowing an extended conflict to harm American interests. This would impede the Partido Revolucionario Cubano's goals of complete independence for Cuba [10].<sup>10</sup> Afro-Cubans also feared American intervention and the establishment of a segregated society similar to the United States at the time. American anti-imperialists also feared United States intervention in Cuba, dreading the harm to the democratic ideals that an empire and colonies could do the American Republic. Many anti-imperialists also feared intervention in countries populated with what they perceived as lower races and ethnic groups. As stated by Henry Gannett as late as 1897:

The United States, of all nations, should go very slowly in the matter, first, because since it stands at the head of the nations in point of civilization, almost any addition of people to its numbers will reduce the average civilization, and consequently the strength and industrial capacity of its people. Second, because under its principle of home

<sup>7</sup>Record, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., pp. 704-712.

<sup>8</sup>Both Hugh Thomas, in *Cuba: Lucha por la Libertad* (New York: Vintage Español, 2013) in Chapter 20 and Louis A. Pérez in *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* Chapters 2 and 4 provide an in-depth analysis of the American desires and intentions to possess Cuba as both necessary for the completion of the American national project and the need to make the United States more secure both economically and politically. Both also examined how these desires conflicted and exacerbated the fears of Cuban independence supporters who feared that American expansionists plans would thwart their dreams of a fully independent nation particularly in the years leading up to the last war of independence in the 1890s.

<sup>9</sup>Cubans Against Annexation, *The New York Times*, June 3, 1893.

<sup>10</sup>Lillian Guerra, *The Myth of Jose Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Guerra offered an in-depth discussion of how the myth of José Martí created conflicting notions of nationalism and how these notions created new tensions as a result of the realities never living up to this myth.

<sup>6</sup>Louis A. Pérez. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 186-187.



rule, annexed provinces will be called on to govern themselves in all local matters, while the general government will be held responsible by foreign governments for all hostile acts committed by such annexed states against their citizens; and third, because all annexations involve responsibilities in case of war for which we are unprepared and show little disposition to prepare ourselves [11].<sup>11</sup>

James Gannett's opinion also represented that of a sizable number among the intellectual elites who feared that the imperialist expansion would make the United States responsible for the destiny of people who they also considered uncivilized and undeserving of being part of the United States. They worried that imperialist expansion would make the country similar to the traditional European empires and undistinguishable from their expectations of the United States as different and better than those traditional empires. In the same article, anti-imperialists foresaw the dawn of the American imperialism with the acquisition of Cuba after the recent addition of Hawaii. They feared the incorporation of people who were not fully civilized and not ready for self-government as a burden to the United States. "What has been written of Hawaii applies with much greater force to Cuba, whose annexation has been actively urged, even to the extent of offering to purchase the island from Spain. Why should we want Cuba? An island separated from us by sea, sparsely populated by an alien, semi-civilized people speaking a different language, with no experience in self-government, with a history, tradition, and sympathies wholly different from ours: could we hope to make them one with us? Can we afford to dilute our national legislature with a score or more of Spanish Cubans? Can we afford to assume responsibility for the acts of such a home government as the Cubans are likely to set up?" Many Americans feared that for the first time the United States would incorporate territories heavily populated by non-Anglo-Saxon people. They would be more difficult to assimilate into the republic much the same way that many feared the massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. If the United States rejected their incorporation into the Union, this would lead to the acquisition of permanent colonies that had not been part of American expansionism until the 1890s.

## American Intentions and the Promotion of a Modern Nation

Regardless, the mysterious explosion in the Maine battleship and the death of 261 Americans galvanized the American public to intervene in Cuba and dispatch the Spanish colonial government back to the peninsula. While the Spanish government in Cuba ended, Spanish immigration continued and both the interim United States military government and the Cuban elites encouraged it. The Spaniards were not ideal immigrants in the eyes of the American but they were necessary to whiten Cuba given that no massive United States immigration to Cuba was expected. Many articles in popular and professional publications obsessed with the proper population for Cuba now that it was under American occupation. American magazines referred to transformation of Havana since American occupation: "The city of Habana has for too long been considered as a sort of nursery of diseases for the United States that the average American citizen finds it hard to realize that today Habana is clear and pure, more healthy than Washington and many cities of the American continent [12]."<sup>12</sup> The magazines noted

<sup>11</sup>Henry Gannett. "The Annexation Fever," *National Geographic Magazine* 8, no. 12 (December 1897): 355.

<sup>12</sup>"American Progress in Habana," *National Geographic Magazine* 13, no. 3 (March 1902): 97.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 97.

and resented the ungratefulness of the Cuban populace: "The wise, conscientious, persistent measures which for three years the United States officers have been enforcing throughout Habana, despite the opposition and dislike of the Cubans, have delivered the city of its old foes-filth and filth diseases."<sup>13</sup> Certainly, the American interim government made great strides to make the city more livable and clean after years of conflict. The author noted that Havana was cleaner than some American cities and this was demonstration of American altruism and sacrifice. The United States was sacrificing for Cubans despite their child-like filthiness and opposition. The author made no mention that Havana's condition was in large part due to years of independence wars that while not directly affecting the city, forced the Spanish authorities to diverge resources to the war effort. The author also mentioned the opposition and dislike of the Cubans. However, Cuban opposition was in large part due to the difficult negotiations with American authorities in an effort to gain full Cuban sovereignty and not against the cleaning and rebuilding of the city.

As mentioned already, another American obsession was the issue of race and ethnic viability. In the post bellum United States and coinciding with positivist and Darwinian concepts of stronger and weaker races, American racial attitudes exacerbated the prejudices of many white Cubans who feared that a fully enfranchised Afro-Cuban population might allow the racial minorities to gain control and subjugate or expel them from the island [13].<sup>14</sup> The American elites also feared an Africanized Cuba so close to the United States. In multiple articles published since before the intervention, the press was fixated with Cuban capacity or incapacity for self-government due to a multiplicity of reasons such as the lack of experience in self-government, Spanish traditional political instability, and ethnic and racial reasons. Race was always one of the main reasons argued. The persistent American fears of another Haiti, as a potential source of instability and inspiration for African Americans, was very important to Americans and to white Cubans as they prepared to draft a Cuban constitution. "The experiences of the past have shown that there is no possibility of Cuba becoming Africanized without constant renewal by immigration. The 520,000 colored people, one-half of whom are mulattoes, represent the diminished survival of over 1,000,000 African slaves that have been imported [14]."<sup>15</sup> Just a couple of years later, in 1900, because of the recent Cuban census, there was some relief once independence appeared probable and the population census proved the earlier assumptions correct. "The results of the Cuban Census, in many respects unexpected, show on the whole a gratifying condition of affairs in the island. From the accompanying diagrams emphasize the more important facts. From the relatively large proportion of native-born white, 58 per cent of the total population, it is evident that the administrative control will remain in the hands of the native white Cubans when the United States withdraws from the island. This Cuba will not become a second Haiti [15]."<sup>16</sup>

Much like Afro-Cubans and slavery divided Cuban society, not unlike similar divisions in the United States during the same period

<sup>14</sup>See Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 2001) for a very thorough discussion of the fears among Americans and many white Cubans of an Africanized island. However, in the end the Cuban leadership accepted the fact that Afro-Cubans through their effort in the wars of independence had earned the right to vote and enfranchisement in the Cuban body politic.

<sup>15</sup>Robert T. Hill. "Cuba," *National Geographic Magazine* 9, no. 5 (December 1897): 232.

<sup>16</sup>"The Cuban Census," *National Geographic Magazine* 11, no. 5 (May 1900): 205.

during the nineteenth century, the Cuban nation and Cuban nationality in the first couple of decades struggled with the inclusion of Afro-Cubans in the national project. In the end, abolition of slavery and the heavy participation of Afro-Cubans in the wars of liberation made all but impossible to exclude them. The Cuban Constitution enfranchised all males of voting age. José Martí and the Partido Revolucionario Cubanorecognized this fact. Nevertheless, the nation-building project that included them was one that they could not define in their own terms. Cuban elites still conceived a modern Cuba as one that had to be modern and this translated into a white Cuba and a whitening project that was recognized and supported by the governing elites and the American business interests.

The Cuban national project included blacks but the elites insisted on keeping their presence as a sort of invisible image. Cuba had to be colorblind when it came to people of color but with a whitening national project. The white and black elites told Afro-Cubans to deemphasize their blackness so as not to provoke the whites among the governing elites and the American interests. Therefore, Cuba became inclusive of Afro-Cuban with the condition of deemphasizing black cultural aspects. After all, and using the United States perspective as a counterweight, this was better than the options available to blacks in the United States at the time. Afro-Cubans were welcomed in the national construction but on narrow terms deemphasizing blackness and accentuating modernity and nationality with a western conception of the nation. The Cuban elites borrowed from American cultural and social norms. However, they adapted them to a new nation that in some ways turned its back on its Spanish and African heritages while still depending on heavy Spanish immigration as the long-term solution to a whitening project more in line with a United States conception of a modern nation. The United States was doing something similar in its territory of Hawaii at the same time by promoting Portuguese immigration not in leadership positions but as a way to counter the Asian workers immigration [16].<sup>17</sup> The tension with these arrangements inn Cuban society was almost impossible to sustain and led to periodic outbreaks of political instability. However, the Cuban governing elites during the first three decades of independence promoted a white and western image of Cuba deemphasizing the Afro-Cuban component which became invisible in its promotion of the island as a tourist destination and as an important industry to would help to diversify its over dependence of sugar production. Particularly during the 1920s, Cuba attempted to project, successfully most of the time, an image of European sophistication as well noted by Rosalie Schwartz in *Pleasure Island*: "As crowds of visitors flocked to Cuba and enjoyed Havana's hospitality, the more elite among them compared the island favorably to the likes of France's Deauville or Riviera resorts [17]."<sup>18</sup> This image was a diametrically different from the image that Americans had of other countries in the Western Hemisphere particularly Mexico during the first three decades of the twentieth century. During the last years of former Mexican president Porfirio Díaz's government, whose image in American States publications was that of a great modernizer of an Indian nation, "travelers from the Eastern and Midwestern United States began to tour the United States Southwest, tramping through "Indian country" and looking for the supposedly last vestiges of Indianness within the borders of the United States. As with travel to

Mexico, the railways created an interest in \_and market for\_ travel into Indian country [18].<sup>19</sup> The travelogues of the period reflect this image of visiting the other quite the opposite of visitors to Cuba who in the travelogues looked at the Spanish architectural and ethnic heritage [19].<sup>20</sup> This was almost never the case of Cuba for Americans who saw Cuba both as a land of pleasure and beauty yet exotic but with a certain Spanish colonial charm.

The United States had to give Cuba its independence given the passage of the 1898 Teller Amendment. This amendment was a joint resolution of Congress in reply to President McKinley's request for war resolution against Spain requiring the United States not to annex Cuba and leave control of the island to its people. Many imperialists later perceived this amendment as a grave error approved by Congress at a time of great antipathy towards Spanish cruelty against the Cuban people and the idealism necessary to convince the American public to support the war. Supporters of annexation thought it tied the hands of the United States since it forced the Americans to grant independence. However, the United States' government and the American commercial interests were going to shackle this independence with the heavy yoke of the Platt Amendment and the constant threat of intervention during the first three decades of independence. The United States was going to make sure that its commercial interests remained unchallenged. Cuban resources available to possess and use fascinated Americans. The fertility of the soil brought admiration from visitors: "There is every opportunity to eat well in Cuba. Where they do not eat well, it is because they do not care or know how. Chickens and guinea hens are raised without care. There is generally a guinea hen or a quail or some other fat bird wandering around the house, anxious to be shot for breakfast, dinner, or supper. Anything that you can stick into the ground will grow. It is possible to raise coffee on one side of the house and sweet potatoes on the other, bananas just outside the lean-to and potatoes in the front yard [20]."<sup>21</sup> American interests had been massively investing in Cuba since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Cuba was nominally independent but with limited sovereignty. It soils were easily and efficiently predisposed to sugar cane cultivation but also fertile for other products available to American visitors so close to the United States both geographically and culturally that it was familiar and not quite foreign. In addition to ideal soils, Cuba also had proximity, management and labor expertise already on location and well adapted to American management techniques with a well-developed transportation system to carry not only sugar but also people from Cuban ports to the United States mainland.

Cuban independence came heavily limited by the American government that reserved the right to intervene in Cuba if its interests were in danger. The Cuban political leadership resisted the American imposition but realized that they had to accept the limitation imposed by the Americans or accept the permanent incorporation imposed on Puerto Rico, Guam, Hawaii, or the bloody and ultimately failed rebellion in the Philippines. Despite the resentment among the political elites in Cuba, it is a fact that in no small part Cuban nationality developed during much of the nineteenth through the contrast between the perceived modernity and progress of North America and the backwardness of the old and tired Spanish Empire. Modernity and

<sup>17</sup>See Christine Skwiot, *The Purpose of Paradise: United States Tourism and Empire in Cuba and Hawaii* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) for an excellent comparative study of how two apparently disparate islands were reciprocally shaped by United States evolving notion of imperialism and possession and how the local elites used their agency to further their interests.

<sup>18</sup>Rosalie Schwartz, *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>19</sup>Jason Ruiz, *Americans in the Treasure House: Travel to Porfirian Mexico and the Cultural Politics of Empire* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 112.

<sup>20</sup>Basil Woon, *When It's Cocktail Time in Cuba* (Published by Horace Liveright, 1928), 11.

<sup>21</sup>E. Ralph Estep, *El Toro: A Motor Car Story of Interior Cuba* (Detroit: Packard Motor Car Company, 1909), 95.

progress ideas influenced Cubans elites during the nineteenth century as much as other elites around the globe. Cubans did not perceive Spain as capable of bringing modernity to the island. North America encompassed everything that Cubans, particularly the Cuban elites, perceived as modern and positivist: industry, railroad, democracy, the culture of materiality, and in many cases a racialized conception of society where whites were at the top of the racial pyramid regardless of what Anglo-Saxons thought of the Southern European whites. Cuban elites knew and probably supported the idea that they were bound in both culture and economic ties to the "Colossus of the North." Progress and modernism distanced the elites from Spain and from Africa. Many among them viewed with angst the heavy African presence in Cuba, not unlike the way the southern whites in the United States viewed the heavy presence of African descendants, a majority or close to 50 percent of the population in some states in the Deep South prior to the Great Migration of the 1910s.

Prior to the final war of independence starting in 1895, many among the elites did not want to include Afro-Cubans as part of the national project. Afro-Cubans males had the right to vote but they continued to be excluded from the image of a modern and western nation. During the first republican period ending with the 1933 revolution Cuba's tourist industry was able to accomplish the delicate balancing act of making its Afro-Cuban population invisible to most foreign visitors. It relied on gambling and drinking in addition to natural and architectural beauty to accomplish this. However, large segments of the Cuban population saw gambling and alcohol as not promoting an ideal version of the island abroad while failing to benefit the Cuban masses. "Some conventioners took their money to Havana and left their inhibitions at home." Prohibition in the United States exacerbated these behaviors and while the Cubans understood this, they lamented the consequences of an increasingly view of Cuba not as advanced and western but as frivolous and lurid. Cuban writer and tourist expert Armando Marabona completed in 1959 perhaps the only work about Cuban tourism during the pre-revolutionary period. While acknowledging the benefits of gambling and pleasure activities, Marabona criticized the emphasis given to these activities in the first tourism law of 1929 reflected by the construction of the national casino and to racetracks. He decried the law and the politicians' disregard for other aspects that might enhance tourism while reducing the reliance on frivolous activities that did not increase the tourists' stay on the island and entice tourists to visit areas outside Havana [21].<sup>22</sup>

Americans' heavy involvement in Cuba, both during the cleaning and reconstruction phases and in the early post-independence period, created a familiarity with Cuba that was unique in Latin America. The Cuban elites "sold" and promoted the nation as a white and modern national entity very close to the United States and eager to attract more American investments. One case served as a clear example of the elites' eagerness to attract American capital and project an image of modernity and whiteness. The Cuban Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor during the administration of José Miguel Gómez published Cuba: A Pamphlet Descriptive of the Island of Cuba Containing Unblemished Data for General Information. In the section about the people of the island, the pamphlet informed the reader in English that 70.3 per cent of the population was white and the remaining 29.7 percent were colored. The pamphlet also adds:

It is so unusual to hear of any friction between the colored and the whites that it may be said to be a rare occurrence. A wide difference exists between the race sentiment in Cuba and in the United States,

which few people ever take into consideration. In the states the greatest war of modern history was waged over the colored element of that country. That race was then responsible for deep hatreds and sorrows for countless tears, great poverty and intense suffering. In Cuba there was no such conflict but, instead, the colored and the white fought together for the liberty of their country, and having been through the hardships of persecution and campaigning together they regard each other in a friendly light and live in harmony [22].<sup>23</sup>

The statement was produced by the same administration that shortly afterwards would repress the Partido Independiente de Color during the 1912 rebellion and stamp out any other political organizations based on racial lines as well as the comparsas during the carnival celebrations for fear of Afro-Cuban protests and cultural affirmation. In order to explain and justify the segregationist practices in the United States the pamphlet blamed the black race for the American racial hatred. Cuba was white and not only white but better and more peaceful for the investors than even the United States. When it came to the system of government of the Cuban Republic. The pamphlet added the following: "The government of Cuba is modeled as nearly as possible, after that of the United States," without mentioning that the same constitution included the Platt Amendment that many Cubans, including most of the elites, had tried to prevent. The author presented Cuba as very similar to the United States. It was foreign but still very familiar not only geographically but also socially and politically as well. However, these similarities had limitations. Due to the heavy participation of Afro-Cubans in the Cuban wars of liberation, the Cuban government could not completely disenfranchise Afro-Cuban males. This power provided them with the ability to exercise gradual change and slowly assert their cultural contributions gradually becoming a more important component of what Cuba provided to her visitors subsequent to the 1933 revolution.

Cubans continued the practice started in the nineteenth century of appropriating and adapting foreign cultural and political norms, particularly from the United States. The elites, and many among the popular classes who were able to come in contact with foreigners, used imitation and adaptation of outside cultural practices in the building of Cuban nationality. Some of the more commonly appropriated aspects copied by the elites included American consumerism and work habits as a way to improve one's status. Louis Pérez noted in *On Becoming Cuban* that Cubans from both the elites and the emerging middle classes exuded pride as foreigners marveled at the modernity of the country, particularly Havana. "Today I walked along the various streets of Havana and in all respects it is a great city which enjoys the marvelous life of civilization: all its streets are asphalt, paved and macadamized, and their cleanliness obliges me to compare them with Belgian and Dutch streets [23]."<sup>24</sup> For the elites Cuba had to be modern and European. Some American visitors noted that the close and intense relation between the United States and Cuba created a new type of state, half-autonomous and half-vassal. The obligations imposed by the Cuban constitution while protecting the island from foreign intervention other than American also restricted the ability of the Cuban state to contract any debt if the ordinary revenue of the treasury were insufficient which was sensible and responsible but it restricted the independence of the nation.

<sup>23</sup>Leon J. Canova. 1910. *Cuba: A Pamphlet Descriptive of the Island of Cuba Containing Unembellished Data for General Information*, Republic of Cuba, Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Labor, 9.

<sup>24</sup>Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 146.

<sup>22</sup>Armando Marabona, *Turismo en Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial Lex, 1959), 68.



During the next two decades of Cuban independence, foreigners continued to control Cuba and Cubans both economically and demographically. Of the total population of the island, between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 people, close to 25% of the total was foreign born, mostly originating from Spain. Of the population of Havana at this time close to one third was foreign born. The merchant class consisted mainly of Spaniards and their descendants. Spaniards owned approximately one fourth of the sugar mills, while American interests owned much of the rest at the time. While many of the descendants of these foreigners would become loyal Cubans in the future and wholly assimilate into Cuban society, at this time Cubans felt disposed, leaving government jobs and management positions in foreign companies as the refuge of the white creole members of the Cuban elites. The destruction caused by the wars of independence that forced many of the Cuban elites into these positions, also increased the influx of foreign capital. The American residents never amounted to more than a few thousands with a larger number that were transient United States visitors, either business people or tourists. The total number of Americans at any given time did not amount to more than twenty thousand. The popularity of the annexationist feeling lost strength when the United States government and commercial interests realized after the crushing of the 1912 Partido Independiente de Color rebellion that the Cuban state was strong enough to protect American business interests.

At the same time, there were other reasons for the reduction in the annexationist feelings in the United States. First, there was never any massive migration of Americans to Cuba. There were many Cubans with dual citizenship who moved back, but the expected Anglo-Saxon masses never materialized. The Isle of Pines was the only location where American settlers constituted a substantial percentage of the population most probably due to the uncertain status of the island at the time. The fact is that most of these settlers abandoned the Isle of Pines after a hurricane, a couple of failed crops, and the beginning of World War I (WWI). Second, the vast majority of the Cuban population from all segments of society never supported the annexation of Cuba despite the massive Spanish immigration that continued until the 1930s. Americans considered these immigrants as potential sympathizers of annexation but the reality was that many did not become Cuban citizens and their children considered themselves Cubans and loyal to Cuba Libre. This fact coupled with the lack of massive American immigration made impossible the dream of an Anglo-Saxon dominated state as had happened in all the Western states except for New Mexico where Hispanics were a substantial minority of the population and had to wait until 1912 to become part of the Union. In Cuba, and in Hawaii at the same time, the expected dream of a majority Anglo-Saxon dominant society would not materialize. Hawaii as an incorporated territory would also have to wait until 1959 to enter the Union as a state. Obviously, at this time the fear of incorporating Cuba, with a sizable Afro-Cuban population and the "wrong" kind of white element in control, made the old dream of incorporating Cuba as a state an impossibility. Some visitors to the island still held most Cubans as black and therefore probably not eligible for statehood. As Irene Wright tells her readers in her 1912 travelogue: "Natives," that is Cubans - are negroid. Some "pass for white," as the illuminative colloquial expression has it. Some, possibly, are white; few, however, would care to submit their lineage to scouting close enough to prove it [24]. Only Americans think any less of the Cuban because he is, if not colored, at least tinted [24]."<sup>25</sup> The contrast with the Cuban political

elites' concepts of nationhood and American perceptions and control over the Cuban republic created a sense of instability that also reflected in Cuban tourism and dissatisfaction with some of the consequences and results brought about or aided by the industry in the Cuban nation.

The resulting realization that Cuba would never be part of the Union led to a new conception of an exceptional and different representation of imperialism. Many among the American elites saw the United States as an anti-imperialist or at least a different type of imperialist republic. This contrasted the United States with the older and more traditional European empires. In the case of Cuba, the ability of the Cuban government to protect U.S. interests placed the island into a more Pan-American conception of control via capital, cultural, and technological domination. This so called dollar-diplomacy used intervention as a last resort such as in Mexico and some Caribbean and Central American nations during the following two decades. This added to the instability as Cuba saw itself as different but in certain instances, it was treated just like another Caribbean protectorate leading to increased dissatisfaction with the current republican model that would culminate in 1933 in the midst of a failing and dependent economy in the depth of a worldwide depression. A case in point occurred during the 1920 Cuban election and coincided with the collapse in the price of sugar. As the opposition political parties contested and threatened rebellion, the United States intervened again. However, this time the arbitration and intervention was not military but actually through an emissary of the United States government and assistance from the United States Federal Reserve Bank. Financial assistance from the bank and arbitration among the political parties assisted in passing the crisis relatively quickly reestablishing economic stability and extending the life of the old Plattist republic for an additional decade [25].<sup>26</sup> The first republic was rapidly losing credibility with the entire Cuban population. The ruling elites from the wars of liberation gained a few more years of control before a dictatorship and the world economic crisis would sweep away the old republic together with the old leadership.

## The American Riviera – Tourism Industry and Cultural Nationalism

During the 1920s, the United States delegated on the Cuban state the protection of its interests. As Cubans were still not fully in charge of their own economy, the Cuban state became the main source of wealth accumulation for the upper and middle classes and not a small portion of the popular ones. As this proved insufficient to satisfy the growing Cuban desire for a more nationalist economic policy, it led to the search of new industries that might provide new opportunities. Furthermore, the economic and political elites also wanted to maintain and improve the special relationship with the United States and enhance the image of Cuba as a modern nation and as a foreign place that could still be very familiar to Americans.

The National Geographic magazine "visited" Cuba once again in 1920 with another article with the very appropriate name of Cuba-The Sugar Mill of the Antilles by William J. Showalter. The article recognized the great progress of Cuba during the prior decade as sugar by 1920 had reached a very high price in no small part due to the First World War and the reduction in sugar beet production in Europe. However, sugar prices would collapse once again shortly after the war ended. The National Geographic magazine article gives a lot of credit to what the author refers to as American international altruism that "took upon itself the burden of winning for the people of the island their

<sup>25</sup>Irene A. Wright, *Cuba*: MacMillan's Travel Series (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912), 86.

<sup>26</sup>Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: La Lucha por la Libertad*, Chapters 40-41.

independence [26].<sup>27</sup> The author referred to the fact that American intervention ended quickly after they set Cubans upon a republican path with the only proviso of maintaining peace. Showalter, without mentioning the Platt Amendment by name or noticing the Cuban opposition to it, suggested that the restrictions placed by the United States were a check on revolution and tyranny that also guaranteed foreign investment. The author goes on to compare the favorable results of these limitations on Cuban sovereignty crediting them for the much higher level of Cuban exports if compared to the "eight countries lying between the Texas border and the South American boundary." The close relationship between Cuba and the United States, which Showalter acknowledged to be an American protectorate, allowed for favorable sugar prices, certain government stability, despite the high levels of corruption, and helped in the fast level of development of the island. The author goes on to conclude that people "cannot escape the conclusion that a vast deal of Cuba's prosperity, as compared with that of its neighbors, is due to the blessing of stable government and a freedom from the stalking specter of devastating revolution" brought by the American protectorate.

One interesting difference in the coverage of Cuba in Showalter's article that was to become prevalent in the following decades was the evolution of coverage beyond natural resources, sugar, tobacco, and the benevolence of American supervision. Showalter emphasized the growing importance and potential of tourism. This trend became prevalent in the coverage of Cuba, not only in *National Geographic*, but also in *The New York Times* and other major newspapers, travelogues, and advertising brochures of shipping lines and the soon to be created airlines as the new instruments of American business and cultural hegemony. Showalter's article even had a section with the predictive subtitle of Preparing for the Tourist. He suggested that Cuba was more than Havana. However, he went on to note the new constructions in the new suburbs such as Vedado with many lots sold to rich Cubans and Americans. He suggested what the Machado administration needed to "attack" and that was the lack of hotels with so-called American standards and the consequences of this deficiency such as shortened visits to the island averaging only four days. Showalter, as well as brochures from airlines, shipping lines, and *The New York Times*, started to associate Cuba with pleasure seekers. Showalter's article presented a picture of two American sailors sitting in front of palm trees enjoying tropical fruits such as coconuts and bananas in a fitting combination of American youth, manhood, possession, and pleasure. He took notice of the new dirigible airships operating service between the two resort cities of Miami and Havana further linking and bringing together the two tourist meccas and Cubans and Americans. Bruce Bliven captured this increasing perception of the island as a place of pleasure and fun when he generalized the essence of the contact between the two peoples: "The Cubans ignore the tourists and the tourists ignore Cuba, except as a place which provides hotels, cafés, a gambling casino and a pleasant winter climate [27]."<sup>28</sup>

As the 1920s progressed, there was increasing dissatisfaction with the dependence on sugar, the limited independence, and widespread corruption among the cultural elites and even some among the political leadership. The old republic was running out of steam with increasing corruption and Cuban lack of satisfaction due to lack of political and economic sovereignty. In these circumstances, Cubans elected Gerardo Machado in 1925. He was the last veteran of the independence wars

elected president. Machado came to power with promises of a new nationalism and populist program. Cubans elected few presidents with as high expectations as Machado. Cubans perceived Machado as a nationalist leader who was also a typical Cuban with an exuberant and strong personality typical of the personalist island politics where strong political parties never emerged in large part due to the limited independence, widespread patronage, and a weak state. The Cuban nation entrusted him to achieve his promises of abrogating the Platt Amendment, increased political and economic empowerment, and breaking the chains of the sugar monocrop with its boom and bust cycles. Tourist development figured high in the agenda to break these chains. Many sympathizers compared Machado to the new Italian dictator Benito Mussolini who came to power with promises of breaking the cycle of political instability, corruption, and weak economic performance in the post-World War I European economy. Initially, he looked more like a democratic Mussolini who promised a more honest and efficient government without presidential reelection. Reality was going to disappoint Cubans very soon.

There was a darker side to this personalist and charismatic president and it had to do with the perception that many Cubans had of Machado and that they tended to accept and ignore in their presidents. Cubans perceived Machado as a rascal or the Spanish term *bribón*. The origins of his wealth were not transparent. In the good economic times such as the first couple of years of his administration, cynics, particularly among the elites, could choose to look the other way if the wealth would trickle down and prevent rebellion among the lower classes. Machado could control the malcontents among the intellectuals as long as the rest of the population was satisfied. The army was rewarded and corrupted and became an instrument of the government. He was smart enough to build bridges to the Afro-Cubans elites by increasing their share of the patronage, particularly in the civil administration, so much so that many whites perceived him as pro-black. Still at no time did the elites perceive their positions at risk and Machado kept the growing labor movement in check and American interests satisfied.

Machado, the Caribbean Mussolini, started to copy his Italian counterpart with a more gradualist approach. Labor leaders, initially anarchists and later increasingly socialists and communists, would disappear and the legislature passed legislation prohibiting the formation of new parties while ensuring that the remaining ones became a loyal opposition. Corruption increased, a fact noticed even in the travelogues of the period, as Basil Woon perceived in *When It's Cocktail Time in Cuba*: "Part of the payment of the government officials and deputies is in lottery tickets, but this is not considered as payment but as a perquisite. They are free to sell or keep their tickets as they please. This explains why so many grand prizes fall to officials, a fact which is responsible for practically all suspicion with which the lottery is regarded by the ignorant." The approach used by his government consisted of the use of government resources and financing from major United States banks and corporations to start major infrastructure projects to beautify Havana and improve the communications all over the island. From this period, date such major Cuban landmarks like the Carretera Central or Central Highway, stretching from one end of the island to the next, the Capitol Building, a major expansion of the University of Havana, the iconic Hotel Nacionalas well as other attractions in joint ventures with American investors. While the effort to improve the roads created jobs, lowered the dependence on foreign owned railroads and the beautification of Havana attracted tourism, some of the resources could have been spent in other more pressing needs or saved to reduce the national debt (Figure 1).

<sup>27</sup>William J. Showalter. "Cuba: The Sugar Mill of the Antilles." *National Geographic Magazine*, vol. 38, no. 1 (July 1920): 11.

<sup>28</sup>Bruce Bliven. "And Cuba for the Winter." *The New Republic*, vol. 54, no. 691 (February 29, 1928): 62.





**Figure 1:** American visitors.



**Figure 2:** American publications.



**Figure 3:** Black children.

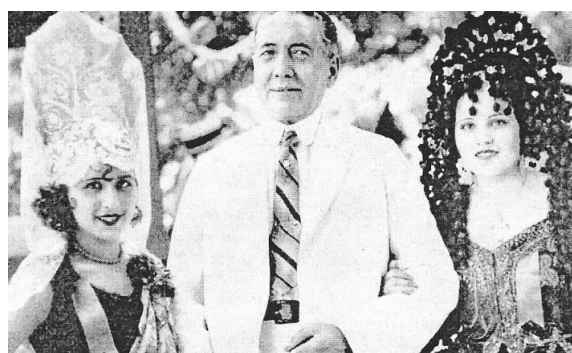
The administration intended to make tourism one of the major industries and while the industry grew during much of the 1920s, it could not lower the dependence on sugar. Armando Marabona recognized tourism as the only industry available to Cuba beyond sugar and tobacco capable of high growth and development without massive capital investment. This increase in tourism exacerbated the association of Cuba with romance and women. In the past, cartoons and other illustrations represented the island and its nationals in American publications as abused women (Figure 2) during Spanish domination in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as black children during American occupation (Figure 3) justifying the need to possess and educate

them, or as abandoned women when the Americans left her in 1902 in the hands of a crazy and violent mob (Figure 4). In the 1920s and beyond, Cuba became a beautiful woman (Figure 5).<sup>29</sup> The women reminded American visitors, preponderantly white businessmen [28], of romance and, in some cases, sex. Havana was described as “tropical-nearby foreign,” “Havana the Smartest City in America,” “Havana is so near at hand – so easily reached – that no American need suppress his desire for foreign travel,” or as a later Pan American advertising would describe it as the “Paris of the Americas, the largest city between Baltimore and Rio.”<sup>30</sup> Perceptions of Cuba as Paris, beautiful, romantic, and modern, certainly delighted the Cuban elites, but the growing perception as sensuous, or in later decades a sexy mulatain tourism advertising, was not the image that they wanted to give of the island. These associations of Cuba with high class living, slightly decadent, and later with gambling and sometimes prostitution would give the tourism industry a bad reputation among Cubans that in subsequent decades would hamper its growth.

On August 15, 1927, The New York Times announced a “Huge Cuban Resort to Cost \$12,000,000 [29].”<sup>31</sup> The project included a casino



**Figure 4:** Crazy and violent mob.



**Figure 5:** Cuba became a beautiful woman.

<sup>29</sup>See Louis A. Pérez. *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* for an in depth discussion of the evolution of the visual and written characterizations of Cuba and Cubans during the republican era and how they evolved over time..

<sup>30</sup>Information obtained from various advertising and brochures from American magazines such as the National Geographic magazine, the Saturday Evening Post, and brochures from The University of Miami Libraries Special Collections - Pan American World Airways, Inc. Records.

<sup>31</sup>Huge Cuban Resort to Cost \$12,000,000, *The New York Times*, August 15, 1927.

[29], the Jockey Club, and other attractions. The article described the project as a Monte Carlo of the West. An American visitor would think of himself as a great civilizer and seducer, almost a conqueror, while Europeans would perceive him as anouveau richeor an arrivisteat best. Cuba became a favorite of high financiers and high-end rollers escaping from prohibition. Some of the famous visitors noted by The New York Times were men of dubious reputations such as New York Mayor James J. Walker who arrived in Havana as an honored guestto watch the horse races at the Oriental Park racetrack in February 1927.<sup>32</sup>New Yorkers elected James J. Walker, also known as Beau James, with the support of the notorious Tammany Hall machine and was mayor between 1926 and 1932. He resigned in the midst of a corruption scandal. His most lasting legacy was the Walker Law legalizing boxing in the state of New York when he was a state senator. In Cuba, he served to cement tourism's association with corruption and extreme lifestyles out of reach to most Cubans. As noted by Basil Woon in 1928 at the high of the tourist season, "Havana is crowded with tourists and visitors from the opening of the racing season, on or about the ninth of December, to the closing night of the casino in March. During these months the Sevilla, the Casino, the Jockey Club, the Almendares, the Yatch Club, the Country Club, and the Biltmore Yatch and Country Club do not yield to any. Havana is not, like Palm Beach, a parrot-cage of inaction. It is rather [19], like Paris, a city of definite action where smart people go to be amused."<sup>33</sup>You may see the Costello sisters, Dolores and Helèn, or Florence Vidor; Mr. and Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt are constant visitors; so are Ed. Bruns, E. L. Annenberg and Al Johnson, to mention only three members of the New York Stock Exchange who will like to play in Cuba. Charles A. Levine and Mabel Boll, "Queen of Diamonds," were there one season, the same that saw Charles Lindbergh and Clarence Chamberlin guests of the city."<sup>34</sup> As noted by Marabona, these tourists were mostly seasonal and limited their stays to Havanaand its surroundings. Seasonal and single event visitors were not the solution according to Marabona [21].<sup>35</sup>

The 1929 economic crash further devastated the Cuban economy already reeling since the price of sugar started falling again in 1927 in a new cycle of boom and bust. Corruption and the government reckless spending did not help in this dire situation. In the midst of the crisis, travel writers presented an image of Cuba as available and decadent. As Woon reflected: "Then another cocktail - being politely attired in white now-at the Mango Grove. Afterward- a cool and lazy dinner served out on the terrace, with a few assorted guests - or maybe you'll want to dine at the Club or the neighboring hotel? Just as you like - the boy with a bicycle-chair will take you there is a minute or so." The picture of decadence and closeness was not the modernity that most Cuban elites wanted for their country and did not satisfy the masses of Cubans whose economic situation was deteriorating once again. Still, Cuba was the beautiful woman, "a gaily attired Spanish señorita [30], Cuba charms the eye, and the glamour of a lurid past, with its pages of piratical plundering, pomp, and high adventures with whichit is so romantically linked, quickens interest from the moment it is sighted on the horizon."<sup>36</sup>The National Geographic magazine article Cuba - The Isle of Romance from 1933 by Enrique C. Cánova completely ignored the difficult situation and continued to emphasize Cuba as a "fun

señorita" now even accessible by air. Cánovas noted with excitement that "Today there are 33 recognized landing fields, including seaplane bases, Camp Columbia being the foremost."<sup>37</sup> Cuba as the beautiful señorita was now even more accessible.

As the Cuban elites as well as the popular classes were aware of American publications and opinions that were readily available on the island, tourism became more and more associated with corruption and the United States. The 1933 revolution launched an effort to reemphasize Cubanidad. The first republic had exhausted the old political structures and the elites realized that to survive and maintain some sort of control they would have to negotiate with some of the new players including the leaders of the sergeants' revolt, particularly Fulgencio Batista, who came from humble origins and was of dubious racial background. The disenfranchisement of the Afro-Cuban population during the 1930s continued. Many among the revolutionary leadershipaccused the Afro-Cuban leadership of having been complicit with the Machado government.<sup>38</sup> However, there were emerging avenues for inclusion in the arts and in the labor movement. Universal male voting rights, and women after 1934 when they obtained the vote, helped in the process. Also of assistance was the growing appreciation among the intellectual elites, both black and white, for the cultural contributions of Afro-Cubans. The growing popularity of Afro-American rhythms in the United States as well as the slowly emerging struggle for civil rights in the United Stateswith a more moderate Franklin D. Roosevelt administration assisted in the growing sensibility in Cubafor Afro-Cubans as well. As difficult as segregation and discrimination were in the 1930s, the evolution between the early 1900s to the 1930s had been substantial and it would be difficult to turn it back in either country. The new Cuban nationalism in the 1930s, in addition to the unilateral abrogation of the Platt Amendment (later accepted by the United States government), and the restriction on the employment of foreigners, led to the conception of Cuba as a cultural mestizo nationto further differentiate it from the United States. The 1933 revolution launched a new era of a more self-assured nationalism that, while not eliminating segregation in many social venues, grew more appreciative of Afro-Cuban culture. As noted by Robin Moore in Nationalizing Blackness, the "Popularization of the sonin Cuba cannot be separated from international artistic currents in Western Europe and the United States [31-40]."<sup>39</sup> Cuban intellectuals and the elites became increasingly supportive of Afro-Cuban cultural contributions leading to what Moore referred toas "Afrocubanophile frenzy" in a manner that would have been unthinkable a couple of decades before. This was part not only of a more assertive concept of Cubanness but also was to become also a more important cultural offer to foreign visitors. Cuba could not eliminate gambling and pleasure completely from it tourist offer but it could certainly add a more varied cultural offer [41-45].

As cultural politics evolved in the 1930s, Batista who became the eminence grisein Cuban politics had to maintain a delicate balance between conflicting agents in society including the old elites of the first republic who still yielded considerable power, the growing ranks of Cuban entrepreneurs who demanded protectionism and help for their nascent enterprises, the increasing demands of labor and cultural

<sup>32</sup>Extreme Captures the Fifth Avenue, *The New York Times*, February 14, 1927.

<sup>33</sup>Basil Woon, *When It's Cocktail Time in Cuba*, 27-28.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, 29.

<sup>35</sup>Armando Marabona, *Turismo en Cuba*, 65-66.

<sup>36</sup>Enrique C. Canova. "Cuba - The Isle of Romance" *National Geographic Magazine*, vol. 64, no. 3 (September 1933): 345.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, 373.

<sup>38</sup>For a detailed coverage of the opportunities, political mobilization, and agency of the Afro-Cuban elites see Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*. Another excellent source of race relations and agency is Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

<sup>39</sup>Robin Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 140.

agents, and the ever present American business interests. The new nationalist assertiveness came to accept the conception of Cuba as a mestizo nation that provided a defense against United States' cultural hegemony. Even the Cuban elites increasingly used the new concept of Cubanidad in order to increase their economic share and power vis-à-vis the United States.

In order to maintain these conflicting interests in check, Batista had to achieve economic stabilization as soon as possible. He was able to achieve this by convincing the American government to negotiate the Jones-Costigan Amendment, also known as the Sugar Act of 1934, that among other things increased Cuba's share of the American market. The American economic and political leadership realized that Cuba's economic stability was necessary in order to protect their sizable economic interests and avoid further radicalization of the revolution. Batista had also complied with his part of the deal by forcing the removal of the brief Grau San Martín 1933-1934 nationalist government [25].<sup>40</sup> Despite the negative image of tourism at this time, Batista realized that it was necessary to revitalize the industry to reduce the dependency on sugar and encourage the return of American tourists that had decreased in numbers due to the economic depression in the United States and the instability on the island. In order to achieve this, the government used gambling again together with increasing reliance on the romantic and sensuous perception of the island. Batista and his associates came to depend on tourism to enrich themselves. This new effort to attract tourism differed somewhat from the exclusive dependence on clubs and high-end rollers. The incorporation of Cuban cultural aspects such as Afro-Cuban music and the legalization of comparsas as in the Carnivals banned since the Partido Independiente de Color revolt in 1912 increased the acceptance of tourism during the 1930s as a way to promote Cuban culture.

The remaining decade of the 1930s was a period of slow recovery for the island and particularly the tourist industry. It would not be until the Second World War when the Cuban economy would fully recover while still depending on sugar and the United States. The Cuban tourism industry would have to wait until after WWII to regain its old dynamism, but in addition to the lingering bad image and continued dependence on gambling and casinos, it had to face the increasing competition of Miami, Puerto Rico, and other Caribbean spots that wanted a share of the increasingly lucrative tourist dollars [46,47].

## Conclusion

Attitudes about Cuban-American relations during the first four decades of the Cuban Republic might appear static when we read about American influence over the period. The fact is that American ideas of possession and imperialism evolved during these decades. When the United States took physical control of the island in 1898, American imperialism was at a stage that we might want to refer as the classical period. The American elites were playing catch-up with the older European empires that controlled most of the world at the time. The young American republic did not have many territories left to acquire so the project was unique from the beginning. Another reason for this imperial exceptionalism was the substantial and influential minority of anti-imperialists who feared that imperial possessions might destroy the whole idea and concept of American democracy and republican virtue. There was also a substantial racial prejudice in the anti-imperialist ideology due to the fear that inferior races might

contaminate and dilute American white preponderance while under pressure at home due to the massive arrival of Southern and Eastern Europeans who were not considered the best white stock.

As a result of these contradictions and the failure of massive American migration to Cuba, it became clear that Cuba would not become a state. Ultimately, the United States government came to the realization that the best approach to American influence and possession was a new type of empire that denied its own imperial characteristics contrasted with the old and more traditional empires. The United States was going to possess and control via business investment, technological superiority, and not least American cultural expansion. Cuba was in the middle of this process and changed as well throughout these American transformations. These changes not only affected the Cuban elites' self-perception but also their own attitudes toward Cuban minorities and their own conception of Cubanidad. Americans in Cuba slowly evolved from the initial military occupation, businessmen, settlers, and adventurers in search for quick economic opportunities to visitors who stayed for substantial periods and related their travels through travelogues and newspaper articles. As technology and costs evolved, mass tourism became increasingly more important as a point of contact and a source of revenue to the island in search of breaking its long time dependence on sugar with its constant fluctuation of booms and busts. Tourism continued the intense relationship between the Americans and the islanders. Both visitors and Cubans were part of a joint evolution of attitudes including racial ones. While racial prejudice was a constant during the four decades of our research, the fact is that changes occurred in both countries and these changes in attitudes led to a slow transformation in the racial ideology. In the particular case of Cuba, the growing importance of tourism and a more self-assured and mature nationalism led to greater appreciation of the contribution of all segments of the population to a national culture that accepted and promoted Afro-Cuban contributions. It is this constant change and transformation of the concepts of imperial hegemony and the agency of the Cuban political and economic elites during the republican period what this research hoped to expand since American influence and culture are still essential components of the evolving Cuban national identity even to this day.

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<sup>40</sup>Hugh Thomas in Chapters 49-52 in *Cuba, La Lucha por la Libertad* provided a detailed coverage of these brief two years of revolutionary activity that conflicted Batista and the Cuban army with the more radical elements of the workers and university students.



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