

## Making the Haitian Cuban Border and Creating Temporary Migrants

In 1913, Cuban president José Miguel Gómez bowed to pressure from sugar companies and their US backers and promulgated an executive degree permitting Caribbean immigrant laborers to enter Cuba on seasonal contracts. Three years earlier, a Haitian named Occiano Guincio had entered a very different type of legally binding agreement on Cuban soil. On August 18, 1910, the Haitian agricultural laborer married Cornelia Videau, an Afro-Cuban native of Guantánamo, in the bride's hometown. At first glance, the marriage between the Haitian and Cuban seems anomalous. It took place before companies were allowed to recruit migrants in a period when statistics show negligible entries for Haitians. In actuality, the union of Guincio and Videau highlights the connections between Haiti and Cuba that predated the migration decree. One of the central arguments of this chapter is that such longstanding flows of goods, people, and ideas – of which Occiano Guincio is a perfect representative – shaped the processes of building the Cuban state, strengthening its border, and legislating the burgeoning temporary contract migration system.

The family histories of Guincio and Videau accentuate the very different experiences of abolition that occurred in Haiti and Cuba; their marriage also illustrates the inseparability of these processes. Occiano Guincio had been born free in Port Salut, Haiti, in 1882. He could trace his legal status as a free black man to the events of the Haitian Revolution, the uprising that successfully ended slavery on the French colony of Saint Domingue almost ninety years before his birth. In contrast, slavery still existed in Cuba in 1885 when Cornelia Videau was born free into an enslaved family. Her legal status resulted from the 1870 Ley Moret, or free-womb law, which attempted to abolish slavery gradually by giving

freedom to children born of Cuban slaves. In contrast to the early, rapid, and violent process of emancipation that occurred in Haiti, Cuban slavery was abolished gradually in the late nineteenth century to avoid a repeat of the Haitian Revolution. At the time of Cornelia's birth, her mother, Rosa Videaux, was identified in documents as a "*patrocinada* of Vidaud." Like other Cuban slaves in the late nineteenth century, Rosa was undergoing an experience called *patronato*, a legal mechanism of gradual emancipation, in which her master maintained control over her labor and mobility.<sup>1</sup>

If the national histories of Haiti and Cuba represent two extreme cases of emancipation in the Americas, the Guincio–Videau marriage suggests some possible connections between the two. A rural worker, Occiano Guincio settled in Cuba at some point between his birth in 1882 and his marriage in 1910, well before the 1913 presidential decree that allowed Haitian immigrant workers into Cuba. In fact, the connection between Guincio and Videau may have gone back even further. During and immediately after the Haitian Revolution, approximately 27,000 masters and slaves fled Saint Domingue and settled in eastern Cuba.<sup>2</sup> Cornelia Videau's French surname raises the possibility that she or her master descended from this initial wave of refugees. Details about her husband's life lend support to this likelihood. At his baptism in Haiti, Occiano Guincio's godfather was Nicefort Vidaud, an individual with the same surname as the woman he would marry a few decades later. The fact that Cornelia Videau married someone whose Haitian godfather shared her own last name raises the possibility of transnational family connections that reached deep into the nineteenth century. Whether the ties that bound Guincio to Videau were fresh in 1910 or had existed a generation before, their marriage highlights the human connections that linked Haiti to Cuba between the two major migratory waves of the early nineteenth century and the twentieth.

A close analysis of the Haitians who traveled to Cuba before 1913 challenges the common idea that Cuba's border was opened and closed according to the will of the Cuban state and the foreign-owned sugar

<sup>1</sup> Marriage Record of Occiano Guincio and Cornelia Videau. August 18, 1910. Archivo Provincial de Guantánamo: Registro del Estado Civil (hereafter APGREC), 423/11869/1–7. The surname is spelled variously as Videau, Videaux, and Vidaud throughout the marriage record. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 46–7, 64–6; Cowling, *Conceiving Freedom*, 55.

<sup>2</sup> Cruz Ríos, *Flujos Inmigratorios*, 40; Pichardo Viñals, *Temas históricos*, 97–9, 108–9; Pérez de la Riva, "Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900–1931," 17; Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*, 173–83.

companies operating within it. According to conventional narratives, the Cuban government passed racially charged restrictive migration legislation in 1902 and 1906 before US-owned sugar companies successfully pressured for Caribbean contract migration in 1913. However, I demonstrate that the Cuban state did not have the capacity to enforce its border for most of the first decade of the twentieth century. The 1902 and 1906 pieces of legislation could not always stop the ongoing immigration of Haitians. But they did represent attempts to make migrants “legible” to the state, meaning that they could be defined, quantified, rendered in state documents, and ultimately governed. In this context, statistical increases in migration reveal as much about the Cuban state’s ability to “see” the people who crossed its border as it does a numerical increase in migration.<sup>3</sup>

The Haitians who arrived in Cuba before 1913 also shaped the terms of the migration legislation that was eventually enacted – again challenging top-down narratives that focus on company and state power. By 1910, the Cuban government had strengthened its capacity to enforce its borders. As a result, Haitians were increasingly arrested as they disembarked on Cuban soil. Incarcerated Haitians, their consuls, and Cuban local officials argued about whether Haitians should be permitted to work in Cuba, how they should be repatriated, and who should pay for it all. These local debates were tied to a national one between the largely US-owned sugar companies that sought to overturn the ban on Caribbean migration and many Cubans who wanted to maintain the ban in order to whiten the Cuban nation.

The local, national, and international voices that weighed in on migration ultimately shaped the Cuban state’s decision to allow Caribbean laborers into their country as well as the policies that regulated this immigration. The eventual result was a temporary, contract labor program that was similar to others that emerged elsewhere in the world in the same period. In early 1913, thousands of Haitians and individuals from throughout the Caribbean entered Cuba with legal permission to work on the sugar harvest. The era of large-scale, state-regulated contract migration within the United States’ Caribbean empire had begun, but its content originated from within the cells of Cuban jails as much as the offices of sugar companies or the presidential palace. Rather than legalizing migration in 1913, the Cuban state made it fully legible to their own

<sup>3</sup> My use of legibility and the idea that a state can “see” both come from James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

control. Instead of causing migration to happen, sugar companies expanded and helped institutionalize an ongoing movement of people.

HAITI AND CUBA IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY  
ATLANTIC WORLD

The Haitian Revolution raged between 1791 and 1804 as the slaves and free people of color in the French colony of Saint Domingue variously fought and allied with the armies of France, England, and Spain over the right to individual freedom and territorial sovereignty. Thirteen years of violent and highly destructive warfare destroyed the plantations of France's most valuable colony as well as the system of coerced labor upon which it depended. The former slaves who led the Revolution created the independent Republic of Haiti, the first country in the Atlantic to permanently abolish African slavery and inscribe racial equality into its constitution.<sup>4</sup> The Haitian Revolution's radical message of anti-colonialism and anti-slavery engendered fear among the world's slaveholders and colonial officials who sought to "silence" its message within their own domain. In the decades immediately following the revolution, many world powers refused to recognize the new country diplomatically. France did not extend recognition until 1825, after Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer agreed to indemnify former planters for the loss of their plantations. Proponents of slavery in the United States successfully blocked recognition for almost six decades.<sup>5</sup>

Independent Haiti's diplomatic isolation did not prevent complex and multi-faceted interactions with other countries in the hemisphere and across the Atlantic Ocean. On the one hand, recent scholarship has identified the revolution's influence outside of Haiti in new and subtle ways. Rather than looking for the event's "causal impact on surrounding areas and its direct effect on slave insurgency in other places," many have conceptualized the Haitian Revolution as "phantasma and nightmare" in order to understand how it affected independence struggles, meanings of modernity, literary production, and a host of other social, political, and cultural processes throughout the Atlantic.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 87; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; James, *The Black Jacobins*; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*.

<sup>5</sup> Stinchcombe, "Class Conflict and Diplomacy," 18, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 5; Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution*, 139–44; Munro and Walcott-Hackshaw, *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution*; Munro and Walcott-Hackshaw, *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution*; Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian*

This focus on Haiti's "spectral" connections should not blind us to the fact that the country's transnational links were also material: People traveled to and from Haiti, they traded goods, exchanged ideas, had sex, and sometimes brought guns. In the first decades after the revolution, Haitian officials formed political alliances with abolitionists and revolutionaries in the Americas and Europe.<sup>7</sup> Lettered journalists, common sailors, and other Haitians appeared throughout the Americas, where they influenced politics in both home and host countries.<sup>8</sup>

Trade linked Haiti to other countries as well. During the 1825 Pan-American conference in Panama, an event from which Haiti was excluded, a Colombian official declared that his government "would not . . . make any objection to continuing to admit the Haitian flag in Colombian ports for purely mercantile purposes" despite the lack of formal diplomatic relations between the countries.<sup>9</sup> This position was not unique to the Colombian representative. As early as 1812, merchants from the United States traveled to Haiti to sell agricultural foodstuffs and purchase coffee. Haitians also exported coffee to France and other parts of Europe in large quantities.<sup>10</sup>

The political and commercial ties between Haiti and other parts of the Atlantic occurred alongside steady flows of people. In the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, planters and their slaves fled Saint Domingue and settled in the United States and neighboring countries in the Caribbean.<sup>11</sup> Once established, such flows did not stop. There was a "constant movement of individuals and small groups" to and from Haiti in the nineteenth

*Revolution in the Atlantic World*; Geggus and Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution*; Hoffman, Gewecke, and Fleischmann, *Haiti 1804*; Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*; García Moreno and Eduardo Vázquez, *La revolución de Haití*.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Haitian emperor Henry Christophe corresponded with British abolitionists despite a lack of recognition from England. In 1816, Haitian president Alexander Pétion offered weapons and asylum to Simón Bolívar, the South American independence leader. Political linkages continued throughout the nineteenth century. See Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 23; Guerra Vilaboy, "La revolución haitiana," 50–1; Fischer, "Bolívar in Haiti"; Dubois, *Aftershocks*; Chaar-Pérez, "A Revolution of Love?"; Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, Exile*; Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*.

<sup>8</sup> For examples from Colombia and Jamaica, see Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery*, 79; Lasso, *Myths of Harmony*, 135–6; Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, Exile*; Eller, "All would be equal," 127–8.

<sup>9</sup> José Rafael Revenga, letter of September 24, 1825, quoted in Stinchcombe, "Class Conflict and Diplomacy," 12.

<sup>10</sup> Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 23–4; Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 55, 61.

<sup>11</sup> Davies, "Saint-Dominguan Refugees"; Brereton, "Haiti and the Haitian Revolution"; Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, Exile*.

century. Some went to France, the favorite site of education for well-heeled Haitians. Individuals also moved between Haiti and the early communities of Haitian-Americans in US cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, New Orleans, Charleston, Savannah, and others.<sup>12</sup> These may have entailed the return of second- and third-generation Haitian-Americans to the land of their parents and grandparents. For instance, in 1840, Alexander Battiste was born in Savannah, Georgia. His “father was the son of Haitian parents but born in the United States.” At the age of four, Battiste moved to Philadelphia to live with his uncle and aunt, two other second-generation Haitians. In 1861, this trio of second- and third-generation migrants returned to Haiti permanently, perhaps to seek refuge during the looming instability promised by the US Civil War.<sup>13</sup> In the latter part of the century, rural laborers began moving between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.<sup>14</sup>

Contrary to popular stereotypes, Haiti was also a migration destination from Europe and the Americas. In the early decades of Haitian independence, presidents Henry Christophe and Jean-Pierre Boyer supported attempts to bring African Americans from the United States to Haiti. Despite many failed colonization projects, approximately 13,000 African Americans settled in Haiti; most eventually returned.<sup>15</sup> Movements also occurred independently of these well-known colonization schemes. Before slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico, runaway slaves sought to reach Haiti by “stealing small boats or fishing vessels or hiring themselves out as sailors.”<sup>16</sup> Individuals from Europe, the Middle East, and other parts of the Americas arrived in Haiti in their hundreds, and sometimes thousands, until the eve of the 1915 US occupation. The most well-known were individuals from Germany and Syria-Lebanon. The latter community comprised approximately 6000 in 1903.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context*, 186; Burnham, “Immigration and Marriage,” 2–9; Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 5–6; Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 49–50; Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*, 1–2, chapter 2; White, *Encountering Revolution*.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Battiste to John S. Durham, Minister Resident and Consul General of the United States, Port-au-Prince, January 25, 1892. Despatches from United States Consuls in Port-au-Prince, 1835–1906, microcopy T. 364, (hereafter DUSCPP) Reel 9.

<sup>14</sup> Turits, “A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed,” 594; Martínez, *Peripheral Migrants*, 1–2.

<sup>15</sup> Pamphile, *Haitians and African Americans*, chapter 2, quote on p. 44.

<sup>16</sup> Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*, 74.

<sup>17</sup> Plummer, “The Metropolitan Connection,” 124–5. See also Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 55–6; Schmidt, *The United States Occupation*, 95–6; Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, Exile*, 216–7, 274; Casey, “Haitian Habits,” 125–7.

On the surface, nineteenth-century Cuba was an unlikely place to have strong networks of migration and trade with Haiti. Cubans themselves had been quite aware of the events of the Haitian Revolution. Cuban soldiers fought in the Haitian Revolution under the Spanish flag and witnessed the revolution firsthand; returning veterans spread news of black revolutionaries who destroyed the institutions of colonial control, African slavery, and plantation agriculture in the neighboring French colony. However, Cuban fears of racial revolution were coupled with new economic opportunities. After the Haitian Revolution, sugar and coffee production exploded in Cuba, the number of enslaved human beings quadrupled, and Spanish control was firmly embraced. In short, “Eastern Cuba became a space of economic counterrevolution.”<sup>18</sup>

The Haitian Revolution influenced master–slave relationships in Cuba as well as the export economy. Ada Ferrer argues that for Cuban slaves and their masters, ideas about Haiti and the Haitian Revolution “loomed large,” creating a situation in which “local slave rebellion became part of the daily fabric of possibility.”<sup>19</sup> In 1812 a slave rebellion in Cuba associated with José Antonio Aponte drew direct influence from the Haitian Revolution and the independent country it produced.<sup>20</sup> Reprisals against real and imagined Haitian-style slave revolts increased in Cuba.

Information about the Haitian Revolution was also brought to Cuba by the more than 27,000 free and enslaved people who fled Saint Domingue and settled in the eastern part of Cuba, where they were responsible for the growth of coffee production.<sup>21</sup> Although many of the Saint Domingue exiles were expelled from Cuba in 1809, a large number returned only a few decades later. Besides bringing the knowledge of coffee-production, refugees were responsible for the prevalence of Franco-Haitian culture in Cuba’s eastern province of Oriente.<sup>22</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, according to one French traveler, Santiago de Cuba had become “almost as much a French town as it is a Spanish one. Our language is understood by everyone, except a few new Spanish colonists, determined to not learn it.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*, 9–11, 183.   <sup>19</sup> Ferrer, “Speaking of Haiti,” 233.

<sup>20</sup> Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, chapter 5; Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*, 276–89.

<sup>21</sup> Cruz Ríos, *Flujos migratorios*, 40; Pichardo Viñals, *Temas históricos*, 97–9, 108–9; Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900–1931,” 17; Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*, 135, 175.

<sup>22</sup> Portuondo Zuñiga, *Cuba: Constitución y liberalismo*, 52–5; Scott, “Public Rights and Private Commerce,” 239–40; Cruz Ríos, *Flujos migratorios*, 78.

<sup>23</sup> Duvergier de Hauranne, “Cuba et les Antilles,” 861 translated and quoted in Joseph, *Four French Travelers*, 21–2.

At the time of Cuba's independence wars in the late nineteenth century, Franco-Haitian culture was still highly visible in eastern Cuba. In the 1890s, almost a century after the initial wave of refugees, Cuban independence leaders José Martí and Máximo Gómez noted the presence of French-speaking individuals on the coffee plantations of Oriente.<sup>24</sup> Emerging Cuban musical styles such as the *contradanza* and dances like the *Tumba Francesa* had their origins in Haiti and were transformed to create meaning in the new context, especially during Cuba's independence wars. For instance, *danzon* was associated with Haitians, Afro-Cubans, and independence from Spain.<sup>25</sup> In 1874, independence leader Carlos Manuel de Céspedes described a dance in which freed slaves sang many "songs, in French Creole, that refer to our revolution."<sup>26</sup>

The Haitian influence on eastern Cuba was maintained not just by the cultural practices of post-revolutionary refugees but also the sustained communications between both countries. Their participation within larger Atlantic flows created commercial, maritime, military, and human linkages between the two countries, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. For instance, in the spring of 1866, a ship called the *Sacramento* sailed out of New York before landing in Port-au-Prince on May 14. From the capital of the first republic in the Americas to abolish slavery, the *Sacramento* traveled directly to Cuba, a place where slavery still thrived.<sup>27</sup> It was one of thirty-six vessels that entered Port-au-Prince from April to June 1866. Two of them traveled directly to Cuba.<sup>28</sup>

These commercial and shipping links continued and probably expanded after 1900, when multiple parts of Haiti and Cuba were linked by trading networks. On May 5, 1900, the *Tres Hermanas*, a ship registered in Key West, Florida, arrived in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, from Baracoa, Cuba. Four days later, the boat traversed the Haitian coast for 27 miles before landing in Archahaie "to take on a cargo of bananas and starch." It then left Archahaie on May 16, "destined for Santiago de Cuba." Bad weather prevented that particular ship from reaching Santiago and it was

<sup>24</sup> Pichardo Viñals, *Temas históricos*, 98.

<sup>25</sup> Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 23,25; Vidal, "Cuba's Tumba Francesa," 49; Hume, "On the Margins," 76.

<sup>26</sup> Céspedes, *El diario perdido*, 268–70 cited in Ibarra Cuesta, *Encrucijadas de la guerra prolongada*, 32.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Conrad, "Arrivals and Departures of American Vessels at the United States Consulate in Port-au-Prince." June 30, 1866. DUSCPP, Roll 4.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Conrad, "Navigation and Commerce of the United States at the Port of Port-au-Prince," June 30, 1866. DUSCPP, Roll 4.



grounded in Port-au-Prince. However, the Cuban crew waited only nine days for the next ship heading to Santiago de Cuba.<sup>29</sup> One can only imagine the news and information that Haitians and Cubans exchanged as they conducted business and, in this case, waited for a seaworthy vessel. The back and forth movements of these ships connected merchants in both countries. In 1903, two Cubans in Santiago, Francisco Bassas y Columbié and Juan Arango y Villasana, had business dealings with the commercial house of Sres. C. Lyon Hall y Ca, based in Port-au-Prince.<sup>30</sup> Not all such commerce was carried out by legally sanctioned trading companies. In 1911, one Cuban observer complained of “the existence of a certain number of Haitian and Jamaican ships that dedicate themselves to piracy in the coast of the eastern region.”<sup>31</sup> It is no wonder that Haitian newspapers regularly reported on Cuban news.<sup>32</sup>

Haitians and Cubans used each other’s territories in military struggles for state power as well. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Spanish authorities in Cuba feared attacks from an alliance between the Haitian government and continental independence leaders like Simón Bolívar, who had already received aid from Haitian President Alexander Pétiou (1806–18).<sup>33</sup> Decades later, after Cuba’s wars for independence began, leaders used Haiti as a point of organization. During the Ten Years War in Cuba (1868–78), Manuel R. Fernandez served as “confidential agent of Cuba in [Port-au-Prince] Haiti,” where he accumulated arms and supplies with the surreptitious aid of Haitian president Jean-Nicolas Nissage Saget. Other Cubans organized from within Cap-Haitien, Haiti.<sup>34</sup> These Cuban

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Battiste, Consulate General of the United States in Port-au-Prince to David J. Hill, Assistant Secretary of State, Washington DC, May 26, 1900. DUSCPP, Reel 10.

<sup>30</sup> Copy of letter to Secretario de Estado, Habana from Juzgado Municipal y Registro Civil, Santiago de Cuba. March 11, 1903 [Original March 4, 1903]. Archivo Nacional de Cuba: Secretaria de Estado y Justicia (hereafter ANCSEJ) 38/2020/2.

<sup>31</sup> Report to Consejo de Secretarios From Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficio. August 23, 1911. Archivo Nacional de Cuba: Secretaria de la Presidencia (hereafter ANCSPP) 121/12.

<sup>32</sup> See for instance “À Cuba: Message présidentiel,” *Le Nouvelliste*, August 20, 1906.

<sup>33</sup> José L. Franco draws from the extensive documentation related to Haiti in the National Archives of Cuba: Asuntos Políticos to argue that Jean-Pierre Boyer was actually planning to overthrow Cuba, with the aid of Mexico, but was thwarted by European powers. Franco, “Un esfuerzo de Haiti.”

<sup>34</sup> José Morales Lemus, “Borrador Manuscrito del Nombramiento de Manuel B. Fernandez como Agente Confidencial de Cuba en Haiti,” February 2, 1870. Archivo Nacional de Cuba: Donativos y Remisiones (hereafter ANCDR) 629/10. Letter from Manuel R. Fernandez to Miguel de Aldama, Presidente de la Junta Central Republicana de Cuba y Puerto Rico, August 23, 1870. ANCDR 156/40–19. This episode is described in greater detail in Casey, “Between Anti-Haitianism and Anti-Imperialism,” 58–62; Luis

exile communities in Haiti were large and strategically important enough to host Cuba's most high-profile independence leaders such as Antonio Maceo and José Martí.<sup>35</sup>

Haitian political figures also used Cuban territory for their own strategic ends. The years between Cuba's formal independence (1902) and the United States' occupation of Haiti (1915) coincided with a period of acute political instability in Haiti. During conflicts, Haitian political and military leaders traveled to Cuba and other countries for organizational purposes and to escape repression. For instance, in January 1908, Haitian political leader Antenor Firmin, himself a previous acquaintance of José Martí, sought to seize power from Haitian president Nord Alexis by using foreign territories for logistical purposes.<sup>36</sup> During the conflict, twenty-six of Firmin's followers left "the island of Saint Thomas" and headed "in the direction of a Cuban port" to continue organizing.<sup>37</sup> In 1914, Cuban officials awaited the arrival "from Curacao, of the Haitian general Defly, [an] agitator who has been expelled by all the governments of the neighboring Republics."<sup>38</sup> Finally, in 1915, Dr. Rosalvo Bobo (whose experiences in Cuba are detailed in Chapter 6) fled Haiti after being thwarted from seizing executive power by the occupying forces of the United States.<sup>39</sup>

These military, political, and economic linkages were built by people who moved between Haiti and Cuba outside of the major migratory movements of the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite the lack of systematic or reliable immigration statistics in either Haiti or Cuba (to be discussed later), these movements appear in scattered places in other types of archival sources. In Santiago de Cuba in 1883, someone unsuccessfully requested a passport so that Cristina Duharte, the daughter of a *patrocinada* slave, could travel to Haiti.<sup>40</sup> Although it is impossible to know the identity or motive of the person who made the request, had they

Lamarque, "Claudio Brindis de Salas no era un mal patriota," *Diario de Cuba* February 13, 1930.

<sup>35</sup> Zacaire, "Haiti on His Mind," 58–61, 70.

<sup>36</sup> Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, 120; Plummer, "Firmin and Martí."

<sup>37</sup> Secretario Interno to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, January 22, 1908. APSGP 785/301.

<sup>38</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Alcalde Municipal, Santiago, October 14, 1914. APSGP 2837/9.

<sup>39</sup> Gaillard, *Les Blancs Débarquent II*, 214, 17, 25.

<sup>40</sup> Untitled Expedient relative to Cristina Duharte's petition for a passport. March 14, 1883. Archivo Provincial de Santiago de Cuba: Juzgado de Primera Instancia (hereafter APSJPI) 788/6/4. It is unknown who requested the passport. Duharte denied making the request.

been successful they would have joined a well-established community of Cubans in Haiti. In addition to the immigrants from Europe and the Americas that settled in nineteenth-century Haiti there was a significant number of Cubans. By the 1890s, the number of Cuban immigrants in Port-au-Prince trailed only the Germans and the French.<sup>41</sup>

The community of Cubans in Haiti established strong social and economic ties with Haitians. Between 1850 and 1871, ten marriages were conducted between Haitians and Cubans in Port-au-Prince.<sup>42</sup> Others did not formalize their unions through church or state. For instance, José Cristobal Polanco y Ferrer was born in Santiago de Cuba in the 1840s and moved to Port-au-Prince in 1876. He had three children outside of marriage with Delcamise Cebea, a Haitian woman.<sup>43</sup> When Polanco registered the birth of his third child with Haitian authorities in 1905, two resident Cubans served as witnesses.<sup>44</sup> One of them, Simon Hierrezuelo, had requested a passport in Santiago a few years before to travel to Port-au-Prince.<sup>45</sup> Polanco's case was not unique. After Cuban independence, the Cuban consul in Haiti inquired about the citizenship rights of "illegitimate children" born in Haiti, "some of a Cuban father and Haitian mother, others of a Haitian father and a Cuban mother, and some whose parents are both Cuban."<sup>46</sup> Cubans had a strong economic presence in Haiti as well, where they had a reputation for being tailors and shoemakers. Cuban musicians and bullfighters regularly passed through Port-au-Prince in the 1890s.<sup>47</sup> In 1885, a hair salon called "*La Cubana*" was opened in Port-au-Prince. In 1930, its proprietor was Jean Rodriguez,

<sup>41</sup> Corvington, *Port-Au-Prince, 1888-1915*, 26, 29, 38, 93.

<sup>42</sup> Burnham, "Immigration and Marriage," 278.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to Secretario de Estado, Habana from Celestino Bencomo, Consulado de la Republica de Cuba, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. August 19, 1909. "Copia y Traducción Literal" [de acta de nacimiento de Jose Cristobal Polanco], August 27, 1893. "Copia y Traducción Literal" [de Extracto de los Registros del Estado Civil de Port-au-Prince, Seccion Sud], July 9, 1901. "Copia y Traducción Literal." [de Extracto de los Registros del Estado Civil de Port-au-Prince] June 12, 1905. ANCSEJ 23/711/7-11.

<sup>44</sup> "Copia y Traducción Literal" [de Extracto de los Registros del Estado Civil de Port-au-Prince], June 4, 1905, ANCSEJ 23/711/11.

<sup>45</sup> Letter to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, From: Simón Hierrezuelo, December 02, 1902, APSGP 1800/5.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to Jefe del Despacho del Departamento de Estado en Habana from Jorge A. Campuzano, Consul de la Republica de Cuba en Port-au-Prince, Haiti. November 06, 1906. Letter to Cuban Consul in Port-au-Prince from Pedro C. Salcedo, Jefe interino del Departamento de Estado. August 20, 1908. ANCSEJ 23/711/2-5.

<sup>47</sup> Corvington, *Port-Au-Prince, 1888-1915*, 26, 29, 38, 93.

a Cuban.<sup>48</sup> Of course, these are only the scattered interactions for which we have records.

The regular movement of Cubans to Haiti continued into the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1901, Cubans Vicenta Rodriguez and José R. Pérez separately asked the Governor of Oriente for passports to travel to Haiti.<sup>49</sup> Numerous other Cubans made similar requests over the next years as well.<sup>50</sup> In this period, the number of Cubans migrating to Haiti was significantly lower than the number of Haitians heading in the opposite direction. By 1906, Haitian newspapers were already remarking on “the number of our compatriots that [Cuba] attracts.”<sup>51</sup> In 1913, Cuban port officials recorded the entry of 1422 Haitians into Cuba, representing the beginning of the twentieth-century migration of seasonal cane cutters. These immigrants, however, were hardly blazing a new trail. Not only were their movements mirrored on a global scale by the migration of millions of people, they were also reinforcing a long tradition of migrant flows going to and from Haiti.

Haiti’s integration into the global migratory movements of the nineteenth century shaped the population flows heading to Cuba. The large-scale, long-distance movements that occurred around the globe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were “closely linked” to shorter-distanced, often seasonal, movements that characterized regions like the Caribbean, creating what Adam McKeown calls “a spectrum of overlapping migrations.”<sup>52</sup> Life stories of individuals who traveled between Haiti and Cuba in the twentieth century clearly illustrate

<sup>48</sup> “Salons de coiffure,” *Haiti Journal*, June 22, 1931; “Salon de coiffure: La cubana,” *Haiti Journal*, January 27, 1930. Thank you to Andy Hernandez for helping me confirm Rodriguez’ nationality.

<sup>49</sup> Vicenta Rodriguez to Gobernador Civil de la Provincia de Oriente, October 24, 1901; José R. Pérez to Gobernador Civil de la Provincia de Oriente, September 25, 1901. Both in APSGP 1800/3.

<sup>50</sup> In 1903, Manuel Salazar, Julian Padilla, Mariano Clavijo y Riviera, Marcelino Hechavarria, Mariano Tur, and Manuel Raventos requested passports to travel to Haiti. In 1906, Alfred Uoldis, Matilde Rodriguez, and Adel Rodriguez made similar requests. Manuel Salazar to Gobernador Civil, Santiago, June 11, 1903; Manuel Raventos to Gobernador Civil, Santiago [re: Julian Padilla]. June 11, 1903; Mariano Clavijo y Riviera to Gobernador Civil, June 11, 1903; Manuel Raventos to Gobernador Civil [re: Marcelino Hechavarria]. Mariano Tur to Gobernador Civil, June 11, 1903. All in APSGP 1800/6. Alfred Uoldis to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, March 09, 1906, Matilde Rodriguez and Adel Rodriguez to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, November 12, 1906. All in APSGP 1800/8.

<sup>51</sup> “À Cuba,” *Le Nouvelliste*, August 29, 1906.

<sup>52</sup> McKeown, “Global Migration, 1846–1940,” 156–7, 160.

these overlaps. Octavio Pérez migrated to Cuba from Haiti in 1916. He had been born in Port-au-Prince in 1900 to a Haitian woman named Maria Despaigne and Julio Pérez, an immigrant from Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic.<sup>53</sup> Jorge Hansen and his wife were born in Jamaica before moving to Haiti. While there, they gave birth to a daughter, Gertrudis, before all three migrated to Santiago de Cuba. In Cuba, Gertrudis married José Puzo Ronchon, a Haitian-born individual, in 1917.<sup>54</sup>

Other connections extended outside of the Caribbean entirely. Santiago Chade and Cecilia Esmeja were born in Ottoman Syria in 1877 and 1882, respectively. The two were married, and migrated to Haiti before having two sons in Port-au-Prince in 1897 and 1899. In 1903, parents and children permanently relocated to Santiago de Cuba.<sup>55</sup> In another example, Julian Caluff y Abraham was born in Tripoli, Syria, in 1905. By the 1920s he was living in Cuba though his Syrian-born mother was in Haiti.<sup>56</sup> Over the course of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Cuban state began to exert more control over who and what crossed its borders. For the first time, border crossers became something for the state to document systematically *as migrants*. The era of official statistics and migration regulations was beginning.

#### MAKING MIGRANTS LEGIBLE AND CREATING TEMPORARY CONTRACT LABORERS

In 1898, Spanish colonial control formally ended in Cuba, only to be replaced by the political, economic, and military dominance of the United States. As in other Caribbean areas under United States control, and following larger global trends, the movement of people and goods between Haiti and Cuba became further subject to state control as borders strengthened in the twentieth century.<sup>57</sup> Naturally, attempts to govern

<sup>53</sup> Citizenship Petitions for Octavio Pérez. July 22, 1938 and May 14, 1942, Archivo Provincial de Santiago: Registro del Estado Civil: Tomo de Ciudadanías (hereafter APSRECTC) 365/114, 175.

<sup>54</sup> Citizenship Petition for José Puzo Ronchon, September 16, 1940, APSRECTC 341/15/203. For the larger context about Jamaicans in turn of the century Haiti, see Smith, *Liberty, Fraternity, Exile*, 274, chapter 14.

<sup>55</sup> Citizenship Petition for Cecilia Esmeja y Chade, May 20, 1941, APSRECTC 358/6/65.

<sup>56</sup> Citizenship Petition for Julian Caluff y Abraham, November 19, 1940, APSRECTC 342/16/46.

<sup>57</sup> Turits, "A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed," 600–1; Derby, "Haitians, Magic, and Money," 499–501; Engerman, "Changing Laws," 76; Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land*, 12–14.

borders entailed controlling people's movements. The flows of people to and from Cuba, which had occurred outside the systematic gaze of the state, would now be quantified, and at times, restricted. Two Cuban immigration laws, based on legislation from the United States, were passed in 1902 and 1906. Both restricted the entrance of migrant contract laborers, effectively banning Haitians and British West Indians from entering the country.

While Cuban law described the ban in terms of a desire to forbid contract laborers, state officials and other sectors of society opposed Caribbean immigrants on racial grounds. Journalists and government officials voiced their fears that allowing Haitians and other immigrants into Cuba would put an end to white Cubans' numerical majority. They also complained that these immigrants carried diseases, could potentially cause a race war, and had primitive habits that would cause the Cuban nation to regress. Instead, Cuban officials, influenced by scientific racism, sought to attract European immigrants to "whiten" the population and provide labor for the growing sugar industry.<sup>58</sup> In short, the goal was to effect US-style racial improvement and to provide labor for the growth and modernization of the US-owned sugar industry.

In the period between 1902 and 1912, the Cuban government sought to restrict the movement of people that had taken place during the previous century. On the surface, Cuban government statistics verify their success (Table 1.1). They suggest that Haitian migration to Cuba was negligible or non-existent until 1913, the year sugar companies were permitted to recruit them. Migration spiked again in 1915, the year the United States military invaded Haiti. The result is that compiled statistics produce a picture of effective state control over borders and the imperial creation of a migratory movement.

However, what appear to be instantaneous acts of closing and opening the border actually represent a gradual process by which the Cuban state developed the capacity to observe and record who and what was crossing that border. To borrow from James Scott, migration had to become "legible" to state institutions; it had to be defined so that officials could observe and record it.<sup>59</sup> In other words, the low numbers of recorded

<sup>58</sup> Carlos de Velasco, "El problema negro," *Cuba Contemporánea*, February 1913; Corbitt, "Immigration in Cuba," 304; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 52, 101–2; Naranjo Orovio and García Gonzalez, *Racismo e inmigración*; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 39–44; Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba," 53, 56.

<sup>59</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 2.

TABLE 1.1 *Haitian immigrant arrivals in Cuba according to official statistics*

Year	Haitian Migrants
1902	10
1903	0
1904	0
1905	0
1906	–
1907	–
1908	0
1909	0
1910	0
1911	221
1912	172
1913	1,422
1914	120
1915	2,416

*Source:* Compiled from Cuba, *Censo de la República de Cuba, 1907*, 60; Cuba, *Census of the Republic of Cuba 1919*, 176; Secretaria de Hacienda: Sección de Estadística General, “Estado Comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la Republica, en los años civiles 1902, 1903, 1904, y 1905” November 2, 1906. ANCSF 115/99.

migrants between 1902 and 1912 reflect the state’s incapacity to count migrants, not a lack of border crossings. The migration laws of 1902 and 1906 were some of the first attempts to bring Cuba’s borders into the state’s purview. Despite their passage, the government was hard-pressed to stop migrants, much less quantify those who entered outside of official channels. Over time, the Cuban state militarized the border further and restricted migration with more success. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that sugar companies were granted permission to bring contract workers into Cuba at the very moment that the capacity to control the border was consolidated.

The illegibility of humans’ border crossing during the first decade of the twentieth century is illustrated by the life stories of migrants themselves. Some Haitians’ journeys to Cuba occurred before 1902, when entries were not recorded at all. For instance, Haitian native Julian Pol y Pié arrived in Baracoa, Cuba, on May 5, 1896.<sup>60</sup> Even after the state began counting

<sup>60</sup> “Julian Pol y Pié,” March 1, 1937, APSRECTC 371/3/13. Haitians Pablo Gil and Amóres Pools arrived in 1896 and 1898, respectively. “Amóres Pools soa, #23” and “Pablo Gil

migrants, Haitians arrived in years when immigration statistics flatly declare that nobody entered the country. The case of Bautista Nustelier y Fortunés is a perfect reflection of the longstanding connections between Haiti and Cuba and the problem with immigration statistics. Nustelier was born to a Haitian mother and Cuban father in Miragoâne, Haiti, in 1901. Two years later he traveled to Cuba, presumably accompanied by one or both parents. Yet immigration statistics declare that not a single Haitian entered Cuba in 1903.<sup>61</sup> The discrepancy between official migration statistics and individual life stories is not unique to Nustelier. Data about individual migrants show that many entered Cuba in various eastern ports between 1903 and 1910 when published statistics do not show the entrance of any Haitians. Edelman A. Fis, José Pols, and Rafael Julian, among many others, were born in Haiti, migrated to Cuba during the eleven years of restriction, and entered Cuba in years in which no Haitians were recorded.<sup>62</sup>

The discrepancy between official migration statistics and individual life stories is partially a result of the way migrants were defined and counted by the Cuban government. First, statistics labeled entering individuals as “passengers” or “immigrants” depending on the class of steamship in which they traveled. Many migrant workers were probably counted as

soa, #22” Censo 1918 de Holguín. Archivo Provincial de Holguín: Gobierno Municipal de Holguín (hereafter APHGM), 23/4972/103.

<sup>61</sup> It is hard to believe that he would have entered the country as a Cuban, seeing that he formally applied for Cuban citizenship in 1931. “Bautista Nustelier y Fortunés” #182, July 27, 1931. APSRECTC 353/1/182.

<sup>62</sup> Different types of archival evidence show Haitians entering between 1903 and 1910. José Rafael Castellano and Edelman A. Fis both arrived in 1904. Filomena Lené and José Pols entered Cuba in 1905. Eladio Fichs and Rafael Julian came in 1906. Pablo Lebore y Rios, Oscar Siguel, José Manuel, Manuel Fones, and Alfredo Thomas arrived in 1908. In 1909, Benito Leucé y Siril, Sijano Amedon, Juan Rafael Fis, Daniel Allas, and Nestor Cade arrived in Cuba. Felip Fiss, José Fidua and Epifanio Ducal also arrived in 1910. “Jose Rafael Castellano,” APRECTC 370/2/126; “Edelman A. Fis, soa, #24” Censo 1918 de Holguín APHGM 23/4972/114; “Filomena Lené,” #167, March 26, 1937, APSRECTC 342/16/167. “José Pols soa, #1” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/115; “Eladio Fichs soa, #10” and “Rafael Julian soa, #18” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/103; “Oscar Siguel soa, #16,” “José Manuel soa, #25,” “Manuel Fones soa, #9,” and “Alfredo Thomas soa, #20,” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/96, 102, 103; “Pablo Lebore y Rios,” February 27, 1934, APSRECTC 364/na/130; “Nestor Cade (Miguel Hechevarria), May 31, 1937, APSRECTC 371/3/68; “Benito Leucé y Siril,” June 30, 1934. APSRECTC 370/2/137; “Sijano Amedon, soa #104,” “Juan Rafael Fis, #136” and “Daniel Allas soa, #136” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/104, 136; “Felipe Fiss,” December 3, 1934, APSRECTC 370/2/212; “Epifanio Ducal soa, #8” and “Juan Hayb soa, #1” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4972/96, 103; “José Fidua, #18” Censo 1918 de Holguín. APHGM 23/4973/27.



TABLE 1.2 *Haitian passengers in Cuba, 1902–13*

Year	Arrivals	Departures	Net Gain/Loss
1902	81	47	+34
1903	151	97	+54
1904	174	62	+112
1905	282	194	+88
1906	395	328	+67
1907	1,031	334	+697
1908	705	393	+312
1909	648	462	+186
1910	854	508	+346
1911	914	425	+489
1912	209	328	-119
1913	1,512	498	+1,014
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,956</b>	<b>3,676</b>	<b>+3,280</b>

Source: “Movimiento de Pasajeros,” Cuban Gaceta Oficial, April 20, 1910, in United States National Archives, Record Group 59, Records Relating to Internal Affairs in Cuba, 1910–29 (hereafter USNA RG 59), roll 84; Ferrer, *Anuario estadístico*, 24–5.

passengers and vice versa. Arriving passengers were required to show \$30 in landing money to authorities.<sup>63</sup> Between 1902 and 1913, 6956 Haitian passengers arrived in Cuba and only 3676 departed, leaving 3280 unaccounted (see Table 1.2).

Second, published statistics are unable to give any sense of the number of migrants who entered the country entirely outside of the state’s gaze.<sup>64</sup> Finally, some Caribbean migrants were counted in categories like “Unspecified West Indians,” a contingent boasting 3359 arrivals between 1903 and 1907. It is clear that many more people from Haiti and other parts of the Caribbean entered Cuba in the first decade of the twentieth century than previously thought (Table 1.3).<sup>65</sup>

Many of the Haitians who arrived in Cuba between 1902 and 1912 did so by taking advantage of the existing commercial and personal networks between the two countries, legal loopholes, and lax law enforcement. One way Haitians entered Cuba during the period of restriction was to hitch

<sup>63</sup> Pérez de la Riva, “Cuba y la migración antillana, 1900–1931,” 33. <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–5.

<sup>65</sup> Cernichao is one of the few scholars to analyze the wave of Caribbean immigrants that arrived in Cuba before 1913. Cernichao, “Oriente: Fuerza de trabajo nativa.”

TABLE 1.3 *Haitian immigrants, net gain of passengers, and unspecified Antilleans, 1902–13*

Year	Haitian Immigrants	Net Gain of Haitian Passengers	“Unspecified West Indians”
1902	10	+34	
1903	0	+54	144
1904	0	+112	233
1905	0	+88	479
1906	–	+67	1,550
1907	–	+697	953
1908	0	+312	–
1909	0	+186	–
1910	0	+346	–
1911	221	+489	–
1912	172	–119	–
Total	403	+2,266	3,359

Source: “Movimiento de Pasajeros,” Cuban Gaceta Oficial, April 20, 1910, in USNA RG 59, roll 84. Olmsted and Gannett, *Cuba*, 106. Ferrer, *Anuario estadístico*, 24–5.

a ride on one of the numerous commercial ships that moved between Haiti, Cuba, and other parts of the Caribbean. In September 1911, for instance, the *Sirena* arrived in Cuba “to establish a storehouse to deposit salt.” Among the crew were many Haitians “who stayed on land” after the boat left.<sup>66</sup> Later that year, the Mayor of Baracoa admitted that migrants entered Cuba “with the aid of the large traffic in coastal trade that is carried out along the coasts of Haiti.”<sup>67</sup>

Migrants were often dropped off away from major ports in desolate areas of the Cuban coast. In 1911, a group of nine Haitians “disembarked clandestinely” in Yateritas, outside of Guantánamo.<sup>68</sup> Such journeys were fraught with risk and hardship. A group of six Haitians who arrived in 1911 displayed “evident signs of prostration due, without a doubt, to fatigue and the insufficient nourishment they have suffered since the time of their disembarkation.”<sup>69</sup> At other moments, ship captains favored the

<sup>66</sup> Jefe de la Policía Gubernativa to el Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, June 9, 1911, APSGP 2837/9.

<sup>67</sup> Consul d’Haiti, Santiago to Gouverneur [Oriente], September 14, 1911, APSGP 785/37/62.

<sup>68</sup> Telegram to Gobernador Civil, Santiago de Cuba from Herrera, Admor. Aduana, Caimanera, March 21, 1911. APSGP 785/37/1.

<sup>69</sup> Letter to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente from Jefe Local de Sanidad, April 18, 1911. APSGP 785/37/21.

ports where law enforcement was haphazard. “Certain steamship companies,” complained a Cuban sanitation official in 1911, “inverted the order of their stops, discharging in ports like Santiago de Cuba all of the personnel they feared would be rejected in Havana.”<sup>70</sup>

As Haitians continued traveling to Cuba between 1902 and 1912, Cuban sugar companies and labor recruiters began working to bring in migrants without government permission. Their techniques mimicked the strategies established by migrants and ship captains. Sometimes, companies brought workers into Cuba through minor or private ports that were not heavily policed. Cuban officials reported that in 1911, in the private port of Nipe, the firm that would later become the United Fruit Company was “importing black workers from Haiti and the other Antilles . . . without there being measures to apply the law of immigration prohibiting such importation.”<sup>71</sup> Some Haitians who entered the country as passengers were aided by labor contractors. Joseph Vital, a sailor on the *Abdel-Kader* “dedicates himself to introducing immigrants in Santiago de Cuba without previous authorization from the Cuban government.” Vital “operates . . . in accordance with a contractor in Santiago de Cuba and the immigrants he brings.” When they disembark, he “collects the thirty pesos that each immigrant brings along” eventually “returning to Haiti with the same money to return.”<sup>72</sup>

Sugar companies’ efforts to bring Haitians into Cuba during the period of restriction was only one strategy to maintain a steady labor supply. In addition to taking advantage of Cuba’s fluid eastern border, companies used legal channels to recruit the kind of European immigrants that many Cubans – influenced by ideas of scientific racism – considered acceptable. Organizations like the *Asociación Fomento de Inmigración* sought to bring single immigrants and families from Spain, the Canary Islands, various parts of Europe, and other places that were officially sanctioned by the Cuban government. In one project from 1913, the organization offered to bring “Portuguese and Spanish laborers” who had “been employed on the Isthmus of Panama” to interested companies. The cost of steamship fare would be split between workers and the Cuban

<sup>70</sup> Report to Consejo de Secretarios From Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficencia. August 23, 1911, ANCSF 121/12.

<sup>71</sup> Report to Consejo de Secretarios From Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficencia. August 23, 1911, ANCSF 121/12.

<sup>72</sup> Cuban Consul in Port-au-Prince to Jefe del Departamento de Inmigración May 10, 1911, APSGP 785/33/7.

government; companies would pay for railroad passage from port to plantation.<sup>73</sup>

Although successive US military governments had been responsible for restrictive immigration laws, US investors were largely responsible for their abrogation. US imperial control over Cuba had created a ripe situation for sugar expansion. As officials and business owners debated migration, sugar production increased in Cuba as a result of US investments and the 1902 reciprocity treaty. Sugar's profitability was increasing and companies' active recruitment of migrants of various nationalities, both legally and illegally, was coupled with attempts to overturn the Cuban government's ban on contract immigration. Between 1900 and 1912, Cuban organizations like the *Circulo de Hacendados*, *Asociacion Fomento de Inmigración*, the *Sociedad de Inmigración Puerto-Riqueña*, and the *Liga Agraria* pressured the Cuban government to allow the entry of contract laborers. Their initial proposals were to contract individuals and families from Europe and specific parts of the Americas for agriculture labor, though none explicitly requested to bring Asian or Afro-Caribbean laborers.<sup>74</sup>

Eventually, sugar company pressure convinced some officials in the Cuban government to soften their position against contract labor. The Guantánamo Sugar Company successfully requested permission to bring 293 individuals from the United States' new colony of Puerto Rico in 1906 – around the time that sugar growers did the same in Hawai'i.<sup>75</sup> In 1911, the Cuban Secretary of Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor was considering allowing “coolie” contract laborers to enter Cuba for the upcoming sugar harvest.<sup>76</sup> The next year, the restrictions on contract immigration were lifted. In 1912, the Ponupo Manganese Company, a US mining firm, was permitted to contract 500 Spanish laborers for work in their mines in eastern Cuba.<sup>77</sup> The same year, the Nipe Bay

<sup>73</sup> Unsigned letter to Wm. W Craib, Executive Agent, The Cuba Company, Ingenio Jatibonico, September 26, 1913, CCA box 9, folder 4a, Leo-142.

<sup>74</sup> McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba,” 29–40.

<sup>75</sup> McLeod, “Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba,” 40–2; Helg, “Race in Argentina and Cuba,” 54–6; Pérez, *Cuba under the Platt Amendment*, 78–83; Guantánamo Sugar Company, “Second Annual Report for the Fiscal Year ending September 30, 1907,” Guantánamo Sugar Company Records, Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, Florida, box 4, unmarked box with annual reports. Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire*.

<sup>76</sup> Jackson to U.S. Secretary of State, June 27, 1911, USNA RG 59, 837.55/18.

<sup>77</sup> Hugh Gibson to U.S. Secretary of State, September 16, 1912, USNA RG 59, 837.55/19.

Company specifically requested to bring contract laborers from the Caribbean, which effectively paved the way for Haitians and British West Indians to enter Cuba with passports and contracts in hand.

Companies' pushes for contract labor from the Caribbean, like earlier calls for its prohibition, were intertwined with the logic of race. As Philip A. Howard and others have noted, bringing in Caribbean migrants was more than just a question of numbers. Before 1913, company and state officials felt a growing concern that European immigrants and black Cubans would move to cities or avoid cutting sugar cane. As Howard argues, they may have also feared radicalism; labor strikes among railroad and agricultural workers rocked various regions of Cuba in the first decade of the twentieth century. Their mobilizations occurred as the *Partido Independiente de Color* sought to expand political citizenship and economic opportunities for Afro-Cubans before its violent repression in 1912; such conditions may have encouraged planters to find a source of demobilized, foreign workers.<sup>78</sup>

After years of political pressure, sugar companies' requests for access to more labor were granted. The Cuban government, through executive decrees, laid the groundwork for what would be a temporary contract labor program. In 1913, Cuban president José Miguel Gómez approved a measure that would allow the Nipe Bay Company to import 1400 workers from Haiti and Jamaica. It was renewed by another decree when sugar prices spiked during World War I. These permitted immigrants to work in the Cuban sugar industry during the war. Throughout the 1920s, the immigration of Haitian and British West Indian laborers was maintained piecemeal by specific presidential authorizations and company requests for migrants.<sup>79</sup>

This apparent victory of sugar companies and their imperial backers to secure cheap and compliant labor had limits. As a top official from The Cuba Company explained in 1913, contract migration was not the same as the indenture programs that brought Asians to the Caribbean in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>80</sup> "The laws of Cuba do not permit of endenture [sic], and without that, the laborer is free

<sup>78</sup> On the question of companies' motivations going beyond strict demography, see Cernichao, "Oriente: Fuerza de trabajo nativa," 93; Howard, *Black Labor*, 32–43.

<sup>79</sup> Corbitt, "Immigration in Cuba," 306–7; McLeod, "Undesirable Aliens: Haitian and British West Indian Immigrant Workers in Cuba," 39–44; Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba," 56.

<sup>80</sup> López, *Chinese Cubans*; Narvaez, "Chinese Coolies in Cuba and Peru"; Mahase, "Plenty a Dem Run Away."

to go or come as he chooses.” The only way to prevent “loss and disappointment” was for recruitment and immigration to “be controlled by a Government Department” rather than fall upon individual companies to petition the state and pay labor recruiters.<sup>81</sup> The sugar administrator presciently described the conflicts over mobility between immigrant laborers and Cuban companies that will be addressed in Chapter 3. His lament also highlights the fact that Cuban immigration policies were not created according to a totally unbridled logic of empire and production; some companies felt that there was still something to be desired from the Cuban state.

Though still inchoate, this migration program had much in common with emerging temporary contract programs throughout the world. Provisions for migrants’ return became more explicit and stringent with every migration decree. To provide some perspective, policies regulating other migrant flows within the United States’ imperial sphere were also only beginning to address repatriation in the 1910s. The Puerto Ricans who migrated to the US colony of Hawai’i as early as 1899 were not afforded return passage after sugar harvests; legal guarantees to repatriate Filipino workers from the future US state were not established until 1915.<sup>82</sup> But rather than emerging solely from the conflicts and compromises among economic interests, state officials, and anti-immigrant voices, as these programs are described, the content of Cuban immigration policies was shaped by the longstanding flows of people between Haiti and Cuba and by the actions of migrants themselves.<sup>83</sup>

Sugar interests and their allies in the United States were not the only ones petitioning for the legalization of contract migration. Their well-known actions occurred alongside requests of a different sort coming from local authorities in Oriente, Cuba. While top-down pressure emerged from corporate offices and sites of political power in the United States, other requests emanated from rural Cuba and its coastlines as a result of exchanges between Cuban officials, Haitian consuls, and the agricultural workers who continually traveled to Cuba despite legal prohibitions. If imperial pressures were responsible for the legalization of migration,

<sup>81</sup> William W. Craib, Executive Agent to George H. Whigham, Esq. Vice President, The Cuba Company, New York, October 3, 1913, CCA box 9, folder 4a, Leo-142.

<sup>82</sup> Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire*, 40, 62–5.

<sup>83</sup> Hahamovitch, *No Man’s Land*, 19–20; Maurer, “The Thin Red Line,” 869–70; Surak, “Guestworkers: A Taxonomy,” 90.

the encounters and exchanges between local actors were responsible for its content and implementation.<sup>84</sup>

By 1910, Haitians' illegal entrances into Oriente had reached such levels that they were customarily reported and discussed by local authorities. In 1911, one official complained that immigrants in Cuba "harm our working class and constitute a serious danger to our institutions."<sup>85</sup> Another declared that immigration from the Caribbean created "dangers ... for public health" because Haitian migrants represented "the lowest on the social scale" and would bring bubonic plague and other diseases to Cuba.<sup>86</sup>

These official complaints were part of a larger effort to militarize the Cuban border and stop the immigration of Haitians to Cuba. In 1911, the Cuban Undersecretary of the Interior told the Governor of Oriente to use the "means within your reach so that the Agents at your orders pursue without break or rest the [immigration] infractions that are being denounced."<sup>87</sup> In addition to "augmenting the Coast Guard service," the Secretary of *Sanitación y Beneficiencia* suggested using rural informants. He proposed "appointing a certain number of seamen (fishermen or sailors) to the ranks of the Coast Guard" to increase surveillance on the border. Although they would be "without salary," the Secretary suggested that "they could be remunerated for each service they offer."<sup>88</sup> Others wanted to increase the personnel on land. The Governor of Oriente believed that "it has not been possible to establish a complete vigilance, due to the scarcity of force at hand." He therefore spoke of the need to "increase as necessary the rural force in the coasts of that district to better guarantee the public order and avoid the repeated infractions of immigration law."<sup>89</sup> Similarly, the Mayor of Baracoa identified "the imperious necessity that the number of individuals upon whom the Rural Guard

<sup>84</sup> JoAnna Poblete's analysis of the sanitary regulations on Filipino immigrants in Hawai'i in the same time period makes a similar argument about the influences of various groups on policy creation and implementation. Poblete, "The S.S. *Mongolia Incident*," 248–9.

<sup>85</sup> Subsecretario de Gobernacion, Habana to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, June 07, 1911, APSGP 785/33/6.

<sup>86</sup> Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficiencia, quoted in Subsecretario, Havana to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, May 31, 1911, APSGP 785/33/1–2.

<sup>87</sup> Subsecretario de Gobernacion, Habana to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, June 07, 1911, APSGP 785/33/6.

<sup>88</sup> Secretario de Sanidad y Beneficiencia, quoted in letter to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, From: Subsecretario, Habana. May 31, 1911, APSGP 785/33/1–2.

<sup>89</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Secretario de Gobernacion, Havana, April 20, 1911, APSGP 785/35/2–3.

depends be larger in this district,” so that they could monitor both land and coastline.<sup>90</sup> Haitian officials responded with their own plans to strengthen the border. In 1910, the Haitian *Chargé du Consulat* told the Governor of Oriente that he had written the Haitian government “with the goal of redoubling the surveillance of [Haitian] coasts.”<sup>91</sup> In 1911, government expenditures increased for “Immigration and Quarantine Services in the ports of Santiago de Cuba, Nipe, and Cienfuegos.”<sup>92</sup>

The militarization of the border had direct effects on incoming migrants, who were arrested in increasing numbers upon arrival in Cuba. In 1910, the governor of Oriente was informed of four clandestine voyages with fifty-one Haitian migrants on board. The following year, seven ships were stopped with seventy-eight migrants (seventy-five Haitians and three Jamaicans).<sup>93</sup> Despite the increase in arrests, there was no sign that the flow of Haitians would stop. In fact, Haitians drew on their long tradition of movement and labor in Cuba to justify their presence there. From their jail cell in Guantánamo, Haitians Jean Felix and Raphael Maurice were aided in writing a letter to their consul in Santiago de Cuba to protest their arrest. In one of the few texts we have directly authored by Haitian agricultural workers, Felix and Maurice argued that their labor and long-term residency in Cuba entitled them to stay. “We have been here a good number of years,” and “we are accustomed to working in the countryside.” Their claim on the consul was unequivocal: “We believe that you are the sole person responsible for the Haitians seized here.”<sup>94</sup>

Haitian consuls, in fact, were held legally responsible for detained Haitian migrants. Cuban officials repeatedly claimed that jailed Haitians would be “at the disposition of the Haitian consul who ought to re-embark them.”<sup>95</sup> In January 1911, Cuban officials complained that

<sup>90</sup> Alcalde Municipal de Baracoa to Gobernador Civil de la Provincia de Santiago de Cuba, April 15, 1911, APSGP 785/35/1.

<sup>91</sup> *Chargé du Consulat* to Gouverneur de Santiago. September 27, 1910, APSGP 785/31/5.

<sup>92</sup> Jefe de Despacho, Direccion de Sanidad to Honorable Sr. Presidente de la República, September 30, 1911 ANCSF 106/20.

<sup>93</sup> Compiled from APSGP 785/31, 35 and 37 and J. A. Ulysse A.T. Simon, Cayes to Secretaire d'Etat au Departement des Relations Exterieures, April 18, 1911, UFGHC, Box 1 (MS23A).

<sup>94</sup> Letter from Jean Felix and Raphael Maurice, Guantánamo to Consulat-Haitien, Santiago, April 20, 1911, APSGP 785/37/27. In rural Haiti, it was common for illiterate people to have letters and documents written on their behalf by area scribes on important occasions such as marriages. See Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, 209–16.

<sup>95</sup> Letter to Gobernador Civil, Santiago from Manuel Leon, Administrador de Aduana, Guantánamo, September 28, 1910, APSGP 785/31/6.



Haitians stayed in Cuban jails for too long, causing expenditures. They stressed that it was the responsibility of Haitian consuls “to return them” to Haiti.<sup>96</sup> At times, the Cuban government requested payment from the consul for the food migrants consumed. Consuls, however, had difficulties obtaining money from the Haitian government to either repatriate the migrants or pay for their board in jail. “If I don’t receive satisfaction from my government or our *Chargé d’Affaires* in Havana,” the Haitian consul told the Governor of Oriente regarding a group of jailed migrants, “I regret to inform you that it will be pecuniarily impossible to repatriate them.”<sup>97</sup> As migrants kept coming, the Haitian Consul’s budget came under attack. In June of 1911, the Haitian consulate owed \$63.00 to the Cuban government. By August it was \$110.88.<sup>98</sup>

In response, Haitian consuls in Cuba put pressure on officials in Havana, Santiago, and Port-au-Prince to resolve the administrative and financial problems that detained migrants were causing. The consul’s first recourse was to contact the Haitian government in Port-au-Prince to arrange for the repatriation of incarcerated migrants. In one case in April 1911, after waiting almost two weeks for a response from the Haitian government, the consul began communicating with officials on Cuban soil. To the Haitian consul in Cuba, the only viable solution was for detained migrants to pay for their own repatriation, which would require them to work for a wage. He pleaded with the governor of Oriente that “Cuban authorities be so complacent as to let [a group of detained Haitians] work, without surveillance so that they may pay the fees of their detentions and those of their repatriation.” These requests were sent to government officials outside of Oriente as well. The consul also asked the Haitian *Chargé d’Affaires* in Havana to negotiate with the Cuban central government on behalf of the jailed migrants. He asked the latter to set them free while assuring that “more severe measures will be taken in the future.” His goal was to have the migrants “work [in Cuba] to pay what they owe.”<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Letter to Gobernador Civil, Santiago de Cuba from Manuel Leon, Admor. Aduana, January 17, 1911, APSGP 785/31/23.

<sup>97</sup> Letter to the Governor of Oriente from le Consulat de Haiti, Santiago. April 27, 1911, APSGP 785/37/42.

<sup>98</sup> “El Consul de la Republica de Haiti en Santiago de Cuba al Ayuntamiento de Baracoa Debe”: June, 23, 1911, APSGP 785/37/42; Gobernador de Oriente to Sr. Alcalde Municipal de Baracoa from, August 25, 1911, APSGP 785/37/59.

<sup>99</sup> Consulat de Haiti, Santiago to Monsieur le Gouverneur [of Oriente], April 27, 1911, APSGP 785/37/28–9.

Cuban officials in Oriente responded in a variety of ways to the problems caused by the increased detention of migrants. Officials at different administrative levels often gave conflicting orders. For instance, in April 1911, there were twenty-one Haitians imprisoned in Baracoa for entering Cuba illegally. After spending fifteen days in jail without being officially charged, they were released by a municipal judge in Baracoa who invoked the principle of *Habeas Corpus*. Two days later, customs officials in Santiago asked the police to arrest the Haitians again because of a letter they received from the Cuban *Secretaria de Hacienda* in Havana. After the migrants were taken to Santiago, two Haitian officials who were acquaintances of the governor asked that they be released. In response, the governor of Oriente brought the details of the case directly to the President of Cuba seeking a judgment.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the anti-immigrant sentiments harbored by many Cuban officials, the Governor of Oriente took the requests by Haitian officials very seriously. As Haitian consuls asked that migrants be allowed to pay for their room, board, and repatriation through work in Cuba, the governor assured them that he “wanted to find a legal means to satisfy your requests.” However, he realized that doing so went against the spirit of immigration laws. He told the Haitian consul that if Haitian migrants were allowed “to enjoy their liberty so they can see to the payment of their room and board and the cost of their return to Haiti with the fruits of their labor, it would leave the immigration laws circumvented and without effect and establish a fatal precedent for successive identical cases.”<sup>101</sup> And yet, that is precisely what eventually happened.

The presidential order to permit Afro-Caribbean contract immigration to Cuba was influenced by these encounters between migrants and local officials in Oriente. The text of the decrees reflected the pleas that migrants and consuls had made during the previous decade as well as the concerns of Cuban officials. Haitian consuls’ previously unsuccessful requests that migrant laborers work in Cuba to pay for the cost of their room, board, and return passage were translated into new migration decrees. Henceforth, sugar companies, and not consuls, would be responsible for the costs associated with transporting migrants to and from Cuba. The first presidential decree was promulgated on January 14, 1913, and declared that the Nipe Bay Company was obligated to assume “the costs and risks of the expedition of these *braceros*” from their “landing to their

<sup>100</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Presidente de la República, May 03, 1911, APSGP 785/ 37/34-7.

<sup>101</sup> Gobernador de Oriente to Consul de Haiti, September 19, 1911, APSGP 785/37/64.

place of work.” A 1917 decree by President Mario Menocal was even more explicit; any individual or company that contracted migrants was required “to properly guarantee that [migrant laborers] not become a public charge.” The state had the legal right to exact money from any person or entity who contracted laborers and failed to satisfy these demands.<sup>102</sup> In Cuba (and later Haiti), migration laws required recruiters and companies to make cash deposits for each contracted migrant worker to ensure that they could be returned home without cost to either government. Migrants paid these fees directly to recruiters and ship captains or indirectly to companies through wage deductions (see Chapter 2).

Although Haitians’ actions influenced state regulations, such laws were ultimately crafted around the goals of state officials more than migrating workers; the latter were often subject to abuse as a result. The executive decrees permitting contract migration reflected the anti-immigrant racism that Cuban officials in Oriente had articulated between 1902 and 1912 as well. In 1916, only three years after migration was permitted, the Cuban government added sanitary regulations to its migration policies, taking its cue from the racially charged characterizations of migrants as disease carriers. Incoming laborers were required to receive a vaccination upon arrival in Cuba. Sanitary officials in Santiago were told “to examine, microscopically, the blood of all immigrants coming from Jamaica, Porto Rico and Haiti in order to discover the probable existence of germs of malaria or falaria . . . [and] prevent the introduction into Cuba of contagious diseases.”<sup>103</sup> The 1917 presidential decree specifically required companies to ensure that “immigrants will not be a threat to public health.” They were required to “attend to the treating and curing of immigrants in case of sickness, in accordance with sanitary dispositions.”<sup>104</sup> Migrants were also required to pay \$2.00 (directly or through wage deductions) for a vaccination.<sup>105</sup> Over a decade later, the United Fruit Company was paying Cuban officials a “vaccination charge” that was passed on to the migrants. However, “few, if any . . . were vaccinated.”<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> José M. Gómez, Decreto Presidencial No. 23, “Autorización para introducir braceros antillanos,” January 14, 1913, and Ley de Inmigración, August 4, 1917, both reproduced in Pichardo Viñals, *Documentos*, 370, 421.

<sup>103</sup> Merrill Griffith, American Consul to Secretary of State, Washington, May 31, 1916, USNA RG 59 837.55/33.

<sup>104</sup> Ley de Inmigración, August 4, 1917, reproduced in Pichardo Viñals, *Documentos*, 421.

<sup>105</sup> Lavelle, *La traite des nègres*, 6.

<sup>106</sup> John H. Russell, Port-au-Prince to the U.S. Secretary of State, Washington, DC, October 28, 1927, USNA RG59 837.5538/3.

Like other areas of public health in the early twentieth century, these sanitary laws were heavily influenced by racial, political, and economic concerns.<sup>107</sup> For instance, the US consul in Santiago declared that Cuban officials did not “entertain any serious apprehension with regard to the introduction of malaria, falaria or miasmatic germs of whatever character through immigrants.” Instead, blood examinations were “a voluntary deception . . . for the express purpose of preventing . . . or at least curtailing the constantly increasing influx of these neighboring Islanders.”<sup>108</sup>

Another sanitary measure required Afro-Caribbean migrants, and sometimes passengers, to pass through quarantine stations.<sup>109</sup> Stations like Cayo Duan in Santiago de Cuba were uncomfortable, unsanitary, and economically disadvantageous for incoming migrants. Over a decade after legal migration began, after tens of thousands of migrants had already passed through the Cayo Duan station, newspapers discussed ongoing projects to improve its sanitary conditions.<sup>110</sup> Even later, observers noted the pervasiveness of bugs and vermin at the station.<sup>111</sup> The physical discomfort of quarantine was matched by the economic disadvantages it produced for migrants. In 1916, there was “a fee of eighty cents (\$0.80) per day imposed upon each [migrant].”<sup>112</sup>

Migration regulations brought other economic obligations for migrants that probably emerged from the requests made by Haitian consuls prior to 1913. In 1919, a Haitian law required migrants to pay the consulate a \$2.00 registration fee upon entrance into Cuba, which represented more than a day’s wages in most years. Legislation also required migrants to pay for their return passage. The process of obtaining a ticket was fraught with fraud and needless expense. One Haitian observer described the “Haitian parasites, known as *courtiers*, connected to some Cubans, tolerated by the Police and the companies; [who] form a dangerous bloc on the Santiago pier.” When migrants arrived from the

<sup>107</sup> Poblete, “The S.S. *Mongolia* Incident,” 258–9; Espinosa, “A Fever for Empire,” 288; de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 48; McLeod, “We Cubans,” 59; Stepan, “*The Hour of Eugenics*,” 42–4.

<sup>108</sup> Merrill Griffith, American Consul, Santiago to U.S. Secretary of State, Washington, DC, June 01, 1916, USNA RG 59 837.55/34.

<sup>109</sup> McLeod, “We Cubans,” 61; “Protesta de unos pasajeros,” *La Independencia*, January 11, 1923.

<sup>110</sup> “Se piensa edificar un hotel en Cayo Duan para alojar los inmigrantes,” *Diario de Cuba*, March 01, 1928.

<sup>111</sup> Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander*, 34.

<sup>112</sup> E. Nazon to Gobernador de la Provincia de Oriente, June 02, 1916, APSGP 374/30/1.

fields, *courtiers* often sold them tickets for steamships that were not functioning or had not yet arrived in port.<sup>113</sup>

Migrants were also vulnerable to abuse from corrupt Cuban officials, especially in the ports. In 1915, twenty-five Haitian migrants deposited the required money to enter Cuba. Later, when they sought to retrieve the amount, they received only a small percentage.<sup>114</sup> In September 1917, “some police officers” in the port of Santiago were “taking advantage of their authority to deceive Haitians and take money from them.” The officers “threatened [Haitians] with searching their trunks, [and] looking for letters directed towards Haiti without stamps” even though it was not a crime to carry unstamped letters in Cuba.<sup>115</sup> The new difficulties of entering and leaving Cuba explain why some Haitians continued to travel to Cuba outside of official channels and others chose to stay in Cuba after the end of the sugar harvest. For instance, in July 1915, Josegenio Domec and nine other Haitians landed in Punto Caleta, Cuba, clandestinely. The group was immediately arrested and taken to Cayo Duan.<sup>116</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Cuba and Haiti were intimately linked by transnational flows of goods, people, and ideas even though they appeared to have polar opposite experiences of colonialism and abolition during the nineteenth century. These flows may be partially explained by Cuba’s porous border and the state’s inability to see, much less regulate, who and what crossed it. When the Cuban government began to exert more control over its borders, these immigrants, who were engaging in a longstanding tradition, shaped the process of state-building and border control, especially when it came to the content of migration legislation.

The 1913 presidential decree initiated a state-brokered, temporary contract migration program at the moment that other countries around the world were just beginning to experiment with such systems. The following year, World War I broke out, which created unprecedented

<sup>113</sup> Laville, *La traite des nègres*, 6–7.

<sup>114</sup> “Haitianos quejosos,” *El Cubano Libre*, October 08, 1915.

<sup>115</sup> Comandante de Caballería, Delegado de la Secretaría de Gobernación to Gobernador Provincial de Oriente, September 26, 1917, APSGP 375/1/1.

<sup>116</sup> “Los inmigrantes haitianos,” *El Cubano Libre*, July 24, 1915. For other instances see “Multa rebajada,” *El Cubano Libre*, August 01, 1915; “Lo de la goleta ‘San José,’” *El Cubano Libre*, October 17, 1915.

global demand for Cuban sugar and Cuban demand for Haitian migrants. In 1915, the United States government occupied Haiti militarily, causing massive transformation in the rural and urban areas of the country. Thousands of Haitians responded to these changes by heading to Cuba, a process that was then regulated further on the Haitian end. It is to this story that I now turn.