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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2018
ABSTRACT

“Into the Mainstream and Oblivion”: Julian Mayfield's Black Radical Tradition, 1948-1984

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Abstract

“Into the Mainstream and Oblivion” is a study of the intellectual and political biography of the African American writer and political activist Julian Hudson Mayfield. As a member of the black Left, Mayfield’s life of activism and art bring the complex network of artists, activists, and political theorists who influenced the construction, tactics, and strategies of social movements during the latter half of the twentieth century into sharper focus revealing the ways in which black, modernist writing served as a critical site of political, social, and cultural ferment during the Cold War. Using art to communicate ideas and arguments about the relationship between race, gender, and political economy, Mayfield and his contemporaries illuminate the broader influence of black writers on American culture and politics. In addition, the state’s response to Mayfield’s life of literary activism sheds light on the ways in which anti-communism worked to disrupt, marginalize, and dampen the effect of challenges to white supremacy.

The project makes extensive use of archives at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Life in Harlem, which houses the archives of Julian Mayfield and many of his contemporaries. In addition to these primary source documents, this project examines government documents produced by the extensive surveillance of African American writers by various government agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of State, and United States Information Agency. Finally, the dissertation has benefitted from a close working relationship with the family of Julian Mayfield and oral histories from contemporaries which sheds light on the complex interplay of gender and class among black social movements during the latter half of the twentieth century.
Dedication

For Lis, with adoration and appreciation
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Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to write this dissertation without the assistance, guidance, and consideration of numerous people. First and foremost, I am grateful to Adriane Lentz-Smith, who gave me the benefit of her vast knowledge of American history and incisive analysis, but also gifted me her valuable time in walking me through the many, many steps it took to get from this project’s genesis to its conclusion. As my advisor and chair of my committee, she has pushed me to be a better, thinker, writer, and historian. In our many informal conversations, Sally Deutsch has served as both a sounding board for ideas and a thoughtful, considerate critic and cheerleader. Ronald Williams, who has become both a mentor and a friend, pushed me to grapple with many of the complexities and nuances of writing black intellectual histories of the recent past. As my introduction to Julian Mayfield through his own work, Tim Tyson provided me with an example of how biography can best be marshaled in the service of history. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of this project. As a teacher, a writer, and a researcher, Bill Chafe’s support and assistance over the years has never wavered and in our many discussions, he has been a sounding board and a valuable resource for writing better history. I am most grateful for this committee’s patience and time in shepherding me through this process.

The Department of History at Duke has been my home away from home for the past eight years. Special thanks go to John Martin, Robin Ennis, Cynthia Hoglen, Phil Stern, and Jamie Hardy for their labor on my and the graduate program’s behalf. In particular, Pete Sigal has been a tireless and indefatigable person in my journey and I owe him a great debt. Through my early courses with Jolie Olcott and John French, I was introduced to the rigorous training of historical research and, with the assistance of Nancy McLean, Bruce
Hall, Laurent Dubois, and Malachai Hacohen, I was initiated into the many sub-disciplines of history which have informed this dissertation. Despite my lack of formal study with Jan Ewald and Thavolia Glymph, my work has benefited from their probing, thoughtful questions. Ashley Farmer, as a friend and a mentor, has been invaluable to my writing and my thinking when it comes to African American Intellectual inquiry.

In addition to the faculty and staff, since I arrived at Duke I have been surrounded by several cohorts of colleagues and friends who have shared the difficulties and joys of graduate school with me. Special thanks to Caroline Garriot for her warmth, kindness, and generosity of spirit. Ashley Elrod and Ashley Young were tireless motivators during the writing process, despite our geographical distance. I also want to thank Jon Free, Claire Payton, Ryan Poe, Mandy Cooper, Mandy Hughett, Dan Papsdorf, Stephanie Rytilahti, Rachel Bessner, Tina Davidson, and Jes Malitoris for their assistance with my earliest drafts and the germination of many ideas. Karlyn Forner and Kaley Deal, in their role as my collaborators on SNCC Digital Gateway, also played a significant role in the construction of this dissertation and, last but not least, thank you to Bryan Pitts and Ahab for always being there when I needed a friend (or two).

Without archivists, historians are merely writers. For that reason, I want to thank the many dedicated archivists and librarians whose assistance and labor is present in this dissertation. At the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Life I want to thank Steven Fullwood and the team of archivists who have made that library a necessary destination for historians of modern history. Thank you to the staff at the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Atlanta University Center, especially Andrea Jackson. David Fort, Stephanie Coon, Christina Jones and the rest of the staff at NARA II in College Park have always been available and
helpful, their vast knowledge informing my own dives into U.S. government documents.

Thank you to Kerrie Williams at the Auburn Avenue Research Library for trusting my untrained hands with unprocessed papers and thank you to Joellen ElBashir and the fine staff at the Moorland-Spingarn Reading Room at Howard University for always pointing me in the direction I needed to go.

The scholarly community is not the only community I owe debts to. In moving to Durham to pursue my PhD at Duke, I found a community beyond the History Department that nevertheless contributed to my work and my writing. Thank you to Sarah Almond, Lindsay Andrews, Alec Ferrell, everyone at Nido Durham, and the hard-working baristas as Joe Van Gogh for innumerable conversations and discussions. Thank you to the Gray family—David, Roxanne, Hudson, Archer, and Cohen—for the use of your spare bedroom. I also want to show my appreciation for the Fowler family—Shaun, Chandra, Pierce, and Rowan—for their hospitality whenever I found myself in Atlanta. Joel Ross, Thomas Ross, and Jessica Ross, thank you for always having a bed for me in Washington.

My biggest cheerleaders during the last eight years have always been my family. I want to thank Therese McKinney, Steven Tyroler, and Lee Spector for welcoming me into their amazing family. My sister, Megan Gosma, and her husband and children—Jimmy, Jackson, and Camden—have never faltered in their support. My only disappointment is that Marilyn B. Young, whose mentorship at NYU was the reason I came to Duke, did not live to see the completion of this project. As a professor and a thesis advisor, a confidant and a sounding board, her support of an older student who did not yet know what he did not know was invaluable. My parents, Helene and Doug Romine, were my first history teachers
and their support has been foundational at every step of the way. I lack the words to
properly thank them for all that they have done for me.

To Sebastian, who preceded this project, and to Desmond, who arrived near the end,
being your father has been the most important role that I have ever taken on. Sebastian, by
dint of his age, became a remarkably effective cheerleader in these final and he never
stopped encouraging me to write.

Through my comrade, Sandy Plácido, I was able to make the acquaintance of Rafael
Mayfield, Emiliano’s son Julian Hudson Mayfield, and Joan Cambridge, to whom this project
is deeply indebted. Without their support and the conversations that we had, I do not think
this dissertation would have been written.

Last, but certainly not least, there is no one in the world who deserves more credit
than Lis Tyroler for the completion of this project. Since my first tentative steps in 2010, she
has been beside me every step of the way, never yielding in her support and picking me up
when I fell. Not only is she a partner in life, but she is also a valuable interlocutor, an
insightful critic, and a deep well of emotional support. For that that reason, this dissertation
is dedicated to her. Therefore, I dedicate this project to her.
Introduction

One person plus a typewriter constitutes a movement.
—Pauli Murray

“I don’t think you have a choice,” Nina Simone told an interviewer in 1969, “[h]ow can you be an artist and NOT reflect the times? That to me is the definition of an artist.” Responding to a question about the political turn her music had taken in the wake of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, Simone's consideration of the responsibility of artists to “reflect the times” illustrated the inherent politics of modern representational art generally. And the lack of choice was especially acute for African Americans. Frank discussions about the racial conditions in the United States by black artists had drawn criticism since the early twentieth century, but the conditions of the Cold War exacerbated this effect. The result was blacklisting, intimidation, and persecution by an anticommunist state determined to silence, marginalize, or deflect criticism from within.

By virtue of their position “behind the veil,” black artists faced both critical and popular disapproval by portraying their lived experiences; white publishers or music producers rejected black art that addressed racial themes because they rarely considered these projects profitable. African American artists thus walked a thin line dividing the responsibility to “reflect the times” and the means to make a living as artists. Navigating this problem defined the horizons of possibility for African American intellectual history and

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black internationalist aspirations, as reflected in cultural production during the latter half of the twentieth century.

In a 1975 profile, music and arts critic Hollie I. West considered the relationship between art and politics in the work of actor, writer, and political journalist Julian Mayfield. “From the beginning,” West wrote, “Julian Mayfield, the writer, and Julian Mayfield, the political activist, have been one. Writing, to him, is a political act.” At 47, Mayfield had recently returned to the United States from the South American nation of Guyana, where he had worked for the Ministry of Information and Culture as a journalist and a propagandist. There, his role was to convince young Guyanese people to stay in their home country and build the “cooperative republic” that Prime Minister Burnham had proclaimed in 1970. Asked about his recent turn in Hollywood, his time in the West African nation of Ghana, and his early career a novelist, the Julian Mayfield that emerged from West’s profile did not map neatly onto any established category of a black artist.

A Broadway actor and rank-and-file Communist Party member in his twenties, an advocate of Fidel Castro and Kwame Nkrumah in his thirties, and a radical nationalist who sought to unify the competing strains of Black Power politics in the late 1960s, West’s profile captured a life of artistic struggle, one which defiantly reflected the times, despite the steep personal and professional costs of doing so. African Americans, Mayfield mused, “[are] in the unique position of having reached the peak of our militant self-identification or self-pride at a time when the larger society is likely to be least tolerant of it.”

Expressing concern

for what the majority white response would be to this militant mode, he offered analysis, but no answers, “I don't think there are any easy solutions,” he told West.⁴


Speaking for himself and the other young writers on the panel, Mayfield identified how the contemporary conditions of the Cold War and domestic American politics provided a narrow opening for moral and legal challenges to segregation and Jim Crow.⁷ But he

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⁴ Ibid., B3.
⁶ Ibid., 29–30.
⁷ “The American Negro Writer and his Roots,” was sponsored by the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC) and took place at the Henry Hudson Hotel in Midtown Manhattan between 28 February and 1 March 1959. Mayfield, who organized the panel “Social Responsibility and Social Protest,” was joined by playwright Lorraine Hansberry and writer Sarah Elizabeth Wright. Though scheduled to appear, James Baldwin was not present for the session. While Wright and Mayfield's presentations, “Roadblocks to the Development of Negro Writers” and “Into the Mainstream and Oblivion,” respectively, were included in the volume published by AMSAC the following year, Hansberry's paper, “Toward A New Romanticism,” was not published until March 1981 in the pages of The Black Scholar. I have not been able to establish a definitive reason for this exclusion, but the radicalism of this piece likely led to its absence. See: The American Negro Writer and his Roots (New York: American Society of African Culture, 1960); Lorraine Hansberry, “The Negro Writer and his Roots: Toward a New Romanticism,” The Black Scholar 12, no. 2 (March/April 1981): 2–12.
questioned whether an embrace of the “American mainstream” by African Americans was the best means to realize full citizenship—or even if that citizenship had any real value. “[I]n his most optimistic moods,” Mayfield offered, “the best [the black writer] can hope for is submersion in what is euphemistically called the American melting pot.”

Thus, he explained to his audience, “[t]he Negro writer may conclude that his best salvation lies in escaping the narrow national orbit—artistic, cultural and political—and soaring into a space of more universal experience.”

In a life spent seeking escape beyond the “narrow national orbit” of American racial capitalism, Jim Crow, and the vast geographic reach of white supremacy, Julian Mayfield's career of peripatetic literary radicalism illuminates the contours of a black radical tradition shaped by the constraints and conditions of the global political, economic, cultural, and social conflict that would define his life: the Cold War. Cedric J. Robinson’s notion of the “black radical tradition,” first articulated his 1983 book *Black Marxism*, presented it as the antithesis of the racial capitalism embodied in slavery, sharecropping, and Jim Crow.

Building off W.E.B. Du Bois’ idea that the role that black men and women played in asserting their humanity was part of the broader trajectory of American history, Robinson’s tradition was not a static notion of resistance, but a dynamic process which reflected dominant political and cultural precepts. Though Mayfield's own political art and activism was focused on alternatives to integration politics, forging solidarity among men and women of the Global South, and constructing new nations in Africa and Latin America, the Cold

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9 Ibid., 30.
War shaped the discursive and political horizons of these movements, rendering a dynamic and deeply historical process. Embracing communism as a young actor in New York, Julian Mayfield's career as a novelist, political journalist, social critic, intellectual, and government functionary embodies Simone's assertion that the artist can not avoid being a product of their times.

Spanning five decades and four continents, Mayfield's output also closely tracks multiple, interwoven trajectories of black intellectual history. From black communism to black nationalism, through black internationalism and Third World solidarity, Julian Mayfield's emphasis on marshaling art and politics to excavate and present usable pasts for black peoples throughout the African Diaspora underscores the salience of biography as a methodology toward understanding the linkages between the Cold War and concomitant black freedom struggles during the latter half of the twentieth century. In a 2005 interview, professor of Africana Studies Geri Augusto cautioned interviewer Charles Cobb, Jr. about “trying to draw straight lines and arrows” between movements and individual politics, “because these things are not straight lines and arrows.” Speaking about the 1972 African Liberation Day, organized by her own mother, Florence Tate, Augusto concluded that despite their differences, “we [activists] came together where there was mutual interest.”

Julian Mayfield's embrace of movements of the Communist Left, of black internationalism, of pan-Africanism, and of black nationalism demonstrates this need to consider lives beyond straight lines and arrows and illustrates the ideological and personal role of “mutual interest” in shaping literary and political activism. Mayfield's own life maps a

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circuitous, intersecting path through the social movements, personalities, and politics that reveal nuance and complexity in the long-term influence of the black Left on American culture as well as the efforts to knit together disparate intellectual traditions like black nationalism and black internationalism. What drove Mayfield was both personal and professional, ideological and strategic—coupled with an abiding interest in the manifestations of power and an almost magnetic attraction to charismatic black male radicals—to provide insight into the conditions for his career on three continents which existed almost entirely within the context of Cold War anticommunism and the twentieth century black freedom struggle. Beyond power, however, what also drove Mayfield was a search for belonging, a unity that had the power to defy the “virus of white supremacy” and the space and means to perfect his art.

As an artist and a black intellectual who lacked both academic credentials and elite status, Julian Mayfield's marginality within Cold War historical narratives is contrasted by the importance of his archive in constructing those histories. Despite having a sizable portion of his personal papers destroyed in Ghana following the February 1966 coup, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Life currently houses nearly forty linear feet of Julian Mayfield's papers, a gift of his widow upon his death. This archive, one of the most oft-consulted collections at the Schomburg, is regularly cited in histories of the black Left, the influence of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, the Black Power Movement, and studies of modern African American literature and film, making Julian Mayfield an important primary and secondary source for American history.¹¹

¹¹ This claim of the use of archive is asserted by Mayfield's second wife, Joan Cambridge, but is borne out in discussions with archivists at the Schomburg. See: Joan Cambridge, “Remembering Maya Angelou,”
However, Mayfield himself only partially present in many of those works, moving in and out of those narrative as if he were making cameo appearances in films. Historian Jonathan Scott Holloway has considered this liminality of black intellectuals as a product of the “crisis canon.” In his 2001 essay, Holloway argues that, “[w]riting about black intellectuals almost always revolves around a crisis of the moment or the crisis of living in a world where many believe the words 'black' and 'intellectual' are mutually exclusive.” The result is that histories have focused on the “crises” and the “dilemmas” of these black intellectuals to the detriment of the intellectual network in which they operated, producing a reductive view of black intellectual history. Holloway's objections to the “crisis canon” is relevant for Mayfield's story in two ways. First, when black intellectuals only become visible in moments of crisis, ideas that do not relate to “black issues” or “blackness” are minimized.


13 Ibid., 2.
Second, the black intellectual is understood as an inherently incompatible concept, such that they are considered as either one or the other, but not as a single, unified persona, “reduc[ing] the complexity of life into a simple and fabricated code that conspires to limit creative possibilities.”

At the same time, Julian Mayfield's career was defined by his own interest in the crises that he saw developing in the United States and abroad. His work focused almost exclusively on black peoples and the impact of broader political trends upon their lives, mentalities, and lived experiences. Holloway's work, which covers the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, is nevertheless useful when considering Mayfield's words in the lecture he delivered in New York in 1959. This speech, entitled “Into the Mainstream and Oblivion,” is one of Mayfield's most-cited works, but the intellectual history of the ideas expressed are typically absent from analyses of the text.

Though Mayfield's early experiences in the U.S. Communist Party influenced his rejection of mainstream liberal politics, his experiences living in Puerto Rico with his wife, an ardent Puerto Rican nationalist during the height of anti-nationalist repression in the mid-1950s, remain obscured or ignored. Furthermore, Mayfield's position as a black Leftist and member of the Communist Party from 1948 to 1956 also highlights how intellectual history has tended to foreground elite intellectuals—W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, or Booker T. Washington, among others—and exclude radical, feminist, queer, or otherwise marginal thinkers like Pauli Murray, Hubert Harrison, Claudia Jones, Gloria Joseph, or Alphaeus Hunton. Professor of Africana studies Michael Hanchard noted this trend in a

14 Ibid., 12.
2006 analysis of black political thought, emphasizing that “[i]t is not just the dominant ideals and political practices, but the marginal, the implausible, and the unpopular ideas that also define an age.”15 Mayfield's ideas, as expressed through both his art and his political writing, were not just radical, but often marginal, unpopular, or ignored, yet he remained committed to publicizing them, despite pressure from publishers, fellow intellectuals, and the state. Put simply, Julian Mayfield did not always fit neatly into the communities he joined.

As a bookish young man growing up in a working-class home in Washington, DC, Mayfield's early experiences with segregation and white racism, combined with the colorism and classism he observed in both his neighborhood and school, fostered a perspective on political economy that was inseparable from race. The son of a chauffeur for the State Department and a domestic worker, Mayfield's life was a product of migration and striving, the desire of his parents for him and his sister, Dorothy, to achieve more than they could. Born in South Carolina, his parents moved to Washington during the Great Depression where they were able to establish a precarious place for themselves. Drawn to writing as a vocation from an early age, Mayfield's path is reminiscent of that of other autodidact, working-class intellectual peers, such as Harold W. Cruse and John H. Clarke, placing him outside of many of the established networks that existed at the time for black artists and intellectuals. This working-class sensibility, coupled with his early training as a journalist, provided Mayfield with an eye for the motivations and concerns of others, but his work was also shaped by the class and color distinctions he recognized within the African American community writ large, as well as the intelligentsia who claimed to speak for them.

Biography, then, demands a reconsideration of the intellectual history that Mayfield's published works offer, making an examination of the personal experiences, travel, and interactions with others during its production not only relevant but necessary. In addition to Mayfield's papers at the Schomburg, the archive holds the papers of many of his peers and friends, including John Henrik Clarke, Maya Angelou, and Tom Feelings, and their correspondence explicates the trajectory of his artistic and political pronouncements. Perhaps the most significant collection besides those at the Schomburg, however, is the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) two-hundred-page file on Mayfield, which offers further context and information about his movements, associations, and roles in various groups.

However, uncritical consideration of either of these two archives—one self-fashioned and the other constructed by opponents bent on the marginalization and neutralization of the subject—further complicates the task of retracing the circuitous routes of Mayfield's unsettled radicalism in order to understand the intellectual history of black intellectuals that came to the fore in the context of the Cold War. Delving into Julian Mayfield's archive in Harlem has often elicited more questions than answers as it offers clearer insights into others than its namesake. A keen observer of human interaction with a focus on the quotidian—and often prurient—aspects of the human experience, Mayfield's archive is replete with accounts of the politics, actions, histories, and stories of others. In addition, as many accounts are products of sporadic attempts at autobiography and memoir writing, the stories emerge through the hazy lens of memory and are refracted through the constant remaking of self that characterized a long and varied career as an artist and a public figure.
The FBI, which conducted surveillance on Mayfield and his family from 1955 until 1977, produced several hundred pages of partially declassified material that documents a life lived under the watchful gaze of agents of the state. A product of Director J. Edgar Hoover's obsession with African American activists of virtually all political and ideological persuasions, the campaign against black critics of segregation, institutionalized racism, and anti-black racism began from the moment of the Bureau's founding. This decades-long project involved the surveillance, intimidation, and persecution of African American activists who dared to publicly challenge the nation's racial and social status quo. Writers were a particular focus of FBI surveillance, as files on Frank London Brown, Gwendolyn Brooks, John O. Killens, Harold W. Cruse, Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, Claude McKay, Alice Childress, and John A. Williams demonstrate an unyielding preoccupation with the influence and import of black writers as agents of social and political change in the United States. While this particular archive centers Mayfield as a subject, what it actually reveals is often inaccurate and produced within a historical moment in which anticommunism became inescapably intertwined with anti-black racism.


17 William J. Maxwell's literary analysis of these FBI files, which considers the FBI response to modern black American writing as a counter-literature, is especially instructive of the ways in which anti-black racism combined with anti-radicalism and anti-communism to produce the Bureau's interest in black writing from the 1920s until the 1970s.
Furthermore, for black intellectual history scholarship, the significance of the Cold War also illustrates the ways in which the globe-spanning conflict offered both opportunities for activists pursuing civil rights, even as it curtailed the freedom to travel, work, and live for others who pursued activism beyond the narrow lines delineated by anticommunist ideologies.\(^{18}\) Viewing this era through the lens of a single person, their work, and their insights helps to examine the dynamics that allowed a lifetime of radical struggle to persist in spite of the ruptures of anticommunist repression. In light of this biographical approach, this dissertation unfolds chronologically. Chapter One examines Mayfield's roots, the origins of his vocational goals of artistry in the service of radical politics, and the ways in which early travels helped cement his own idiosyncratic anti-racism. Chapter Two considers Mayfield's life after the publication of his debut novel and his embrace of new articulations of black nationalism, embodied in the resistance to liberal integration politics following the *Brown* decision.

Chapter Three looks at Mayfield's flight to Ghana and subsequent career—he continued as a political journalist *and* became a leader of the small but significant Afro American expatriate community that formed under the government of Kwame Nkrumah—

to shed light on how an African American became intertwined in a West African nation-building project. Chapter Four traces Mayfield's route back to the United States and his response to the militant mode of Black Power, which had sprung up in his absence, and his efforts to mediate the intellectual conflicts characteristic of that movement. Finally, Chapter Five explores Mayfield's return to the expatriate life, this time in Guyana, where he once again engaged in a nation-building project for a black leader even as he pursued his own artistic expression.

Taken together as a whole, Julian Mayfield's life of radical self-fashioning and remaking maps a novel perspective on the Black Atlantic, even as it challenges many of the conventions which define this concept. As for Mayfield, he considered himself something of a pragmatist who was drawn to theory primarily in an instrumental sense. A writer and a propagandist, Mayfield nonetheless saw himself as an active participant in the black freedom struggles he celebrated and advocated for in his writing. “Whether he is African or American by place of birth,” Walter B. Rideout noted in 1969, “the black writer by the conditions of his existence has been made intensely aware of a white ‘civilization,’ which, whatever its virtues, nevertheless does impose its domination on the black body and mind.”

Resisting

19 The “Black Atlantic,” first articulated by English and Literature professor Paul Gilroy functions as useful category for considering the cross-pollination of ideas, politics, music, literature, and culture which characterize communities of African-descended peoples in North America and Europe and their relationship with their communities of origin in Africa. Gilroy’s probe of the “routes and roots” of ideas of race and culture in the Anglophone Atlantic has produced a wealth of scholarship that probes the intellectual, political, and cultural histories of these ideas. See: Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

that domination, by art, literature, and journalism, is perhaps Julian Mayfield's most
significant and lasting contribution to American history.
Chapter 1: Radical Roots: Travel and the Fashioning of a Radical Author, 1928–1959

From certain standpoints, to travel is to encounter the terrorizing force of white supremacy.
—bell hooks\(^1\)

We must get beyond textbooks, go out into the bypaths and untrodden depths of the wilderness and travel and explore and tell the world the glories of our journey.
—John Hope Franklin\(^2\)

Because, Mr. Norton, if you don't know where you are, you probably don't know who you are.
—Ralph Ellison\(^3\)

During the summer and fall of 1950, as Julian Mayfield criss-crossed the United States in the touring production of the Kurt Weill musical *Lost in the Stars*, he was surprised to encounter familiar expressions of anti-black racism. Having grown up in Washington and briefly served in the Army, he thought of himself knowledgeable, but Jim Crow’s expansive geography caught him off guard. Upon arriving in Omaha, “the ugliest, nastiest city we played during that tour,” the hotel they had booked overtly refused service to the interracial group of men and women.\(^4\) Along with co-star William Greaves, Mayfield set out to look for another hotel and, “[b]ecause we were in the West and not the South, it did not occur to me that black people did not eat in the better restaurants, so I went into one to get change.” To


\(^4\) Julian Mayfield, “Autobiographical manuscript,” SCH, JMP, Box 15, Folder 9, 82 (henceforth: “Autobiography”). Mayfield’s fragmentary autobiographical manuscript exists in two distinct phases with two titles. The first title was “Which Way Does the Blood Red River Run?” and was begun in January or February of 1969. The other, “Send Me My Grandmother!”, reflected attempted revisions in 1971 and 1982. These fragments at the Schomburg run over two hundred pages, but substantial pieces of the autobiography are missing, including a section from Mayfield’s childhood, his time in Puerto Rico, his time in Ghana, and his work on the Paramount film *Uptight*. 

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his surprise the cashier, infuriated at the men’s violation of unspoken racial codes, said nothing, “slammed the change on the counter, and most of it clattered over the floor.”

Though Mayfield found humor in the woman’s ire—she had hurriedly dropped his original ten dollar bill and inadvertently doubled his money for the night—the experience highlighted his ignorance about the rules of race beyond the familiar spaces of the Deep South and the Mid-Atlantic. Later that year, in September of 1950, the interracial group of actors was leaving a restaurant in Los Angeles when they were stopped and searched by a Mexican American police lieutenant. Despite the presence of white actor Neville Brand, the men and women were held for over two hours as police searched their vehicle and their persons for narcotics before ultimately releasing them without charge. When Mayfield expressed his surprise at the cop’s ancestry, he was told that this police officer was a “special case,” and that LAPD policy regarded any and all interracial groups with suspicion and hostility. Travel, though not a central thematic element of Julian Mayfield’s early writing,

5 Ibid., 82–83.

6 Ultimately the performers were unable to find lodgings in any hotel in Omaha. Fortunately, members of the city’s African American community took them in. “Eventually we found lodgings with a little old black lady who was afraid she was overcharging us at fifty cents a day.” See: Ibid., 83.

7 Mayfield’s account of the incident in his autobiographical manuscript claimed that the reason for the stop was that some of the actors had made a joke about smoking marijuana while at a restaurant on Sunset Blvd. Their comments were apparently overheard by a police informant and the group was stopped under suspicion of narcotics trafficking. Mayfield concluded that, even in spaces where the color line was not enforced with violence, interracial groups were suspect. See: Ibid., 82.


9 Edward Escobar, a professor of Chicana/o studies at Arizona State University, has conducted extensive research into the relationship between Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department. In his
implicitly informed his observations and conclusions about race and political economy in the United States. His mobility shaped a developing political awareness, an understanding of his place as a black man in the United States, and aided his own self-fashioning as a writer, activist, and critic.

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which place informed Julian Mayfield's political and intellectual biography from his birth until 1959. A shrewd observer of human psychology with an abiding interesting in the “seamier side” of life, Mayfield's frequently ribald anecdotes offer insight into the ways that race, gender, and political economy shaped human relationships. These experiences would become the foundation of his later arguments on the interrelated dynamics of race and class in the mainland United States and elsewhere in the Diaspora. Additionally, Mayfield's dark skin, which had made him aware of the extant racial hierarchies within black communities as a young man, informed his experiences in spaces without a defined color line, such as during his time as a G.I. in Hawai'i (1946–1947) and during the years he lived with his first wife, Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, in Puerto Rico (1954–1959). As a member of the U.S. Communist Party and as a collaborator with other black Leftists in Harlem during the early 1950s, Mayfield's radicalism blossomed in the fertile soil of these early travels, situating his radical rejection of the post-war liberal order upon a foundation of frustration and disgust with the status quo. Tracing Mayfield's earliest journeys

accounts, Chicanos and the LAPD had a long-standing antagonistic relationship with violence, harassment, and sexual assault the defining features. Escobar makes no mention of Mexican Americans working within the LAPD, but contemporary newspaper accounts suggest that there were at least a handful of Mexican American police officers on the force dating back to the 1920s and 1930s. However, I am unable to find reliable statistics or demographic information relating to race and the LAPD with regards to Mexican Americans. See: Edward J. Escobar, “Bloody Christmas and the Irony of Police Professionalism: The Los Angeles Police Department, Mexican Americans, and Police Reform in the 1950s,” Pacific Historical Review 72, no. 2: 171–199; Edward J. Escobar, Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).
offers an intellectual history of a black radical tradition in the making, contextualizing his shifting political commitments and the expansion of his concept of self as a part of something greater.

Among twentieth century black writers, travel has played a significant role in narratives of awakening and self-fashioning. Autobiographical accounts are replete with examples of the ways in which space challenged preconceptions and shaped political engagement. Relocating to France, writers Chester Himes, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright did, gave them a sense of freedom from white violence and the daily oppression of life in the United States. Langston Hughes early experiences in Haiti and Cuba showed him the broader currents of black artistic and social thought. Often overlooked in favor of international encounters, regional variations within the United States offered domestic black travelers analogous experiences. In 1944, W.E.B. Du Bois recalled his short journey into West Tennessee during his time at Fisk University in the 1890s. “I touched the very shadow of slavery,” he wrote, “I traveled not only in space but in time.” No amount of reading, historian David Levering Lewis writes in his account of this experience, could have prepared Du Bois for the dehumanization of, “a zone where time had stopped the day after the day of

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In discovering anti-black racism where he had not expected it to exist, Julian Mayfield's experience in Omaha inverts Du Bois's observations in rural West Tennessee. In both cases, well-read young black men were confronted with the complexity, variety, and geography of race in the United States beyond what they expected. For Du Bois as it did for Mayfield, race in the United States remained as intimately related to geography as it did to political economy.

In spite of observations such as these, the relationship between racial oppression and geography has become minimized over the last twenty years as scholarship has flattened regional differences in favor of grand narratives. Scholarship on “the long civil rights movement,” which charts a trajectory of interconnected activism from Red Summer in 1919 to the 1970s, reflects this trend toward the dissolution of periodization and geographic specificity. Historian Sundiata Cha-Jua and professor of African American studies Clarence David Levering Lewis, W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography (New York: Macmillan, 2009), 56–57.

12 The “long civil rights movement” thesis takes its name from historian Jacquelyn D. Hall's 2004 article, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past.” Historian Robert Korstad has argued that the, “civil rights unionism” of the 1930s and 1940s was not, “just a precursor of the modern [Civil Rights Movement]. It was its first phase.” Robert O. Self argued that the 1954–1965 framework minimized the impact of the, “black radical tradition” and foregrounded the liberal black political activists of the era, many of whom were anti-communist. Self also contends that this “long movement” was extant in both national and international politics. In general, the “long movement” thesis is useful for tracing the development of ideas, strategies, and tactics, as well as the ways that inter-generational organizing had an important impact on the Civil Rights Movement. However, as Cha-Jua and Lang point out, the necessity of periodization for historical analysis and the role of regional difference point to the limitations of the “long movement” thesis. For more on the “long movement” thesis and the connections between the Old Left and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s see: Robert R. Korstad, Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past” The Journal of American History, Oxford 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233–1263; Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980, Edited by Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America, Edited by Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Matthew Countryman, Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008); Peter B. Levy, Civil War on Race Street: The Civil Rights Movement in Cambridge, Maryland (Gainesville: University
Lang have critiqued this thesis for failing to take into account “the role of space and political economy in shaping specific, historically bound modes of social interaction.” Julian Mayfield's autobiographical account of his early travels, his exploration of Communist spaces in New York, and his time in Puerto Rico illustrates the ways in which place shaped both ideas and personal relationships. By contextualizing the role of place in his critiques of political economy, race, and activism, this chapter reveals the ways that geography shaped black radical intellectual and political development during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Approaching the impact of geographic space chronologically, the first section is concerned with Mayfield's early life in South Carolina and Washington, D.C. through his stint in the military and brief college career. The second section examines his early acting career in New York and his subsequent engagement with Communist Party politics and black politics more broadly in New York. The third section examines Mayfield's marriage to the Puerto Rican nationalist, Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, and their relocation to Puerto Rico. It was there that Mayfield and Cordero had their first child, Rafael, and Mayfield completed and sold his first two novels. The chapter ends with his return to New York City and his enthusiastic embrace of the “New Afro-American Nationalism” that arose in response to violence directed at the non-violent Civil Rights Movement. Though dismissive of his early


life, noting wryly that he had no “searing experience” that would compel a white press to publish his autobiography, Mayfield's experiences as a Southern transplant in Washington, a black Leftist in Harlem, and African American journalist in Puerto Rico were formative and foundational to his subsequent articulations of a deeply personal black radical tradition.

A Radical in the Making

Julian Hudson Mayfield was born on June 6, 1928 in Greer, South Carolina. He had few kind words for his hometown, sardonically asserting that, “there is no doubt that I am the most important person ever born in Greer, South Carolina, but there is no record of that fact in Greer.”  

An examination of the local newspapers, which included the Daily Herald (Spartanburg), Spartanburg Journal, Greenville Observer, and the still-functioning Greer Citizen, lends credence to his observation that, “in 1928, newspapers and advertisers went about their business as if African Americans did not exist.”  

Like Borges's apocryphal assignation that there are no camels in the Quran, the lives of African Americans merit mention in these periodicals only when their labor or criminality was at issue. Though Mayfield would only spend a brief period residing in the Deep South, he would return throughout his life to visit with his extended family and to render aid to African Americans still living under segregation. His resistance to living under Jim Crow notwithstanding, he nurtured a deep connection to his black Southern heritage, which by its very existence was a product of “generations of people who mostly struggled and got by.”  

Mayfield's awareness of his

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17 Ibid., 23.

18 Julian Mayfield, “Greer Journal,” 1982, SCH, JPB, Box 1, Folder 6, 1.
working-class origins both informed his subject matter as well as his approach to storytelling, political writing, and intellectual debate.

According to information provided by Mayfield's son, Rafael Hudson Mayfield, the Mayfield family has deep roots in South Carolina. In a photocopied newsletter for a 1983 family reunion, the writer notes that “[t]here's a common saying that the Mayfields owned half of Greer.” Though likely an exaggeration, genealogical information provided by Rafael indicates that the family's presence can be reliably dated to the mid-nineteenth century and that both of Mayfield's parents were the grandchildren of former slaves. Hudson Mayfield, born in 1905, met and married Annie Mae Prince, born 1906, in 1926. According to Mayfield, his mother had picked cotton and worked as a domestic in South Carolina before their marriage. Hudson, who had some college by the time that Julian was born in 1928, did not finish and later worked as an orderly and a driver. In the 1920s, Greer was a tiny, rural hamlet along the Norfolk Southern Railway connecting Atlanta and Charlotte. Divided not

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21 Based on email communication with Rafael Mayfield and census records, Hudson Mayfield’s mother, Mattie Perrett, was born on 15 September 1879 and died 18 November 1962. She married Henry Mayfield who was born sometime in the late 1870s and, according to census records, lived in Chick Springs, some fifteen miles west of Greer.

22 According to his FBI file, Julian's father, Hudson Mayfield, was born in Greer in 1906 and his mother, Annie Mae Prince, was born the following year. However, Mayfield's own sources indicate that Hudson was born in 1905 and Annie Mae born in 1906. Hudson attended Allen University in Columbia for a year between 1925 and 1926, suggesting that his family had some means or had established connections with the AME Church, but he did not graduate. Mayfield's own recollections emphasize his parents' working-class roots as well as their aspirations for him and his sister to rise above the poverty that they had been born into. Mayfield never spoke of why his father did not finish the degree that he started, but Hudson's marriage to Annie Mae Prince in 1927 and the birth of Julian in June of 1928 suggests that the pressures of fatherhood were contributing factors to his decision. Mayfield makes note of his parents' names and personal details in his autobiography, but most of the details of birth dates and marriage dates were provided by his FBI file. See: Julian Mayfield FBI File, SAC WFO (Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Office) 100-30570, 2.
only along county lines—Greer’s metropolitan area straddles Greenville and Spartanburg Counties—but along racial lines, the town fared poorly after the stock market crash of 1929 and work was scarce. Early in 1930, the Mayfields left Greer in search of better opportunities. The family settled first in Asheville where Hudson took a job as a hospital orderly. A daughter was born in February, but died at seven months old. When the family relocated to Washington, D.C. in 1933, Hudson found work as a taxi driver and their third child, Dorothy, was born. Settling in Northeast, the family changed apartments frequently, but in 1942 they were able to purchase a home on Fourth Street in Southwest near the Navy Yard where Hudson and Annie Mae would reside for more than forty years.

From the age of five until the age of eighteen, Julian Mayfield made his home in the nation’s capital and lived under its regime of Jim Crow. “I have never known why black people always breathe a sigh of relief when they finally reach Washington, D.C.,” Mayfield reflected later in life. “The cops there are as trigger-happy, bloodthirsty and vicious as they are anywhere else in the United States,” such that “you think of Washington as being

23 According to information gathered by the FBI, Hudson was hired as an orderly at the Oteen Veterans Administration Hospital in nearby Swannanoa township. He would work there for three years before relocating to Washington. See: Ibid., 3.

24 Annie Mae was already pregnant with their second child when family arrived in Asheville, North Carolina in February of 1930. A baby girl, Edith, was born shortly after their arrival. In the 1930 census, Edith is listed as an infant of two months, but by the end August she had developed a fever and died on the first of September. Her death certificate lists the cause of death as “intestinal obstruction.” She was seven months old. It is unclear is Mayfield was aware of his other sister, he did he mention her in his writing. See: Edith May Mayfield, Death Certificate, North Carolina State Archives; Raleigh, North Carolina; North Carolina Death Certificates.

25 Julian Mayfield FBI File, Subject file, SAC WFO, WFO 100-30570, 2.
Yet it had not always been so. In the aftermath of the Civil War, Washington's federal patronage system thrived under the nearly unbroken line of Republican administrations. That system proved a boon for African Americans and civil service exams allowed many to rise in the federal bureaucracy. A small community of African American men with relatively influential positions in federal agencies such as the U.S. Post Office, the Treasury Department, and the Government Printing Office helped create the basis for an African American community in the nation's capital that was among the wealthiest and socially intricate when Harlem was still a Jewish and Italian enclave.

Historian Eric S. Yellin, who has documented the history Washington's black community, argues that its decline was rooted in the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912. Born in Staunton, VA, Wilson's white progressives arrived to Washington determined to “whiten” the federal service, undoing the work of previous administrations, ending patronage systems for African Americans, and enacting Jim Crow laws which segregated the city's transportation system, its public accommodations, and law enforcement. By the time the Mayfield family arrived in 1933, Washington's segregated society would have seemed depressingly familiar. Once the home of middle-class black postal inspectors and high-ranking black treasury officials, Washington of the 1930s differed from Greer and Asheville only in its sprawling urban geography and cosmopolitan environs.


Despite this reality, Mayfield praised the lengths his parents went to shelter him and his sister from the racial reality of the United States during the height of Jim Crow. “We children never thought of ourselves as actually living in a ‘ghetto,’” he recalled in his autobiography. He noted that he only became familiar with the concept from reading about the wartime plight of Jews in Europe and did not at first think to apply it to his own condition. Growing in segregated Washington, Mayfield wrote, meant the world of his youth was a world of black faces.\(^{28}\) It was not until later that he became to understand the institutionalized boundaries that separated his world from that of white America, inhibiting his ability to move between them.

He characterized his childhood in Washington as a “fairly tranquil business,” praising his parents for their work ethic and their aspirations for him and his sister.\(^{29}\) Living a short distance from a municipal garbage dump, his hard-working parents ensured he lived a life of stability and free from hunger, but he family, “always knew which way the wind was blowing.”\(^{30}\) Still, in Southwest, the Mayfields found a community of fellow black Southerners who “went to church services, weddings, funerals, and gave picnics where the dominant food was always pigs feet, chitterlings, ham and potato salad.” Washington’s “Southness” was not only a product of its geography, but a reflection of family histories of its large African American minority. Unlike the rural township of Greer, the concentration of black communities meant that “we were black, and the people who ran everything were white.”


\(^{29}\) Ibid., 24.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 23.
That, Mayfield reflected, “was a fact of life, like the wind and the sun, not a main preoccupation.”

Though he decided to be a writer from an early age, Mayfield was not a star pupil. In recounting his early education, he credited a young teacher, Mr. Jenkins, with encouraging him to write and giving him the confidence to expect more from himself. Washington's whites, however, never let him forget who he was. In 1942, at the age of 14, the young man applied for a position as a copy boy at The Washington Post. Standing before the white receptionist, Mayfield received an obdurate reminder of the space he was allowed to occupy under Jim Crow. Inquiring whether there were any positions available the manager, without looking up from his work, responded brusquely: “We don't hire colored boys here.” The following year, though, Mayfield found a job at the Library of Congress, where he did menial work pasting labels onto books and re-shelving volumes. Ironically, it was this job, and not his schooling, where he was first exposed to modern African American literature through Richard Wright. Mayfield recalled that after discovering Wright's searing autobiography, Black Boy, he surreptitiously slipped it into his bag, reading the book in a single night before returning it the following day.

Through Wright, Mayfield made his way through the wealth of black literature produced by the Harlem Renaissance which both inspired him and provided him his earliest education about the relationship between class and race and the ways that these differences imposed barriers within the African American community. With this understanding

31 Ibid., 31.
32 Ibid., 23.
accompanied by Mr. Jenkins' encouragement, Mayfield pursued educational opportunities beyond the vocational track of his peers. Enrolling in Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, Mayfield found himself in an environment quite unlike the one he was familiar with in his neighborhood or in his previous schooling. “We believe,” Dunbar's founding charter stated, “that in a democracy free secondary education should be provided for all, regardless of race, except those whose physical or mental abnormalities make such training impossible.”

Modeled after private, college preparatory schools of the era, the public Dunbar's high academic standards exempted its graduates from taking college entrance exams, a factor that contributed to its appeal for middle-class African American students with hopes of attending college. As a result, Washington's upwardly mobile African American population made sure that Dunbar had a reputation for excellence and achievement.

Dunbar's academic traditions “attracted most of the ambitious and promising colored youth in Washington, D.C.” who, in turn, were economically one of the most “fortunate colored groups in the entire nation.” But, by the time Julian Mayfield began his studies there in 1942, its standards, like its student population, had declined. The Wilsonian application of Jim Crow to the nation's capital undercut the fortunes of those who remained. Harlem's concomitant rise meant that ambitious young men and women fled Washington for New York upon graduation. For Dunbar's students, often the best and the brightest of their communities, segregated streetcars still made their long commutes to school fraught

33 Ibid., 22.


with institutional racism. Additionally, racial barriers in theaters, amusement parks, restaurants, and concert halls diminished their ability to enjoy the cosmopolitan city. Finally, a series of funding crises took their toll on the school's ability to hire well-qualified teachers. Nevertheless, it was Dunbar that put Julian Mayfield on his path to becoming a writer and an actor.

“Dunbar was a fascinating place to be,” Mayfield wrote later in life, “it wasn't at all like it is now, it was a school for the elite.” And, as an elite school, the students would study Greek and Latin, read poetry, take diction classes, learn musical instruments, and practice debate. Aside from the opportunities it afforded him, though, Mayfield had few kind words for the school. He described the racial hierarchy at Dunbar in darkly humorous terms.

“The student and teacher population of Dunbar was involved in the interracial color war” Mayfield joked and, “the dice were loaded against the darker-skinned students.” In the context of the time, the importance of color gradations, “was understandable if not justified . . . [but] anyone who looked at my yearbook today would think that I had attended an integrated school with the blacks in a distinct minority.” Despite graduating with a middling record at Dunbar—he finished with a C+ in 1946—Julian excelled in oratory and dramatics. As he finished out his senior year, he was the winner of the American Legion

38 According to the Special Agent in Charge of the Washington Field office, “the subject is shown to have an I.Q. of 110 in 1943 and that his attendance and deportment were satisfactory. See: Julian Mayfield FBI File, Subject file, SAC WFO, 100-30570, 2.
National Americanism Committee's award, which provided him with a small windfall and the confidence to pursue a career in the theater.\(^{39}\)

Julian Mayfield's parents' commitment to a college education for him and his sister signaled a middle-class sensibility, but their inability to provide financially left Mayfield with few options. He was aware that that a college degree would not allow him to bypass the constraints of Jim Crow, but his ambition to write reflected his belief that this profession would allow him freedom of expression to make up for his lack of social liberty. Aware that his parents could not afford college, he nevertheless, “confidently expected lightning to strike somewhere in the next three years.”\(^ {40}\) Military service in the peacetime Army and, more importantly, the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the G.I. Bill, proved to be his bolt from the blue.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Mayfield's brief military career occurred during the interlude between the Second World War and the Korean War and he saw no combat.\(^ {41}\) His service record was limited to secretarial work, music, and games of chance. He did his basic training at Fort McClellan in Anniston, Alabama and spent his leave before

\(^{39}\) The prize was $50 USD. See: “Prize winner in national contest,” *New Journal and Guide* (1916–2003), Norfolk, VA, 6 April 1946, 22.


\(^{41}\) In particular, the experiences of Harold Cruse, Ossie Davis, and Hoyt Fuller, who all served abroad during the Second World War, are relevant comparisons. John H. Clarke, who did his service primarily at Kelley Field, Texas, did not experience combat, and neither did James Forman, who was present in Japan during the Korean War. However, both of the latter men nevertheless experienced military life during wartime, which contrasted with Mayfield's experiences in the peacetime army. See: Harold W. Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 168–170; Letter from John Clarke to the *Atlantic Monthly*, 28 March 1946, SCH, John H. Clarke Papers; Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, *With Ossie and Ruby: In This Life Together* (New York: It Books, 2000), 124, 128; Hoyt W. Fuller, “Autobiographical Manuscript,” Atlanta University Center, Hoyt W. Fuller Papers, Box 6, Folder 1, 78, 82–83; James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 242–243.
deployment studying dice throwing and becoming, in his words, “a third class pad roller. I learned to roll the dice in such a way that every roll of the bones out of my hand reduced the odds radically in my favor.”\textsuperscript{42} Employing these skills to deprive his squad mates of their pay, he used his winnings to convince a “reasonable” sergeant to keep him “off work details and overseas shipping rosters for months.”\textsuperscript{43} As a private first class in the 926th Engineering Aviation Group, Mayfield left Alabama for leave in Washington before reporting for duty in San Francisco. The Army shipped him to Hawai‘i, however, where he was appalled by the oppressed conditions in native Hawai‘ian communities on Oahu. Drawn to the residential streets of Honolulu, far from the haunts favored by soldiers, he came face-to-face for the first time with the effects of American empire and recognized that the conditions faced by Hawai‘ians on their own island echoed his experience. After a brief illness, he was sent back to the mainland for medical leave and was honorably discharged in November 1947.\textsuperscript{44}

Despite the short duration of his military service, the peacetime Army gave Julian Mayfield the opportunity to attend college—though he found the experience was not to his liking. Following his discharge, he enrolled in Lincoln University near Oxford, Pennsylvania and attended the school for the latter half of the 1947–1948 school year. Lincoln had been

\textsuperscript{42} Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 78.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 78.

\textsuperscript{44} In Mayfield's FBI file the bureau reported that Mayfield served as a typist and played trumpet and trombone in a military band. He was diagnosed with an ulcer in November 1947 and was transported to Fairfield-Suisun Army Airfield outside Berkeley, CA for treatment. Two days later, on 28 November 1947, he was honorably discharged and given a train ticket to Washington. See: Julian Mayfield FBI File, Subject file, SAC WFO, 100-30570, 3; “Discharge Certificate,” 13 October 1954, SCH, JMP, Box 2, Folder 3, 1.
founded in 1854 as the United States' first degree-granting historically black university.\textsuperscript{45} After nearly a century of white leadership, Horace M. Bond was appointed as the institution's first black president in 1945 and set about challenging both the university's hidebound traditions and the racial composition of its faculty and staff. Lincoln's facilities were small and, combined with segregation in nearby townships, black students and black faculty alike were virtually confined to campus.

The stifling, formal atmosphere of the all-male college reinforced this physical isolation. Lincoln is more than two hours by car to Washington and three hours to New York City. In 1948, the urbane and impoverished Mayfield was effectively trapped at Lincoln for the duration of the semester. Being forced to take segregated busses back and forth to Washington or New York made the isolation and stultifying atmosphere even more unbearable. After only one semester, Mayfield dropped out. Though he intended to pursue radio broadcasting at New York University, he found himself drawn to the theater and began taking acting classes and small parts at the Blackfriars Theatre.\textsuperscript{46} He never re-enrolled or completed his bachelor's degree.


\textsuperscript{46} The Blackfriars Theatre was founded in 1931 by two Dominicans, Father Urban Nagle O.P. And Brother Fabian Carey, O.P. Taking their name from the sixteenth century private theater of the same name in London, Carey and Nagle opted to produce original works that were both spiritually and intellectually challenging. More importantly for Mayfield and his peers, the Dominican Order in New York’s diocese were committed to integration and regularly made parts available to black actors and actresses. See: “Guide to the Blackfriars Guild Collection, 1921–1997,” Phillips Memorial Library, Special and Archival Collections, Providence College, Providence, RI, 2.
Lincoln, like Honolulu and Washington, contributed to Mayfield's frustration with the world he inhabited. Bound by institutionalized racism and second-class citizenship, the young man chafed against the constraints imposed upon him due to the color of his skin. His working-class origins also contributed to his perception of the ways in which social class and colorism contributed another important component to his socioeconomic status.

Though Mayfield developed no radical political associations at Lincoln, the staid curriculum and atmosphere of conformity spurred his search beyond the boundaries of black, middle-class society for solutions to the persistent racial problems he bore witness to every single day. Through acting classes with Frank Silvera, Mayfield befriended other young African American men and women with designs on the theater and careers in the arts.

Forging lifelong friendships with other black actors and writers—such as William Marshall, Alice Childress, William Branch, Rosa Guy, Sidney Poitier, William Greaves, Sylvia Boone, Brock Peters, and Robert Slater, and others—had an enormous impact on the direction of young Mayfield's career aspirations. But it was his involvement in the black theatrical milieu in Harlem that acquainted himself with the black Leftist circles which formed an integral component of the neighborhood's post-war art culture. Joining the group of young men who coalesced around the legendary singer, actor, and activist Paul Robeson, Mayfield's early theatrical success also afforded him the ability to tour the country.47 This

47 In Mayfield's autobiography, he recalls that, “I do remember that some time in the early fifties a number of the younger men decided that Paul should not be allowed to walk the streets alone, that hooligans hired by right-wingers were perfectly capable of killing our hero. We used to vie for the privilege of walking beside Paul wherever he went. Sometimes our entourage would include Sidney Poitier, Leon Bibb and Harry Belafonte. Looking back now it somehow seems amusing. Although Paul was in his early fifties, he was in very good health, and a former All-American from Rutgers who stood taller than six foot four inches. We must have been a great nuisance to Paul, but I think at this . . . time, when some of his former friends of the celebrity world had deserted him, and there was a group of young men who wanted to be seen with him, he allowed us to tag along.” See: Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 99–101.
mobility, combined with a budding association with the U.S. Communist Party, aided the development of his criticism of capitalism and its relationship to racial oppression.

**Lost in the Stars**

Julian Mayfield's first major acting role ironically proved more significant for his understanding of American racism than it did for his acting career. In the summer of 1949, Mayfield was cast as the understudy for Sidney Poitier in the Kurt Weill musical *Lost in the Stars*.48 Adapted from Alan Paton's novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the production featured lyrics by Maxwell Anderson and was directed by Rouben Mamoulian.49 *Lost in the Stars* also had the distinction of having on the largest black casts in mid-century Broadway history and Mayfield faced stiff competition for the part of Absalom Kumalo. Unbeknownst to Mayfield, Poitier had also auditioned for the role of Dr. Luther Brooks in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *No Way Out*, and, when Poitier received the part, Mayfield was promoted to the lead.50 Opening in October 1949, the show earned critical and popular acclaim and the

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49 An, “extremely difficult show to finance,” *Lost in the Stars* was rejected by numerous investors due to its “heavy” racial themes and the “uncommercial” nature of its plot. The production budget was $90,000 USD and members of The Playwright's Company raised nearly a quarter of its budget themselves to ensure the show went on. They were in luck and, by April 1950, the show's advance sale was $100,000 USD. According to contemporary newspaper accounts, it was the first time a hit Broadway production had decided, “to move lock, stock, [and] barrel to L.A.” in the midst of a successful first run in New York. The deal was negotiated between The Playwright's Company and California producer and impresario Edwin Lester. See: “*Lost In Stars' Cast To Move Lock, Stock, Barrel To L. A.*” *New York Amsterdam News* (1943–1961), City edition, 1 April 1950, 17.

50 It was not the first time that had received a role in this manner. In April 1949, the Blackfriars Guild Theatrical Company put on a production of “City of Kings” with Elwood Smith and Urban Nagle, O.P.
producers, sensing a hit, made the unprecedented move to take the show on the road in the middle of its Broadway run. Plotting a course through the American Midwest to West Coast, the tour introduced Mayfield and the rest of the cast to the diversity of anti-black racism in the continental United States.

*Lost in the Stars'* powerful call for racial reconciliation in early twentieth century South Africa echoed the interracial politics of the American Left in the late 1940s, but at that time, Mayfield did not yet consider himself a radical or a Leftist. With South Africa's apartheid standing in for American Jim Crow, the play directly addressed the ways that racial inequality and segregation bred poverty, crime, and disregard for human life. Weill's adaptation of Paton's novel follows the Anglican Reverend Stephen Kumalo in traveling to Johannesburg from his small town to keep his son, Absalom, from losing his moral compass as the young man toils in the gold mines for a meager wage. Rev. Kumalo, however, arrives too late. Absalom, about to be a father, has already joined a gang and, while he participated in a robbery, has shot and killed a white man. Caught and imprisoned for his crime, Absalom faces the death penalty for his actions. Confronted with the prospect of losing his son, Reverend Kumalo undergoes a crisis of faith and receives spiritual guidance, appealing to the judge on his son's behalf.

Intent on setting an example, however, the judge finds the young man guilty of murder and sentences him to death. At the end of the play, with his son facing the hangman's noose, Rev. Kumalo is visited by the father of the man his son murdered and the

two men make peace with one another. Despite his son's death by hanging, the reconciliation between the two men—one as the father of a criminal and one as the father of a victim—highlights the ways that forgiveness and reconciliation were the first steps to addressing a social fabric rent by racism and segregation.\(^{51}\) As the first actor to play Absalom Kumalo, Mayfield also had the distinction of developing the part for the stage and he is featured on the original cast recording.

As an ambitious young man suddenly thrust into Broadway fame, Julian Mayfield recalled with pride how it was his first regular paycheck since arriving in New York, but the show's national tour had the secondary effect of significantly broadening his horizons. Mayfield's anecdotes from this tour placed a heavy emphasis on prurient encounters and ribald humor, but these details are instructive in highlighting how geography and economic conditions shaped Mayfield's understanding of race relations across the country. Among the cities the show toured were St. Louis, Chicago, San Francisco, Omaha, Louisville, Cincinnati, Columbus, Omaha, and Kansas City. In his autobiography, written some twenty years after *Lost in the Stars* toured, each story offers insight into his developing understanding of race, sexuality, gender, and criminality. Despite the effort that he made to portray his younger self as cosmopolitan and self-aware, the young man that these stories depict still had a great deal to learn. Mayfield quickly made friends with his co-stars and, along with Van Prince and William Marshall, or “the three boys,” as he called the trio, would “slip our room keys into our pockets and hit the streets looking for action in the form of girls and parties.”\(^{52}\)


\(^{52}\) Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 34.
For obvious reasons, *Lost in the Stars* did not stop anywhere in the Deep South, but as the encounter in the introduction shows, confrontations with *de facto* racial segregation imparted a deeper understanding of the breadth of white supremacy in the United States for the young Mayfield. In addition to the contacts that he made in cities like Chicago and Los Angeles, *Lost in the Stars* was not only foundational to his understanding how race functioned outside of his experiences in Washington and South Carolina, but whetted his interest in Leftist ideologies and informed his understanding for the necessity of socially conscious art. Both of these can be seen most clearly in one of the tour's first stops, Chicago.

Despite the absence of laws banning African Americans from public accommodations, Mayfield quickly learned that there were still clearly demarcated lines in Chicago society. In his autobiography, he related several encounters in bars and juke joints in which co-star Van Prince provoked the ire of dangerous-looking white men by socializing with white women. Mayfield reflected that, despite the fact that the men could legally walk into any bar they wanted, they had to be on their guard. Far from the familiar social constructions of the Deep South and the mid-Atlantic, Mayfield and his fellow African American actors were subject to the variations on Jim Crow that existed elsewhere in the nation. In spite of the lack of segregation in public accommodations and the apparent absence of Jim Crow, he experienced the familiar rules of South Carolina and Washington in which he was expected to stay in his place or violence would be the result.

After narrowly avoiding a barroom brawl in Chicago, Mayfield was leery of the city's nightlife and vowed to play it safe. On his second night in town, he accompanied William Greaves to the house of some people associated with the local arts scene. There, he was introduced to Margaret Taylor-Burroughs and her husband Charles Burroughs, “who were
to become dear friends over the years.” The couple lived in a converted carriage house “behind a great mansion on Michigan Avenue” that served as a base for activism and art on the South Side and an informal boarding house for visiting artists. Margaret and Charles Burroughs were well-known in Chicago as advocates for black art, history, and radical causes, founding the DuSable Museum for African American History in 1961. Charles, the son of Williana Burroughs, had been raised in Moscow, and Mayfield recounted with humor how he spoke English with a pronounced Russian accent, which grew thicker and more incomprehensible the more vodka he consumed. Margaret Burroughs saw her art as a

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55 Charles Burroughs was the eldest son of dedicated communist activist Williana “Liana” Jones Burroughs, the U.S. Communist Party's candidate for New York Comptroller 1933 and the Party's candidate for Lieutenant Governor of New York in 1934. A prominent voice in defense of the Scottsboro Boys, Williana joined the Communist Party in 1928 and traveled to Moscow that year for the 6th World Congress as a representative of the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC). Burroughs and her husband subsequently traveled internationally for the Comintern, leaving their two sons, Eric and Charles, to be taught in Moscow. According to Mayfield, a daughter was also left in Switzerland. Burroughs and her children were reunited in Moscow in 1937, after being apart for nearly nine years, but due to the lack of dedicated American Communists in the Soviet Union, she was persuaded to remain in Moscow for the duration of the Second World War. Eric Burroughs went on to become an actor and worked with Orson Welles's all-black Federal Theatre Project production of Macbeth. Charles returned to the United States in 1945 after serving in the Army settled in Chicago, where he met Margaret Taylor and the two were married. See: Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 199-201; Julia L. Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 279–280, 394n30; Joy Gleason Carew, *Blacks, Reds, and Russians: Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 85–87.
means to improve racial pride and racial solidarity and used her associations to call attention
to injustice and force the city to act on issues in education. A public school teacher, Mayfield
wrote with admiration that she was, “a thorn in the side of any elected official, including the
governor.”

Mayfield's encounter with Margaret and Charles Burroughs became his entrée into
black Communist circles, but as a young man, he recalled deriving more enjoyment from the
free-flowing vodka and the attractive young women who came and went from the house. He
appreciated that the slight, soft-spoken Margaret Burroughs, “had a knack for making
everybody who came to the apartment work . . . and you soon found yourself ironing or
washing dishes and not minding as long as Margaret was there rapping in her flat
Midwestern tones.” It was also in this former carriage house on Michigan Avenue where
Mayfield first met Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, and Paul Robeson, recalling that
they were but a few of the black intellectuals and luminaries who made it a point to stop by
the Burroughs home when they were in town.

On his first night at the Burroughs' home, however, he had scarcely been at the
house more than a few hours when the phone rang. Mayfield and five other young men were
immediately drafted to attend to some “trouble” in Trumbull Park. Ignorant of Chicago's
ongoing battle over desegregation, Mayfield acquiesced and, while the men drove, he was
given a short primer on the state of race relations in Chicago. Trumbull Park turned out to


57 Mayfield recounted that despite being a, “working actor who must avoid injury of every kind . . . [w]e are
very particular about our faces,” he had met a young woman named Geri at the Burroughs' home and,
“could not appear chicken in front of [her].” Upon returning to the Burroughs' home uninjured, he was
disappointed to see that, “[s]he never gave me any indication that she was impressed.” See: Mayfield,
be a “symbol in the struggle for civil rights, for the project had been built with public monies.” For Mayfield, the desultory attempts at desegregation by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) symbolized the hollow promise of integration as a political solution to American racial conflicts.\(^{58}\)

The complex, constructed in 1938, consisted of 55 buildings and 434 apartments and, despite its location in South Deering on the Far-South Side of Chicago, it had an unofficial racial covenant. The CHA only rented to white families.\(^{59}\) Following the end of the Second World War housing needs became particularly acute on the overpopulated South Side, swollen with black workers who had been lured north with high-wage wartime jobs. In the years after Mayfield first visited, the white neighborhoods bordering the South Side would become a racialized battleground. Unscrupulous real-estate agents and developers deployed “block-busting” techniques to turn neighborhoods from white to black by bottoming out home prices, preying on white racism and fear. However, when Mayfield first visited Chicago in the summer of 1950, these conflicts were in their infancy. He happily reported in his autobiography that the “trouble” had mostly subsided when he and his new comrades arrived. The rock and bottle throwing had stopped and the two groups of men—

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\(^{59}\) Trumbull Park Homes was located at 105th Street and Yates Avenue and was designed by architect John A. Holabird. In 1953, the project was “accidentally” integrated when a light-skinned black woman named Betty Howard moved her family into the project. Beginning in August 1953, white residents and whites from neighboring areas attacked the building that the Howard family lived in while police did nothing to stop them. In October, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) attempted to move ten more black families into the complex, but violence prevented them. It was not until 1963 that black families were able to move into the projects without police protection. See: D. Bradford Hunt, “Trumbull Park Homes Race Riots, 1953–1954,” *Encyclopedia of Chicago* <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/2461.html> Accessed 30 June 2017.
one white and one black—instead hurled insults at one another from parked cars across a wide boulevard.

The experiences in downtown Chicago with Van Prince and his brief foray into direct action on the South Side with Williams Greaves painted a vivid picture for Mayfield about the reality and the limits of Northern integration. But, the production did stop in Chicago and soon after *Lost in the Stars* headed west to California.⁶⁰ Along the way, the production stopped in Cincinnati, Columbus, Louisville, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Omaha. Yet St. Louis and Kansas City were consistent with Mayfield's experiences in Washington and Chicago, and Omaha did not even have a cohesive segregated neighborhood, leaving the non-white actors and crew bereft of accommodation entirely. After being rejected from several hotels and treated poorly by whites at restaurants, the actors were welcomed by local men and women who put them up in their own homes. When they reached San Francisco, though, Mayfield recalled a profound sense of relief. After playing thirty shows, the show closed to rave reviews in Los Angeles on 30 September 1950. The show stopped again in Chicago on the way back to New York, where they played the Great Northern Theater and Mayfield spent time attempting to woo a young woman whom he had met at the Burroughs' home, Geri, but with little success.

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Back in New York, Mayfield unsuccessfully auditioned for several roles, but after multiple rejections, he concluded that *Lost in the Stars* had been something of a fluke.\(^{61}\) Mainstream Broadway productions continued to develop only a handful of roles for black actors. The parts that were written were, at best, non-speaking roles or, at worst, humiliating caricatures. Proud, Mayfield sensed that he himself was one of those “fellows who simply would not accept their 'place' as black men,” and “beg[an] to value the relative independence of a writer.”\(^{62}\) Seeing his early acting success as a flash in the pan, he returned to his first love, writing. Whereas an actor, a singer, or dancer “must always work in an ensemble,” writers, he surmised, “seemed freer; they could turn out their great works at home, [and] hate their enemies without apology.”\(^{63}\) Now living on W. 99th Street on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, Mayfield’s interest in writing and his experience in the theater connected him to a small group that had been founded only the year before, the Harlem Writer's Guild, where he began to develop his earliest plays.\(^{64}\)

John Henrik Clarke has written that the Harlem Writer's Guild “was born out of the radicalism that followed the Second World War” as men and women sensed the shifting

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\(^{61}\) According to Mayfield, the producers planned an international tour of the production as well and he applied for his first passport and was in the process of procuring the necessary visas when the producers, “decided to quit while they were ahead.” See: Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 79.

\(^{62}\) Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 96

\(^{63}\) Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 64

\(^{64}\) There seems to be some confusion in secondary sources whether or not Mayfield was a founding member of the Guild. Some sources claim he was a founding member while others leave his name off the list of people associated with the group entirely. John O. Killens's papers at Emory University related to the Guild note that Mayfield joined early, but was not a founding member. See: John O. Killens Papers, Emory University, Boxes 113 and 114.
mood of African Americans in the nation. Today, the Guild's roster reads as a virtual who's who of black playwrights and authors of the mid-twentieth century, but in 1950 it was one of several informal writing groups in Harlem. Founded by John O. Killens, Rosa Guy, John H. Clarke, Willard Moore, and Walter Christmas, the Guild was midwife to the work of dozens of black literary figures, including Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, Ossie Davis, and Audre Lorde. The Guild helped foster the creative energies of a generation of black writers and artists who recognized that, if they wanted their voices heard, working together was the only way to rise above the din.

The writers, directors, and actors who participated in Guild activities helped organize both space for the discussion and production of cultural work, but also aided in the basic material needs of writers living in what was perhaps the most expensive neighborhood in one of the costliest cities in the United States. Providing Mayfield with a circle of talented collaborators and spaces in which to work on his art, it also connected him to the Leftist circles that existed uptown and, through the Guild, Mayfield quickly joined the Committee for the Negro in the Arts (CNA) and subsequently Freedom, the magazine founded by Paul


Robeson. At some point during this time, he became a formal member of the Communist Party adding his budding radical political voice to the vibrant, cultural scene in New York.

**The Black Cultural Left**

*Freedom*, Julian Mayfield wrote in 1969, was a magazine dedicated to the, “furious exchange of ideas” between men and women who were “deeply and angrily and sometimes violently concerned about the issues of the day and the world.”Edited by Louis Burnham, the magazine ran for a tumultuous five years amid an increasingly hostile climate of anti-communism, blacklisting, and loyalty oaths. Such a space of political and ideological ferment intoxicated the young Mayfield, spurring development of political and artistic ideas that he would later use to attack the injustices and inequality that had awakened on his tour with *Lost in the Stars*. *Freedom*, however, offered little in the way of renumeration. The struggling publication—its founder, writers, and readership hounded by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and anticommunist publications like *Red Channels*—could barely afford to publish its issues, much less pay its staff. As a result, Mayfield worked a variety of jobs, saving his evenings for writing, but any hopes he had for making it big as a writer were dashed by the hard truths of surviving in New York. “[E]xcept for a brief stint at a Post Office employee and as a taxi-driver,” Mayfield recalled, “I could not remember earning a week’s salary.” Money, “the bane, the curse, the plague of most writers,” was inevitably in short supply.

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68 For more on Robeson, the Red Scare, and *Red Channels* see: Ellen Schrecker and Phillip Deery, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2017).  
70 Ibid., 16.
In spite of these financial tribulations, the early 1950s proved productive for the young writer as he made full use of the spaces that Communist Party association offered its members in the early 1950s. Along with the urban institutions of the Harlem-based black Left, which included the offices which housed *Freedom*, the CNA, and the Harlem Writer's Guild, Mayfield attended classes at the Jefferson School of Social Sciences in Chelsea, spent the summer at the Communist-run Camp Unity in Upstate New York, and collaborated with fellow Guild members in small productions for the American Negro Theater (ANT) and other neighborhood arts groups. There was also his Party duties, “the furious activity as a rank-and-file member of the Communist Party,” which included committee meetings and, as the chairman of a committee on unemployment under the umbrella of the CNA, research about the employment prospects of his fellow Harlem residents.\(^71\)

In her prosographic portrait of these black men and women living in Harlem, *Black Art and Activism in Postwar New York*, Rebeccah E. Welch named the loose coalition of playwrights, authors, directors, actors, and novelists the “Black Cultural Left” and historicized their origins in “urban institutions and movements that explicitly advanced the role of culture in political struggle.”\(^72\) The urban nature of this movement was a product of the demographic changes wrought by the Great Migration which increased New York City's black population by a factor of ten between 1900 and 1950.\(^73\) The lack of affordable housing,

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\(^{71}\) Ibid., 91.


\(^{73}\) According to census data, the black population of New York increased from 1.8% in 1900 to nearly 10% in 1950 with nearly all of that growth confined to Harlem. Notably, this figure includes Afro-Caribbean migration from the West Indies (including Haiti, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, the US Virgin Islands, and Windward Islands, with estimates of nearly 20,000 to 30,000 individuals, but does not include Puerto Ricans migration which is considered a separate trend due to their holding of U.S. citizenship. See:
a product of segregation and restrictive covenants, and rapidly increasing population led to prohibitively high rent prices and poor living conditions as homes were subdivided into rooms that seldom included even basic amenities. The Black Cultural Left’s artists and writers not only addressed these conditions in artistic appeals to Harlem residents, but lived them as well. As an intellectual vanguard, the Black Cultural Left emphasized the ways in which race and political economy were related by portraying the contradictions and hypocrisy of the American racial reality. The writing and theatrical roles of Julian Mayfield reflect these challenges.

In one of his earliest published pieces, Mayfield pointedly attacked the disingenuous media coverage of the Korean War. “[T]he official concern for the welfare of the civilian population, far less the enemy militia,” he wrote to the editor of The Washington Post in February 1952, “has not been one of the features of the Korean adventure.”74 Disputing the U.S. State Department narrative that war was being conducted to protect Korean citizens, Mayfield called attention the ways in which public media portrayals of the war were silent about the massive air bombardment campaign underway in Korea, which indiscriminately killed civilian and soldier alike. Having offered little in the way of criticism of U.S. foreign policy prior to his involvement with the Communist Party, this developing critique of post-war militarism offers insight into how the Party, and his time spent in the newsroom-like atmosphere of Freedom, shaped a growing awareness and investment in world events. Freedom


served as an apprenticeship for Mayfield and it allowed him hone his writing talents even as it fostered a space for his political education. Perhaps more important from the anecdotes and stories contained in Julian Mayfield's autobiographical manuscript, however, were the relationships he forged during this time.

The trials and tribulations of fellow black radical writers and artists that Mayfield befriended in Harlem not only make up the bulk of his recollections in his autobiographical manuscript, but they influenced many of his life choices between 1950 and 1954, as well as many of his career moves in later decades. Among those men and women whom Mayfield befriended during this era included John H. Clarke, William Branch, Loften Mitchell, Walter Christmas, John O. Killens, Rosa Guy, Ossie Davis, Audre Lorde, and Alice Childress.

Taking his autobiographical recollections as a guide, it was Childress who had the greatest impact on his radical education. Born in Charleston, SC in 1916 and “the only African-American woman to have written, produced, and published plays for four decades,” Childress was also deeply enmeshed in the world of the Black Cultural Left in the 1940s and 1950s.

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75 Alice Childress, who also used the names Louise Henderson and Alice Herndon prior to her marriage to Alvin Childress in 1934, was born in Charleston, but relocated to New York with her grandmother in 1925 when her parents divorced. A high school dropout, she received her dramatic education in the American Negro Theater starting in 1939, and later performed in such places as On Striver's Row (1940), Natural Man (1941), and won acclaim when Anna Lucasta (1944) moved downtown to Broadway, becoming the longest running all-black play in theater history. Co-stars in Anna Lucasta included Canada Lee, Hilda Sims, and Frederick O'Neal. Childress died in Astoria at the age of 77 in 1994. See: Mary Helen Washington, “Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, and Claudia Jones: Black Women Write the Popular Front,” in Bill Mullen and James Edward Smethurst, Left of the Color Line: Race, Radicalism, and Twentieth-Century Literature of the United States (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 186; Sue Woodman, “Obituary of Alice Childress - A testimonial to black America,” The Guardian, 14 September 1994.
In addition to directing Mayfield in several plays, the most notable of which was Ossie Davis's play *Candy Store*, Childress encouraged Mayfield to take other roles and write his own work. Between 1951 and 1952, performances of *Candy Store* were staged for the benefit of the United Electrical Workers Union and to raise money for the Civil Rights Congress. Mayfield acted in the play for no money, relying on other jobs to make ends meet. Other plays Mayfield acted in or directed during this time included William Branch's *A Medal for Willie*, *The Big One*, and *The Other Foot*. According to Kathlene McDonald, Childress also taught dramatic workshops at the ANT and led creative forums on Black art and culture at the Jefferson School of Social Science, a Marxist Educational Center in Chelsea. Evidence suggests that it was Childress who invited Mayfield to the Communist Party's flagship educational project The Jefferson School of Social Science, located on Sixth Avenue and 19th Street, to further his radical education.

The “Jeff School,” as it was known, took its name from Thomas Jefferson and was the direct successor to the CPUSA’s earlier adult education effort, the New York Workers School. Each school offered low-cost or free classes for adults in an environment that was avowedly Marxian. The Jefferson School opened in 1944 and was funded by the CPUSA as part of an effort to expand teaching Marxist thought to the working class. Like the Abraham Lincoln School (founded in Chicago in the 1930s by lawyer and activist William L. Patterson), the Samuel Adams School in Boston, and the Tom Paine School in Philadelphia,

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76 *Candy Store* focused on a local boycott against a New York chain drugstore in a thinly veiled version of Harlem, encouraging residents not to patronize establishments that treated them poorly, a concept that would be repurposed a decade later during the height of the Civil Rights Movement as, “don't buy where you can't work.” See: Kathlene McDonald, *Feminism, the Left, and Postwar Literary Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 33–34.
the Jefferson School’s mission was, “educate and inform the whole mass of the people, they are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.”

Operating openly, the school quickly became a bugbear of anti-communists and soon came under surveillance by the FBI investigation and surveillance. In breathless reportage in the 1949 *Saturday Evening Post*, Craig Thompson reported that the school functioned as an “open conspiracy.” There, “everyone speaks and acts on the assumption that everyone else is already a Communist or about to become one. People who, elsewhere, will go to jail rather than admit to being party members here openly proclaim it.” Mayfield would spend two years taking night classes at the “Jeff School,” but, like Dunbar, its fortunes were already on the decline when he began. At its peak in 1948, the school taught more than 5,000 students, but as the McCarthy Era progressed, state and federal pressures as well as burdensome court case convinced many to avoid the school entirely and the school closed with little fanfare in 1956.

Another key space of furious intellectual debate and ideological ferment was Camp Unity, a “worker’s summer camp,” in the Berkshire Mountains near the New York–Connecticut Border. Located approximately twenty miles East of Poughkeepsie, Camp Unity was an ideal retreat from the city and Mayfield spent two summers there beginning in 1951. An advertisement placed in *The Crisis* of July 1941, encouraged readers to “deal yourself a

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78 Craig Thompson, “Here’s Where Our Young Communists Are Trained,” *Saturday Evening Post* 221 (12 March 1949): 38.

health glow with a stiff set of tennis on a well-kept, fast court or a brisk swim in the clear, cool waters of Lake Ellis.” It declared “every weekend a no-trump weekend” and proclaimed rates of $22/week and $3.75/day with “efficient chambermaid services.”

Camp Unity was one of an archipelago of resorts funded by the Communist Party and labor unions designed as an affordable retreat for working-class peoples from the tightly packed, working-class neighborhoods of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore. These resorts were integrated, a rarity for vacation resorts of any kind in the continental United States, reflecting the Communist line on interracial organizing. Camp Unity attracted many of their attendees by offering musicians, actors, and directors free room and board in exchange for their cultural work. As a result, musicians, actors, and other performers often came to the camps to get away, allowing Camp Unity to claim that it “featured the best jazz music within a hundred miles.” While that integration was refreshing for Leftist and working-class African Americans Camp, it also presented problems, especially in the context of making art.

Many prominent musicians of the era spent time at Camp Unity, due to its working schedule and amenities, but their experiences and recollections hinted at broader ideological problems.

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80 The Crisis, July 1951, 233.

81 According to Larry Rubin, who grew up in Philadelphia and became an important member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Paul Robeson performed at many of these camps during the 1940s and 1950s and W.E.B. Du Bois was also known to attend. See: Interview with author, 7 July 2016.

and racial conflicts within the “cultural front.” Saxophonist and band leader Sidney Bechet recalled his time at the camps fondly and appreciated that his days were free to rest and read as he was only required to perform at night. However, not all of his bandmates felt the same way. Bechet's longtime pianist Willie 'the Lion' Smith, complained about the “nest of Commies” on the picturesque lake nestled in the Berkshires in Bechet's autobiography, calling it “the most mixed up camp I ever saw or heard about—the races, the sexes, and the religions were all mixed.” Smith complained to Bechet, but his band leader refused to budge. “I couldn't see anything in that Communism stuff,” Bechet reported Smith saying, “[i]nstead of the early bird getting the worm, they wanted the early bird to cut up the worm and give away all the pieces.”

Pianist Art Hodes was similarly ill at ease with the political environment of Camp Unity. When he took the job, all he knew was that “Camp Unity was a labor camp—a camp for laboring people. A cheap vacation.” Hodes, who went on to edit the magazine *The Jazz Record* in the 1940s, bristled when he discovered the control that he perceived the camp's organizers exerting over musicians. He considered the food to be “plentiful” but “tasteless,” and objected to the ideological quibbling about the styles of Jazz that was apparent in the Party at the time. Hodes was also angered by the editorializing that camp organizers

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85 Michael Denning cites Sidney Finkelstein's 1948 book, *Jazz: The People's Music* in his discussion of the conflicts between Jazz musicians and the Leftist ideologues of the “Cultural Front.” Finkelstein argued that divisions of certain kinds of Jazz as “high” or “low” culture was merely a social construct of capitalists attempting to sell the music to consumers. Denning considered this conundrum in the context of a question: Should Jazz remain traditional, as it was a product of the proletariat, or should the party embrace
initiated about his musical choices. According to his autobiography, *Hot Man*, he was asked to refrain from celebrating the South in “Dear Old Southland” and leisure in “Summertime.” In an exchange with an unknown camp organizer, Hodes asked “What's wrong with 'Summertime? ’” The answer was the lyrics, particularly, “the living is easy.” Life and living, Hodes’s critic declared, “was never easy.” The pressure on the band to take classes in economics, the lack of decent food, and the party's demands that they refrain from gambling prompted Hodes to pack his bags and go home. 

Camp Unity's disruption of segregation in leisurely pursuits in the post-WWII United States not only appeared to working-class blacks and black Leftists, but it also appealed to other groups who were considered part of the “criminal element.” One of the most infamous of these guests was noted Harlem gangster Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson. Known as the “Harlem godfather” due to the control he exerted over the numbers racket, drug


Hodes, *Hot Man*, 80.

trade, and prostitution rings above 110th Street, Mayfield recalled that Johnson regularly vacationed at the camp in the 1940s. Whereas other gangsters vacationed in Palm Springs and Miami, Johnson drove up to Camp Unity every summer and rented a cabin by himself because he felt safe, “among a bunch of radical nuts.” Though there were some Florida resort areas that were integrated, such as Miami Beach, Camp Unity did not require a long trip through the segregated South.

Mayfield, ever the optimist, recalled trying to recruit the much older gangster to the Marxist cause, but Johnson rebuffed him. Mayfield wrote that Johnson's opposition to the Communist Party was that Leftists “didn't understand power, that power belonged to the person who had the guns.” According to Mayfield, it was Johnson who had driven Robeson to and from his second concert at Peekskill, which had resulted in a violent response by local whites. Johnson told Mayfield that, “he had no patience with a non-violent philosophy and that he was damned if he was going to see one of his heroes killed because he was surrounded by a bunch of non-violent quacks.”

90 Mayfield notes that both Puerto Rico and Cuba were integrated during this time as well. See: Ibid., 105.
91 Ibid., 105.
Ambivalence about Camp Unity in Mayfield's autobiography reflected the complexity of these perspectives, but criticism of his first forays into writing by white Leftists planted the seeds of his rejection of interracial social movements. “The staff was integrated,” Mayfield recalled fondly, “we even had a couple of orientals among the waitresses, and an honest-to-god Eskimo waitress who took in good humor all the dumb questions she was asked.”

In his autobiographical manuscript, Mayfield recounted a confrontation with a woman following the first production of his one-act play, 417, the basis for his debut novel, The Hit. The woman, whom he called Edith, “gushed” about his play, but she expressed her discomfort with the fact that, “there were no white people in that play, no white people at all.” Momentarily flummoxed, he initially felt embarrassment at the oversight. Camp Unity was one of the few truly interracial resorts in the country and, “the theme of all the [party] faithful was black and white racial unity.” The issue seemed to upset Mayfield as much as it had Edith and, in spite of himself, he apologized for not including a single white character.

As the conversation progressed, however, it dawned on Mayfield the space in which 417 took place, Harlem, had few white people. There was also the fact that no one would have batted an eye if the company had produced a play about a white family living in the United States that did not include a single black character. “Whites and blacks don't really have much to do with each other in this county,” Mayfield noted and, in spite of working together, using the same transportation and market facilities, whites and blacks, “hardly know each other.” Edith's comment, reconsidered nearly twenty years later, got at the heart

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Ibid., 30.
of this fact. The artifice of including white characters in black stories when, “their literature usually ignores blacks (as human beings, as something more than background),” became transparent to Mayfield. “If our writing is too much preoccupied with [whites],” he commented in his autobiographical manuscript, “it is because their power too often impinges on our lives culminating in dramatic confrontations.”95 This frustration and resentment with Party dictates on black art developed into a full-throated critique of American literature over the course of the 1950s and informed much of Mayfield's thinking about political art, race, and publishing for the remainder of his life.

In an article written about fellow Guild member and friend Lorraine Hansberry in a 1979 issue of Freedomways, Mayfield recalled that, “she only became a playwright because she was so disappointed, and often angered, by other plays written about Afro-Americans.”96 Mayfield's drive to produce art for the black working-class reflected these same frustrations and his first two novels—the aforementioned The Hit and its successor, The Long Night—had only a handful of white characters who primarily served as antagonists and representatives of white repression. In a letter to Mark Crawford, written in 1974, Mayfield recalled his frustration with working within, “multi-racial organizations.” Having been active in such organizations since 1947, Mayfield wrote, his rejection of such groups, “became a matter of principle because no matter who started off running the organization the whites would usually end up boss man, because they supply the money.”97

95 Ibid., 32.
97 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Mark Crawford, 5 June 1974, SCH, JMP, Box 29, Folder, 2, 1.
In these spaces provided by the Communist Party—the Jefferson School, Camp Unity, and \textit{Freedom}—Julian Mayfield developed his own black radical tradition and began his project of fusing art with politics to encourage solidarity across socioeconomic and racial divisions. Like many of his contemporaries in the Black Cultural Left, such as Ossie Davis, Alice Childress, Loften Mitchell, and John O. Killens, Mayfield challenged American anti-black racism through art in ways that mostly adhered to the Communist Party line. A relatively minor figures in the movement, Mayfield recalled that he had few fears of being blacklisted or having to take a loyalty oath since he was only a rank-and-file member. “None of this black listing involved me personally,” he wrote in his autobiographical manuscript, “for blacks never worked very much anyways, and I had no reputation worthy of mention.”

However, in 1953, Julian Mayfield's life took a radical turn which placed him squarely in the crosshairs of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He fell in love. Some time in the spring or summer of that year, Julian Mayfield became acquainted with a young doctor who was doing an internship at Sydenham Hospital in West Harlem. Dr. Ana Livia Cordero and Julian Mayfield soon became a couple, much to the surprise of their friends and families. Their relationship, marriage, and move to Puerto Rico fortuitously removed Mayfield from the space of “furious debate” in New York at the height of the blacklist. Despite his sentiments to the contrary, Mayfield had already attracted the attention of the FBI and his time on the island would become fodder for the Bureau's increasing interest in black modern writers.

\footnote{Mayfield also notes that he was asked to sign a loyalty oath in order to get an unnamed television drama produced and, “I grandly told everyone concerned to go to hell, but the amount under discussion was only about $2000.00.” See: Julian Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 23, 91.}
Invisible Island

Despite it being one of most productive periods of his life, Julian Mayfield's time in Puerto Rico (1954-1959) is perhaps the most poorly documented, both in terms of correspondence and writings, but also in terms of autobiographical accounts. This contradiction can be seen in both his personal life and the politics of Puerto Rico within U.S. Empire. In a handwritten biographical account of the island, entitled “La Boriqueña,” Mayfield recalled that, “[t]he tragedy of Puerto Rico may be perceived in a simple statistic: one out of every three Puerto Ricans lives in the United States. There must have been a million living in or near New York City, but I can't remember meeting any until I met my wife-to-be in 1953.”

Julian Mayfield’s time in Puerto Rico was also intertwined with his relationship with Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, but, aside from a handful of autobiographical mentions and correspondence, their relationship is almost entirely absent from his published work.

In his accounts of the island, Julian Mayfield notes its immediate impact on his perspective of race, color lines, and the marginality of colonial spaces, but Dr. Cordero generally appears a supporting character in Mayfield's personal and professional drama. This invisibility of Cordero in Mayfield's body of work reflects the ways in which Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States remains peripheral in historical perspectives on U.S. foreign policy, race relations, and political economy. “Puerto Rican invisibility” in which the island and its people are obscured from political, social, and cultural accounts of the era, is a useful

99 “La Borinqueña” is the name of the Puerto Rican national anthem. It was also the title of Chapter 9 of his autobiographical manuscript, but that chapter is not present in the Schomburg collection. See: Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” SCH, JMP, Box 1, Folder 12, 1.

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shorthand for this marginalization of the island historically and politically.\textsuperscript{100} This idea of invisibility is even more appropriate in discussing the absence of the island in a historical analysis of Mayfield's writing and in material about him, as save for minor references, its role is absent from biographical and historical accounts. Probing the historical relevance of Puerto Rico as a component of his radical education and his personal life offers insight into the ways in which the island should be regarded as anything but invisible in his political and intellectual biography. Rather, it was a space of radical ferment in which Mayfield came to see many of the flaws in communist ideology and began to turn toward a nationalist, anti-colonial, and, eventually, Third World perspective on global events.

Julian Mayfield's relationship with Dr. Cordero reflects his personal commitments to politics and how the space of Puerto Rico shaped his later ideological and intellectual work. Meeting by happenstance at the party of a friend's apartment on Central Park West. Mayfield recounted that he told his friend Ted Cole that, “I had just seen the woman I had decided to marry.” Dr. Ana Livia Cordero was, “an attractive, brilliant young woman who usually finished first at school” and she had graduated with honors from both the University of Puerto Rico at Rio Pedras and Columbia University. She was apparently married when they first met, “to a young poet who had been the boy-next-door when she was a child,” but, according to Mayfield, was already in the process of a divorce when their relationship began.\textsuperscript{101} Their courtship was brief. Her work as a medical doctor meant, “she was usually on

\textsuperscript{100} The idea of “Puerto Rican Invisibility” originates in the work of Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel, who have pointed to the, “general unawareness concerning American colonial history” among both scholars and the general public as evidence of said invisibility. Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel, Puerto Rican Jane: Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 22.

\textsuperscript{101} Mayfield, “La Borinqueña” 1.
the run, eating faster than anyone I ever knew.” Fortunately, Mayfield kept writers' hours and was available to spend time with her late at night, or early in the morning, and he recalled fondly their conversations at bar-b-cue joints along 125th Street. “Whenever we had a chance,” Mayfield recalled, “we talked and talked and talked, which would have been all night if it had stopped there.”\(^\text{102}\)

In early 1954, the couple decided to get married and this announcement not only worried her parents, but concerned Mayfield's friends. His friends “felt [he] was copping out of the class struggle” because they couple had decided to relocate to Puerto Rico so Cordero could finish her training.\(^\text{103}\) However, despite the obvious physical attraction, Mayfield recalled that her political commitments drew him to Cordero. She “had been involved in politics from her early years,” and her politics were such that she had even refused to attend her graduation from Columbia because Dwight D. Eisenhower was President of the university and, “she did not want to accept a diploma from a person for whom she had little respect.”\(^\text{104}\) This political sensibility ran in her family. Cordero's father, Rafael I. T. Cordero had been an economist and was appointed comptroller on the island by President Franklin Roosevelt. During the 1940s, when a series of student uprisings rocked the Rio Pedras campus, the elder Cordero publicly spoke in support of the students and, due to his appointment, the government was unable to remove him from his position.\(^\text{105}\) Don Rafael and Doña Vivi, Cordero's mother who was also named Ana Livia, couched their concern

\(^\text{102}\) Ibid., 1.


\(^\text{104}\) Mayfield, “Autobiography,” unnumbered page with the heading “Chapter Nine.”

over the upcoming nuptials in economic terms. “Although writing was respected,” Mayfield said of Puerto Rico, “it was considered more a hobby than a profession.” With her parents worried that he could not support her and his friends worried that he was leaving the “struggle,” the couple's decision to forge ahead suggests a great deal of affection. After leaving New York in March, they married in Puerto Rico on 6 November 1954.

Though he had no prospects when the couple arrived to Puerto Rico, Dr. Cordero's friends were able to help him find work once he had arrived. In his first job, Mayfield traveled the island conducting surveys on radio audiences for a marketing firm. “In this way I saw most of the towns on the island,” Mayfield recalled before he added, “and I encountered poverty on a level I had never imagined while I lived in the United States.” Notably, Mayfield uses the term “United States” here, despite Puerto Rico's status as a dependent territory of the U.S. While this might appear to be an oversight, it was one of the ways he expressed his sentiments toward Puerto Rican nationalism, even two decades later.

Though he asserted his familiarity with black working-class privation in Washington and the conditions facing native Hawai’ians in Honolulu, “there had been no place like El Fanquito where people lived in huts on stilts above greenish, brackish swamp and mud; no

106 Ibid., 2.

107 Correspondence from the time period also suggests that this relationship affected Mayfield's position in the CNA and prompted his resignation in February 1954. In a statement announcing his resignation, Mayfield decried the, “organized campaign of slanderous gossip directed against me.” He expressed further disappointment at the “petty gossip” and “personal malice” which he declared had, “no place among honorable men and women banded together in common struggle.” The statement does not mention Cordero, but I speculate that his relationship with Cordero during the final months of her marriage and subsequent divorce in late 1953, were related to the gossip that Mayfield was subject to. See: Julian Mayfield, “Statement of Resignation,” 12 February 1954, SCH, JMP, Box 7, Folder 13, 1.

108 “Certificado de Matrimonio,” filed 8 November 1954, SCH, JMP, Box 2, Folder 3, 1.

place like a slum edge of Caquas where pretty little black and brown-eyed kids romped in the ankle-deep open drainage which ran past their front doors after a heavy rainfall.” Using vivid imagery to link color with socioeconomic status, Mayfield’s observations challenged other African American travelers’ accounts of the lack of racial bias on the island. Despite the absence of formal segregation or a “color line” in Puerto Rico, Mayfield observed that integrated facilities nevertheless discriminated based on skin color, but couched rejection in socioeconomic terms.

Though the couple was poor, the post-war efforts to provide housing for Puerto Rico’s mushrooming population meant that they were able to live together as a married couple. They moved into a low-income housing project called Puerto Neuvo in the small town of Narrajito which lay in a hilly region nearly fifty kilometers from San Juan. The development they lived in was “acres and acres of little concrete houses with three small bedrooms [whose] uniformity was relieved by the individual tastes of the owners.” Though they only had “packing crates” for tables and a “pallet on the floor” for a bed, Mayfield’s recollections indicate that the couple was happy and very much in love. Dr. Cordero worked in a nearby hospital as Mayfield began adapting 417 into his debut novel, The Hit. Far from being a respite from the chaos and increasingly paranoid politics of New York, the island provided another space of confrontation and education to the writer. Governor Luis Munoz Marín's desire to portray Puerto Rico as a modern symbol of “safe” Cold War tourism

112 Ibid., 2.
obscured a harsh reality. Beneath the carefully preserved facades of Old San Juan’s shops and the flickering wrought iron gas lamps lighting the cobblestone streets, a seething resentment of Yankee imperialism bubbled beneath the surface.

It only took a few days of living in Puerto Rico for Cordero and Mayfield to acquaint themselves with the combative politics of the island. The evening after their arrival, the couple dined at home of César Iglesias and his wife Jane, who were friends of Dr. Cordero from her time at university in Rio Pedras. Two days later, the Miami News reported that a series of “sweeping police raids” resulted in the arrests of “40 nationalist party leaders and six communists.” The targets in these raids included several of the couple’s dinner companions, including their hostess Jane Iglesias, who was detained at the infamous La Princesa prison. Jane’s husband, César, and three of his associates, Juan Santos Rivera, Juan Saez Corales, and Pablo Garcia Rodriguez Cordero, escaped and remained on the run for several weeks before eventually turning themselves at various newspaper offices. “If you are a political prisoner it is safer that way,” Mayfield noted as he recounted this incident, “the reporters can attest to the state of your health before the cops go to work on your head.”

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113 Iglesias was the former Secretary of the Puerto Rican Communist Party (PCP), a fact that was not lost on Mayfield or the FBI agents from San Juan. Mayfield alludes several times to Ana Livia’s early radicalism, but does not go into detail about it. Work by Sandy Placido, whose research has uncovered Cordero’s papers and deposited them at Harvard, will shed light on that subject. One fact that is clear is that her participation in radical politics was aided by her father’s position as a Roosevelt-appointed auditor and comptroller on the island. Don Rafael I. T. Cordero’s job protected the family from political retribution from the radical politics of Ana Livia and her mother. See: Julian Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” 1.


Though this brush with political repression later contributed to arguments regarding the state of political activism in the mainland United States, he kept himself clear of direct political involvement with the increasingly violent nationalist movement.

The crackdown on nationalist political activity in Puerto Rico that Mayfield witnessed was a product of the post-war explosion of nationalist sentiments throughout the colonial world. In the case of Puerto Rico, it had a more immediate cause in the release of Pedro Albizu Campos in 1947. Born in 1891, Campos was, by the early 1930s, the leading figure in the Puerto Rican independence movement. His embrace of violent spectacle as resistance to imperialism dated back to 1935 when four demonstrators were gunned down by police at a student nationalist rally. Campos vowed in a subsequent speech that, “the present imperialist policies which want to dissolve nationalism through terror and assassination is a provocation and an act of imperialist foolishness aimed at satisfying a handful of North American corporations.”

In July 1936, Campos was convicted of conspiracy to overthrow the United States government and sentenced to ten years in prison. Despite being held at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary during the Ponce Massacre of 21 March 1937, Campos pledged to kill a continental American citizen in retribution for every nationalist killed after he learned of the massacre. His sentence was later increased to

116 Pedro Albizu Campos, “Puerto Rican Nationalism,” _La Conciencia nacional puertorriqueña_, edited by Manuel Maldonado-Denis (Siglo Veintiuno Editores, Mexico City, 1972), 44–45; Translation by author.

117 The Ponce Massacre resulted in nineteen deaths and dozens of injuries after police opened fire into a large crowd of nationalist demonstrators. In spite of early claims by FDR-appointed Governor Blanton Winship that the island’s police had acted, “with great restraint” and “in self defense,” the findings of the Hays Commission concluded that, “[t]he facts show that the affair of March 21 in Ponce was a "MASSACRE."” (emphasis in original). See: Federico Ribes Tovar, _Albizu Campos: Puerto Rican Revolutionary_ (New York: Plus Ultra Educational Publishers, 1971); Nelson A. Denis, _War against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America’s Colony_ (New York: Nation Books, 2015), 52–4; _The Birth of Caribbean Civilisation: A Century of Ideas_.
twenty-five years for sedition. By the late 1940s, the federal government quietly reduced his sentence and Campos was released in the fall of 1947. He wasted no time in picking up right where he had left off.

The violence of the post-war nationalist movement and the obscurity of two violent incidents in the mainland United States related to it emphasizes the invisibility of Puerto Rico in historical narratives of the post-war United States. It also provides context for the increased police persecution of nationalists on the island when Mayfield and Cordero arrived in 1954. In 1950, an assassination attempt was made on by two Puerto Rican nationalists on President Truman just blocks from the White House.\textsuperscript{118} Truman was uninjured, but one of the attackers and a police officer were killed in what has become known as “the biggest gunfight in Secret Service history,” despite the violence lasting less than a minute.\textsuperscript{119} The incident drew Truman’s attention to the island, but it appears to have left policy largely unaltered.

\textit{About Culture and Identity, Nation and Society}, Edited by O. Nigel Bolland (Kingston, Jamaica; Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2004).

\textsuperscript{118} On 31 October 1950, nationalist groups organized simultaneous, small-scale revolts across the country. The following day, 1 November 1950, two nationalists living in the United States, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola, approached President Truman’s temporary residence, Blair House. Located on Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest of the White House, Blair House was the executive mansion’s official guest residence and Truman was residing there while the White House was in the midst of renovations. Collazo and Torresola approached the house in broad daylight as President Truman napped on the second floor, and attacked officers and Secret Service agents guarding him, killing one and wounding three. Torresola was shot and killed along with White House police officer Leslie W. Coffelt, but Collazo survived to be captured. Collazo recovered and stood trial in Federal court. His death sentence was commuted by Truman in 1952 and he was freed in 1979 by President Carter after which he returned to Puerto Rico. He died in 1994. See: “400 in Puerto Rico Lay Down All Arms: Puerto Rican Nationalist Leader Arrested,” \textit{New York Times}, 3 November 1950, 1; Scott P. Johnson, \textit{Trials of the Century: An Encyclopedia of Popular Culture and Law}\textsuperscript{1}: 388; Ronald Kessler, \textit{In the President’s Secret Service} (New York: Random House, 2010), 9; Stephen Hunter and John Bainbridge, Jr., \textit{American Gunfight: The Plot To Kill Harry Truman – And The Shoot-Out That Stopped It} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 251.

\textsuperscript{119} The full quote was, “[t]he biggest gunfight in Secret Service history was over in forty seconds. A total of twenty-seven shots had been fired.” See: Kessler, \textit{In the President’s Secret Service}, 8.
It took another incident to impel the United States government to take action. On 1 March 1954, four Puerto Rican nationalists smuggled several semiautomatic pistols and a submachine gun into the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C. After unfurling a giant Puerto Rican flag from the “Ladies Balcony” overlooking the House floor, the nationalists fired hundreds of bullets into the United States House of Representatives which was in session debating an immigration bill. Though no one was killed, five Representatives were wounded in the attack. Upon being arrested, one of the nationalists, Lolita Lebrón reportedly yelled, “I did not come to kill anyone, I came to die for Puerto Rico!” The police crackdown which Mayfield witnessed upon his arrival in Puerto Rico was a direct response to these violent incidents. Both the FBI and island law enforcement began surveilling and imprisoning nationalists at a higher rate than at any time since the 1930s.

In addition to the crackdown on nationalists, Puerto Rico was also in the midst of a rapid economic and social transformation in the mid-1950s which contributed to the growth of the nationalist movement. The sugar industry, which had been the largest employer and owned the majority of the land on the island, had become the focus of reformist policies initiated by the islands governors beginning in the 1930s. Beginning with Governor Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. in 1929, successive governors, including Blanton Winship and Rexford Tugwell, “enacted policies to stifle the growth of large cane-farms.” The result of

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120 Puerto Rican nationalists Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Andres Figueroa Cordero, and Irving Flores Rodriguez, entered the observation deck known as the Ladies Gallery and unfurled a Puerto Rican flag while Lebrón shouted "¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre!" The group fired over thirty shots from semiautomatic weapons at the 240 Representatives of the 83rd U.S. Congress. In the midst of debating an immigration bill when the shooting began, five Representatives were wounded in the attack, which was quickly broken up by Capitol Security. Alvin M. Bentley (R-MI), was shot in the chest, Clifford Davis (D-TN), was shot in the leg, Ben F. Jensen (R-IA), was shot in the back. George Hyde Fallon (D-MD) and Kenneth A. Roberts (D-AL) were also injured in the attack. See: Clayton Knowless, “Five Congressmen Shot in House by 3 Puerto Rican Nationalists; Bullets Spray from Gallery,” New York Times, 2 March 1954, 1.
these policies, economists argue, was that, “starting in the late 1930s, farm size fell, mechanization of farms essentially ceased, and the Puerto Rican sugar industry’s productivity (relative to Louisiana) rapidly declined until the industry collapsed.” The collapse of the sugar industry lead to increased out-migration, reflecting Mayfield’s observation in the 1950s that nearly a third of the island's inhabitants were now living in the mainland United States.

At the beginning of the 1950s many nationalists blamed Marín for increasing unemployment and a sluggish economy and, though Marín inherited a difficult economic situation, his response generated violent dissent among the island's inhabitants. In 1948, the previous governor, Jesús T. Piñero, implemented a law which criminalized nationalist advocacy, activism, and discourse. The Ley de la Mordaza, also known as the “Gag Law” or the “Little Smith Act,” made it illegal to advocate the overthrow of the government. According to legal scholar David M. Helfeld, the law was designed specifically to eliminate the leaders of the nationalist and independence movements and to intimidate their followers. The Ley de la Mordaza made it illegal to display or own a Puerto Rican flag, to speak out or

121 In a 2012 report entitled about the decline of the Puerto Rican sugar industry, researchers Benjamin Bridgman (Bureau of Economic Analysis), Michael Maio (University of Minnesota and Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis), and James A. Schmitz, Jr. (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis) argued that, “[i]n the 1930s and 1940s, the local Puerto Rican government enacted policies to stifle the growth of large cane-farms. As a result, starting in the late 1930s, farm size fell, mechanization of farms essentially ceased, and the Puerto Rican sugar industry’s productivity (relative to Louisiana) rapidly declined until the industry collapsed.” See: James A. Schmitz, Jr., Arilton Teixeira, Benjamin Bridgman, Michael Maio, Staff Report 477, “What Ever Happened to the Puerto Rican Sugar Manufacturing Industry?” <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/research/staff-reports/what-ever-happened-to-the-puerto-rican-sugar-manufacturing-industry> Accessed 14 October 2016.

122 The Ley De la Mordaza, also known as the “Gag Law” and “the little Smith Act,” was officially known as Law 53 of 1948. The law remained in effect until 1957, when it was repealed based on its violation of freedom of speech within Title II of the Puerto Rican Constitution and the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. See: Pedro A. Malave, America’s Colony: The Political and Cultural Conflict between the United States and Puerto Rico (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 93.

write on the subject independence, to meet with anyone or organized an assembly in favor of Puerto Rican independence, or even to sing a patriotic song. Modeled after the Smith Act (1940), the “Gag Law” infuriated nationalists and directly contributed to the rebirth of the nationalist movement. Marín's response to protests and sporadic violence, Mayfield concluded, was simply “to lock everybody up, communists, nationalists, socialists alike, anybody who didn't like the government.”

Mayfield, familiar with the ways in which the Smith Act had been used to attack communists and Leftists in the United States, also saw it as part of a broader project to suppress Puerto Rican culture. In the autobiographical “La Boriqueña,” Mayfield noted that in addition to manufactured goods, nationalists objected to cultural imports from the mainland. U.S. television shows, films, dress, and pop culture were cited as examples of “Yankee Imperialism” which undermined local culture, causing young people, in Mayfield's words, to “emulate the youth of the colonial power.” This cultural hegemony was exacerbated by the influx of industry owned by mainland Americans. Ironically, the out-migration that followed actually helped keep the nationalist movement alive. Many nationalists fled in order to pursue a nationalist agenda, as public displays of Puerto Rican nationalism were not banned in cities like Chicago or New York. Thus, restrictive laws and an inequitable relationship with the federal government in Washington not only prevented Puerto Ricans from developing their own industries, but also in even acknowledging their own culture.

124 Mayfield, “La Borinqueña,” 2; The Smith Act was also known as the The Alien Registration Act of 1940. It was passed by the 76th United States Congress, 3d session, ch. 439, 54 Stat. 670, 18 U.S.C. § 2385.

Though limited in scope, Mayfield's observations about the island recognized the ways in which colonial subjugation combined with racial and economic repression to shape the high rates of poverty and economic dislocation on the island. These disparities also catalyzed a nationalist movement which Mayfield compared favorably to the political activism he had been a part of in New York. “The difference (in those days) between U.S. radicals and those in the Caribbean and Latin America,” Mayfield wrote, “was that nearly everyone in the latter group had been in prison several times and took it as a matter of course.” Unlike Communists and black nationalists in New York, Mayfield elaborated, “most Latin American revolutionaries do not expect their relatives and comrades to knock themselves out raising bail to get them out of prison.”126 The reason for the violent tactics of the nationalists, Mayfield implied, was that the desperate circumstances and foreign domination engendered a more violent and aggressive nationalist movement.

Despite these words, Mayfield was decidedly inactive in politics and nationalist politics during his time in Puerto Rico. In 1956, Dr. Cordero became pregnant with the couple's first child. That same year, Mayfield was hired by William J. Dorvillier, a veteran newspaper editor who had run the Puerto Rican World Journal from 1940 to 1945. Dorvillier restarted the publication in 1956 and gave Mayfield a position as a theater critic. Though it was the only English language newspaper on the island, the Puerto Rican World Journal did poorly and, though he personally favored the nationalist cause, Dorvillier and his columnists were circumspect about publicly supporting Campos. Mayfield's columns, seven of them in total, lacked any political content. Rather, they provided light-hearted reviews of theatrical

126 Ibid., 3.
productions touring the island. That same year, Mayfield was hired at the English-language radio station WHOA, which broadcast news and discussion programs. In spite of these jobs and the birth of his son, Rafael, in April 1957, Mayfield still found time to write two novels before the family departed the island in 1959.

Figure 1: Julian Mayfield holding his infant son, Rafael Mayfield, in Naranjito, Puerto Rico

In spite of the invisibility of Puerto Rico and Dr. Cordero in Mayfield's autobiographical accounts, there is one space in Mayfield's biography in which the island was centered, though that did not originate with him. Instead, it was a case of his political associations catching up with him. In mid-1954, Julian Mayfield came to the attention of the FBI for his work with the CNA and his performance in plays written and directed by the men and women of the Black Cultural Left in Harlem. In contrast to Mayfield's carefully curated self-narrative, in which Puerto Rico is remanded to the margins, the Bureau's early files on the writer-activist were overwhelmingly concerned with the potential of his
associations with Puerto Rican nationalists, independentistas, and the Puerto Rican Communist Party (PCP), making the FBI's chronicle of Mayfield's time on the island more complete than his own reminiscences.

The FB Eye Blues

Though Julian Mayfield came under surveillance by the FBI due to his political and artistic activities in New York, it was in Puerto Rico where the earliest observations and discussions of his politics by the state were made. This concerted effort to observe, influence, and disrupt the production of African American literature shaped its construction between the 1950s and the 1970s. It also had salutatory effects on Afro-Diasporic solidarity, influencing the development of national and global black consciousness as African American writers, aware of their surveillance, began to resent the presence of the FBI. Contextualized with Mayfield's own story, the idea that the Bureau's surveillance influenced the production of black writing highlights other relevant aspects of Afro-Diasporic intellectual and political projects originating in the United States.

In particular, the ways in which radical African Americans were moving through the African Diaspora seeking solidarity and learning from other African-descended peoples had emerged as a chief concern in the FBI files on Mayfield. These connections, agents worried, would have a negative impact on U.S. State Department efforts to discourage nationalist and

127 English professor William Maxwell's observed that, “In the manner of a state museum the FBI collected, preserved, and educationally labeled works of black art, exhibiting foreign objects it intended to defang but came to emulate.” By applying literary analytical techniques to the memos and writings produced by the FBI regarding modern black writers, Maxwell points to the ways that African American writing was, in fact, a dialogue between black writers and the state, such that each influenced the other in novel and often unseen ways. Julian Mayfield, as one of the writers whom Maxwell concerns himself, is, along with James Baldwin, Fank London Brown, Langston Hughes, Alice Childress, and Alice Windom, show the ways in which the FBI influenced black literature in ways reminiscent of the ways the Bureau shaped the strategies and tactics of the Civil Rights Movement. See: Maxwell, F.B. Eyes, 11.
independence movements from seeking aid and close relationships with the Soviet Union even as it affected the ways in which domestic activists considered civil rights struggles. By keeping abreast of such literature, Director Hoover and his subordinates believed that they could get a head start on blunting the influence of these works before they were published.

Like FBI files on contemporary writers, including James Baldwin, Chester Himes, John O. Killens, Harold W. Cruse, and Frank London Brown, memos and reports contained in Julian Mayfield's FBI were typical in that they reflected common tactics employed by the Bureau. Labeled a “Security Matter-C,” when Mayfield's presence in Puerto Rico became known, the Bureau was keen to discover his links to nationalists because it considered him a potential threat. In the first memo of his FBI file, dated 16 August 1954, the bureau reported on his background, his family, his time in the military, and his stint at Lincoln. The FBI's investigation revealed no evidence of early radicalism, however, they did conclude that Mayfield had embraced “the communist line” in New York. These early reports in the file lacked any analysis and functioned as background of Mayfield's activities until that point, with short descriptions of his work on the Committee for the Negro in the Arts, Freedom, and the appearance of his name in the Daily Worker for advocating for “various left wing causes.” The agents in the Washington Field Office (WFO) also conducted background

128 C for “Communist.”

129 According to the memo, Mayfield was reported to be the “Chairman of the Subcommittee on Unemployment, Committee for Negro in the Arts, 1951; appeared in a play under auspices of CRC [Civil Rights Congress], 1953; appeared in musical presented at Camp Unity, 1953; was staff writer at Camp Unity Interracial Gala Program, 1953; active on behalf of WILLIE MCGEE, 1951; spoke at a rally for the defense of V. J. Jerome, 1953; participated in a People's Rights Party Nominating Petition for George Blake Channey, 1953; enrolled with ALP, 1952; spoke at conference called by the NY Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, 1951; denounced American intervention in Korea, 1950; took part in places and activities which were against “witchhunting” and handling of prisoner of war issue.” See: Julian Mayfield FBI File, Memo dated 18 February 1955, 1–3.
checks on his father and his mother and even included Mayfield's medical records and a reported arrest at the age of eleven. The agent[s] writing the report made note of his marital status—single—and current address on West 99th Street, New York, without realizing that he had already left the country. A follow-up report filed by agents in the San Juan Office (SJO) in June of 1955 notified the Bureau of Mayfield's whereabouts in Puerto Rico, his marriage, and his address. The SJO subsequently conducted interviews with his neighbors and initiated surveillance of Mayfield and Dr. Cordero's home in Naranjito.

Writing by black authors was a priority for Hoover's agents, and Mayfield's work was a subject of interest for the SJO agents who surveilled him. Information gathered by an unknown informant, designated T2 in the files, stated, “the subject stayed in his house most of the time and appeared to occupy much of his time by typing.” The informant “did not know what material the subject was typing,” but recommended that agents find a way to do so. In July, an agent informed the Washington office that that he had made some recordings of Mayfield on the radio in New York which the Mayfield was “making a joke” of the American way of life. The agent stated that he had mailed the recordings to Washington, but the file makes no further mention of them. Agents soon discovered that Mayfield was employed as a radio announcer for WHOA and was writing for “a Puerto Rican newspaper,” but the file did not identify which one.

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130 According to his FBI file, Mayfield missed almost an entire year of school (between November 1940 and September 1941) due to a rheumatic heart, a consequence of rheumatic fever. The file also included an arrest for larceny and “depredation of private property” on 3 April 1940. Records from Mayfield's military service include a diagnosis of a duodenal ulcer, the reason for his discharge in 1947. See: Julian Mayfield FBI File, SAC WFO, WFO 100-30570, 3.

Consequently, the Bureau's focus shifted to his association with the local communist party and the potential for radical cross-pollination. Finding no evidence of his association with known Puerto Rican Communist Party (Partido Communista Puertorriqueno—PCP) members, SJO agents doggedly continued surveillance throughout 1955 and 1956. Further reports described Mayfield as unemployed and linked him to the Nationalists arrested following the dinner party he and Dr. Cordero had attended in March 1954. Mayfield's files received wider distribution in 1956, when a meeting with an acquaintance from New York, Esther Rand, briefly connected him to a Soviet Spy Ring. However, this lead proved short-lived and the agents did not pursue Mayfield's relationship with Rand any further. This information-gathering was not without its consequences. Subsequent reports indicated that the agents conducting interviews were drawing unwanted attention to themselves. In questioning neighbors, acquaintances, and previous superiors, Mayfield became aware that he was the subject of scrutiny.

132 While that report noted Mayfield's connection with Juan Saez Corales, Pablo Garcia Rodriguez, and Ramon Mirabel Carrion though they did not seem to recognize any connection with Iglesias, ironic given it was Cesar and Jane Iglesias that hosted the party. See: Ibid., 47.

133 The spy ring was known as “Mocase” based on the association with Boris Morros, a Hollywood producer, CPUSA member, and FBI double agent. Mayfield came to be associated with “Mocase” due to a meeting with Esther Rand. According to the FBI, Mayfield met with Rand and asked her to talk up some of his plays in New York. The origin of Mayfield's friendship with Rand is unknown, but the context suggests she was associated with the New York theater business. Rand was known to the FBI as an associate of Jacob Albam, Robert Soble (Soblen), his brother Jack Soble, and Jack's wife Myra who were all convicted of conspiracy to receive and obtain national defense information and transmit same to foreign government, 18 U.S.C. § 793. The Bureau could not link Mayfield to the Sobles, and did not pursue that connection any further. In 1957, Myra and Jack were sentenced to five and a half and seven years in prison, respectively, and Jack died soon after his release in 1967. Myra Soble was later pardoned by George H. W. Bush in 1991. Robert Soble committed suicide in London as he was being deported back to the United States after an unsuccessful attempt suicide attempt and having sought asylum in Israel. The Sobles and Albam were all convicted based on testimony from Boris Morros. See: Boris Morros, My Ten Years as a Counter-Spy (London: Werner Laurie, 1959); Edward Ranzal, “Brother of Soble Is Seized As a Wartime Soviet Spy: Psychiatrist Is Linked to Ring Headed by Beria,” New York Times, 30 November 1960, 1; Robert Merry, “Soblen Death Suicide, Says British Jury: How Spy Got Pills Is Still Mystery,” Chicago Daily Tribune (1923–1963), 10 October 1962, 24; Jennet Conant, A Covert Affair (New York City: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 326.
Agents did not approach Mayfield directly, though a memo absent from the file suggests that they asked for permission to do so. A strongly worded rejection, addressed to the special agent who authored an apparent follow-up to the August report, denied the request of that agent to interview Mayfield based on the agents' apparent incompetence in gathering material on him. “Authority to interview the subject is denied,” the memo read. “You do not know the subject's employment for the past three years, nor the subject's marital status.” This rebuke, apparently from somewhere high up in FBI headquarters, was coupled with instructions. “Make an effort to develop new sources who would be in a position to furnish information to you concerning his activities.” Once this additional investigation was complete, the memo concluded, “you may wish to request again authority for an interview.”134 But no further request to interview Mayfield was found in the files and memos became scare after 1957.

This reduction in surveillance reflects due to Mayfield's lack of political activity on the island. Busy with his new family, his jobs as a radio announcer and a theater critic, Mayfield also published his first novel in 1957, followed quickly by a second in 1958. The Hit (1957) and The Long Night (1958), both published by Vanguard Press in New York, received favorable reviews from critics, including Langston Hughes.135 Writing in the New York Herald Tribune, Hughes called The Hit, “[a] powerful little novel . . . of unusual interest.” Mayfield's debut novel examined a momentous day in the lives of the Cooley family. The protagonist, Hubert Cooley, is a deeply unhappy man who plays the numbers every day daydreams about

135 It was Mayfield's fellow Harlem Writer's Guild alumnus John H. Clarke who brought these books to editors at Vanguard.
“the hit” that will make him rich so that he can leave his wife and run away to San Francisco with a woman from their church.\textsuperscript{136} With “simple straightforward prose,” the novel’s characterization of winning at the numbers is an allusion to African Americans’ interminable wait to access the “American Dream.”\textsuperscript{137} Like that dream, when Hubert's number does “hit,” the man who ran his numbers bank packs up and leaves town. The novel closes on Hubert waiting on his stoop, bags packed, having already told his wife he was leaving, with no sign of the winnings that he so desperately needs to begin his life again.\textsuperscript{138} Though Mayfield wrote both \textit{The Hit} and \textit{The Long Night} in Puerto Rico, they are more reflective of Mayfield's time in Harlem and make only passing mention of Caribbean themes.\textsuperscript{139}

Though he wrote little in the way of political prose during his time on Puerto Rico, Mayfield's shrewd conception of what constituted political action, revolution, and anti-

\textsuperscript{136} The “Numbers Game” or the “Numbers Racket” was an informal gambling system prominent in New York during the first half of the twentieth century. The “numbers” originated at the New York Clearing House on Cedar Street in Lower Manhattan which posted two figures that were combined each day in order to derive the winning number. Those figures were typically the daily clearances among member banks of the exchange and the other was the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's credit balance. New York residents could bet as little as a penny and as much as a few dollars on a three-digit number. 417, the title of Mayfield’s original play, was the winning number that protagonist Hubert Cooley bet each day. “Hitting the number” was winning. See: Shane White, Stephen Garton, Stephen Robertson, Graham White, \textit{Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem Between the Wars} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).


\textsuperscript{138} Like \textit{The Hit}, \textit{The Long Night}’s story revolved around the numbers racket. That story had as its protagonists young Steely Brown who was sent by his mother to pick up her winnings so that she can pay rent. When Steely is robbed on his way home, he spends the rest of the night desperately searching for a way to bring home the money that his mother needs. See: Julian Mayfield, \textit{The Hit} (New York: Vanguard Press, 1957); Julian Mayfield, \textit{The Long Night} (New York: Vanguard Press, 1958).

\textsuperscript{139} One exception is a single mention of Touissant L’Ouverture in \textit{The Long Night} and the character of “Black Papa.” “Black Papa,” was a homeless man who crosses protagonist Steely Brown's path twice during the novel chanting what to Steely appears to be gibberish. However, the words, “Cina, Cina, Cina Dogwe sang, cina lo-ge,” which Mayfield spells out in the text, are in fact Haitian Kreyol and part of songs sung in praise of loa of the seas, Agwe. This marks “Black Papa” as an Afro-Caribbean figure embedded within mid-century Harlem. See: Mayfield, \textit{The Long Night}, 37, 47; Steven Belletto, “Julian Mayfield and Alternative Civil Rights Literatures,” \textit{Twentieth-Century Literature}, Duke University Press 63, no. 2 (June 2017): 125.
colonial activism underwent important changes during this time period. Puerto Rico was not a space of “furious debate” or radical ferment in the ways that the Harlem offices of Freedom had been, but his observations about the hierarchical nature of the “color line” in an ostensibly colorblind space resonated with him in much the same as his experiences at Camp Unity.

The positions he articulated upon his return to New York illustrates the influence of his Puerto Rican sojourn and his brush with the anti-colonial, nationalist politics on the island. Over time, Mayfield began to regard the struggles for independence in Puerto Rico as elements of larger projects which linked the Caribbean to Africa and to the United States, a position that echoed the arguments that Cordero had articulated since they met. Connected by race and organized by economic power, the solution to these interconnected problems was, for Mayfield, the acquisition of political power. This was evidenced in the similarities between the nationalist struggles in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico during the 1950s and 1960s, a subject that the FBI recognized as well.¹⁴⁰

“The Song of Freedom Must Prevail”

Following his relocation to New York in early 1959, Mayfield gave a presentation in which he criticized contemporary African American politics through literature. The talk,

¹⁴⁰ In a series of hearings in the fall of 1959, held in both New York and San Juan, the House Un-American Activities Committee heard testimony from undercover New York City Police investigators about the various Puerto Rican nationalist and Communist groups organizing. Notably, one Detective Mildred Blauvelt testified that, “the Boro Hall Section [of the Communist Party] would devote itself to four major concentrations, one of them being activity among the Puerto Ricans, the others being longshore, Negroes, and the industries.” The fact that both the NYPD, the House of Representatives, and the FBI connected Puerto Rican and African American activist groups prefigures the cross-pollination of radical groups like the Young Lords in the 1960s and 1970s and suggests that the history of linkages between radical, nationalist Puerto Ricans and African Americans would be illuminated by further study. See: Communist Activities Among Puerto Ricans in New York City and Puerto Rico, Committee on Un-American Activities (Government Printing Office; Washington, 1960), 1528–1529.
entitled “Into the Mainstream and Oblivion,” considered the ways in which the combination of international and domestic events meant that, “a social climate is being created wherein . . . [the Negro] may win the trappings of freedom that other citizens already take for granted.” Emphasizing the hollow nature of these advancements in desegregation, Mayfield cautioned the writer not to, “align himself totally to the objectives of the dominant sections of the American nation.”141 As one of a number of veterans of *Freedom* present at the conference, which included Lorraine Hansberry, John O. Killens, and Sarah E. Wright, Mayfield offered both a dire warning and a call to action.

Beginning with his cross-country journey with *Lost and the Stars* and concluding with a strident denunciation of the politics of integration, Mayfield's writing following his return to New York reflected the sum total of his experiences in the intervening nine years. His prose took on a newfound urgency in the wake of increasing violence against African Americans in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Little Rock. His time in Puerto Rico corresponded with the slow ascendance of civil rights as the dominant form of African American politics in the United States, but the NAACP and SCLC’s focus on the symbolic value of integrating public accommodations, Mayfield believed, did not adequately address the critical and related issues of economics, social class, and culture. At best, he argued, these trappings would yield only token change. At the 1959 AMSAC conference, Mayfield disputed this idea that desegregation of public accommodations would bring about

141 Mayfield, “Into the Mainstream and Oblivion,” 33.
substantive change vehemently, citing the limited acceptance as leading to cultural marginalization and “submersion” into the American melting pot.142

The shot Julian Mayfield fired across the bow of what he labeled an “insoluble dilemma” was a piece of narrative fiction exploring the impact of this symbolic strategy in striking detail.143 Making the top-down approach of the NAACP and the SCLC the fulcrum upon which the central plot pivoted, Mayfield emphasized the inability of school integration to challenge the social and historical forces that kept African Americans politically marginalized, mired in poverty, and vulnerable to white violent reprisals. This novel, The Grand Parade, was published in January 1961, and it challenged the solutions to racial oppression and economic inequality offered by liberals, white and black alike. At the same time, the internationalist consciousness that had been shaped by Mayfield's time in Puerto Rico was joined to a new black nationalism, in which the struggle of African Americans was likened to those in Algeria, Ghana, and South Africa.

English Professor James Emmanuel, writing in 1968, argued that “Into the Mainstream and Oblivion” prefigured “a decade of insistence by American black men that the varied preciousness of their group identity be publicly recognized and turned into racial project.”144 However, the short introduction to Mayfield's piece in the volume, Dark

142 Mayfield, “Into the Mainstream and Oblivion,” 34.

143 Ibid., 31.

Symphony, not only erased Mayfield's past association with the Communist Party, but made scant mention of his time on Puerto Rico. These erasures of the spaces and narratives of Mayfield's development as a radical writer consumed with the mission of sharing political art has obscured the historical development of his radical perspective.

It is in the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is the ultimately only the source of all culture.
—Frantz Fanon

Nothing succeeds like power—the ability to control votes, money, and jobs—and nothing fails like the man, group, or party that controls nothing.
—Julian Mayfield

With a plot that revolved around a school integration crisis in a fictional American city, Julian Mayfield's third novel, The Grand Parade, laid bare the political machinations that lurked beneath public articulations of racial integration strategies in the post-Brown United States. In the final pages of the book, the city's white mayor personally escorted black schoolchildren into the previously white school building to keep them safe from the violent mob of protestors and counter-protestors that lined the sidewalk. In defiance of the local White Protection Council, which had attracted large group of well-organized demonstrators, Mayor Douglas Taylor was able to stave off violence until the children were safely inside, but lost his life soon after. In contrast to the well-organized demonstrators, the counter-demonstrators who were arranged against them were an ad hoc affair, made up mostly of parents and relatives hoping to protect their children. Notably absent from Mayfield's narrative was any organized resistance to the increasingly vocal and violent proponents of segregation, some of whom had arrived from out of state.

In positioning the city's black leadership as ineffectual bystanders in what was ostensibly their struggle, Mayfield continued with the themes he developed in “Into the

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1 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 180.
Mainstream and Oblivion.” Deploying a trenchant critique of traditional leadership in the African American community through narrative fiction, Mayfield would also write a scathing indictment of said leadership in Commentary magazine shortly after the novel was published. In that article he warned that the, “traditional Negro leadership . . . largely middle class in origin and orientation,” was, “in danger of losing its claim to speak for the masses of Negroes.”3 Despite this dispiriting portrait of integration and black political marginalization, Mayfield's novel was hailed by some critics as, “an objective view of the racial crisis.”4 While the novel sold poorly and was reprinted only once, Mayfield's critical portrait of the asymmetrical nature of alliances between ambitious white liberals and black elites offers historians perspective on the artistic components of the explosion of grassroots organizing and up-from-below movements that emerged in the early 1960s.5

In an interview with the architect of “New Journalism,” Tom Wolfe, in the Spring of 1960 Mayfield sketched the conceptual outlines of what would become The Grand Parade. The interview, which Wolfe quoted in an article entitled “Negro Writers View Lag in their Literature,” focused on the liberal discomfort with the black social identities that informed post-war black modernist writing. Critics, Mayfield told Wolfe, did not seem to notice or care when William Faulkner or Sean O'Casey wrote stories embedded with white Southern or Irish themes. However, black writers who had hopes of critical and popular success

5 The Grand Parade was retitled Nowhere Street and reprinted as a paperback in 1963 by Warner Paperback Library.
received the same dictate from white publishers and editors: “don't confine your work to Negro themes.”

That the social identity of white writers was indistinguishable from their individual identity was taken as a given. Yet, for black writers the two appeared incompatible—at least where white critics were concerned. “Into the Mainstream and Oblivion” identified this contradiction as “an insoluble dilemma—a pressure from all sides to direct [the black writer's] work into the mainstream of American literature.” That mainstream, Mayfield and many of his peers argued, put black modernist writers in an intractable position. Either they refrain from accurately portraying their experiences, denying themselves in the process, or they risk alienating audiences, critics, and publishers.

Not only did this American literary mainstream demand artistic and political conformity, but Mayfield argued that this was evidence that it demanded psychological acquiescence to white supremacy. In his comments to Wolfe, Mayfield illuminates Cedric J. Robinson's subsequent observation that white liberals were unaware that the struggle over post-war black writing was “a political event, one involving the American literary establishment's use of its power and resources to select the 'authentic' voice of Black literature.” As Mayfield explained, the “American literary mainstream” demanded nothing less than, “the integration of the Negro personality with the white personality.”

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8 Wolfe, “Negro Writers View Lag in their Literature,” A9.
Despite these strictures, the novel Mayfield published in 1961 paradoxically fulfilled editors and publishers' demands to resist writing about “Negro themes” even as it offered a close look at the contradictions and forces that gave birth to post-war African American politics and social identity. This novel's plot and its construction, read alongside Mayfield's embrace of armed self-defense and developing transnational activism, illuminate an important component of black radical thought at the beginning of the sixties: the interconnection art with new black nationalist movements, black internationalism, and the growth of Black Power and civil rights as social movements.

Examining the development of this black consciousness through the lens of *The Grand Parade*, this chapter historicizes the novel as a key element in Mayfield's transformation from an up-and-coming “Negro novelist” to a transnational Leftist dissident who would spend much of the next decade in exile. It also offers a nuanced account of the ways white liberals shaped the tactics and strategies of civil rights efforts. Until recently, Mayfield's activism between 1959 and 1961 has overshadowed his literary contributions. Historians' writing on the survivals of the Black Left, the development of Third World Solidarity movements, and the roots of Black Power have leaned heavily on Mayfield's archive, but few scholars have examined the sprawling, 448-page novel and its incisive critique of integration politics.

That Mayfield spend much these two years working on a novel on the political travails of a medium-sized American city demands a more thorough analysis, especially considering the context in which it was written. Historicizing the novel's construction and its contribution to current historiographical trends also points to the ways that Mayfield's developing nationalism was rooted in his frustration with post-war liberalism's role in
shaping the conditions for African American Civil Rights Movements, limiting methods and strategies employed by activists. Additionally, *The Grand Parade* offers two significant insights into scholarly interventions into the history of the Civil Rights Movement over the last two decades. The first is the novel's setting, which highlighted the unique expressions of racial justice movements beyond the Deep South. The second is the effect that the marginalization and persecution of the organized American Left had on the Civil Rights Movement. These historiographic contributions would not be recognized in scholarship

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9 Mayfield’s look at a freedom struggles outside of the Deep South foreshadowed an important historiographical shift in the early 2000s. In 2008’s *Sweet Land of Liberty*, Tom Sugrue called for scholars to look beyond the “spectacle” of civil rights struggles into the South and “bring the North back in” to accounts of freedom struggles. Subsequent work on the Northeast, Midwest, and far West have now appeared from historians such as Nishani Frazier, Matthew Delmont, Mark Speltz, and Martha Biondi whose work shows the importance of considering of place and region in histories of black freedom struggles. The importance of place is also something that Sundiata Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang have called for in the corrective to “The Long Civil Rights Movement” thesis. In their article entitled, “The Long Movement as Vampire,” they emphasize the ways in which scholarship that dissolves important spatial, temporal, and intellectual boundaries ignores “the role of space and political economy in shaping specific, historically bound modes of social interaction.” Not only is the history of activism intimately related to the spatial conditions in which it occurs, but intellectual and artistic production are also indebted to and influenced by the spatial conditions of their creation. See: Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Matthew F. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016); Nishani Frazier, *Harambee City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism* (Fayetteville, AR, University of Arkansas Press, 2017); Mark Speltz, *North of Dixie: Civil Rights Photography Beyond the South* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008); Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Yohuru R. Williams, *Rethinking the Black Freedom Movement. American Social and Political Movements of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

10 Since the late 1990s, historians have begun to re-examine the influence of the Left on the Civil Rights Movement, connecting the movement that arose in the wake of the *Brown* decision to Leftist interracial organizing that began after Red Summer in 1919. Robert Korstad argued that interracial labor movements in the South linked civil rights and labor rights in a bid for justice at work and in the public sphere, but those efforts were squashed by the Cold War. In her influential article “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” Jacqueline D. Hall regards the “civil rights movement” as a political and cultural formation that is rooted in the Popular Front activism of the 1930s which was continuous with the “classical phase” of the Civil Rights Movement (1954–1965). While anti-Communists in Congress and elsewhere were prone to accusing civil rights activists of “red” affiliations, many in the movement did what they could to resist those accusations, including burying or obscuring their Leftist affiliations. The result was an absence of Leftists in the histories of the Civil Rights Movement. Mayfield’s portrayal of the Left in *The Grand Parade* foreshadowed this historiographic trend and he would articulate this point more
until the early twenty-first century, positioning Julian Mayfield as an important precursor to present historiographical debates. Combined with the novel's exploration of black radical concerns over integration and a burgeoning black internationalism, this analysis solidifies the novel's historical and historiographical contributions even as it maps the outward movement of Mayfield's revolutionary horizons.


Mayfield's transnational activism in Cuba and Ghana has been considered by several scholars. The most complete is Kevin Gaines' account of the Afro-American exile community in Ghana, but he only gives a brief overview of Mayfield's biography prior to his arrival in West Africa in 1961. Rebecca Welch’s dissertation, done under the direction of Robin Kelley, examined Mayfield as an element of a collective biography, a prosography, of the Harlem Cultural Left. She considered Mayfield as one of those important links connecting the Popular Front and the Civil Rights Movement, a “long distance runner” which made subsequent “long civil rights movement” historiography possible. While Welch expertly probes the lived experiences of this tightly-connected network of activists, there are important silences in her work, namely Mayfield's time in Puerto Rico and his writing of The Grand Parade. Subsequent work maintains these silences. Van Gosse's Where the Boys Are, roots the New Left and its Black nationalist counterparts in Revolutionary Cuba. Gosse examines the history of the New Left through Mayfield's time in Cuba and his associations with other African American radicals there. Though Gosse is interested in Mayfield's journalism, especially as it relates to Cuba, he is similarly silent about The Grand Parade. Cynthia Young's Soul Power considers Mayfield as part of a vocal cohort of black radical intellectuals who rallied to Castro's side during the Cuban leader's visit to New York. However, Mayfield emerges from her narrative primarily as a foil to his contemporaries Amiri Baraka and Harold W. Cruse. Timothy Tyson's political biography of Robert F. Williams, Radio Free Dixie, again features Mayfield as a supporting character, but discusses Mayfield only to the extent of his role to the climactic confrontation in Monroe, one ancillary to that of Williams. Though Tyson delves deep into Mayfield's autobiography for his account of the events in Monroe that led to their exile, he does not examine Mayfield's other work in detail. It was only in 2014 that Mary Washington's monograph, The Other Blacklist, became the first scholarly publication to consider The Grand Parade seriously. Mayfield is the subject of her epilogue focusing on his experience as an unrepentant Communist as a counterpoint to Richard Wright's hardened anticommunist position. Washington's exhumation of the novel serves as primarily a literary analysis, and not a historical one, but her contribution to the reinterpretation of autobiographical accounts of the Black Left is a welcome addition to the
from Puerto Rico in January 1959 and his arrival in Ghana in November 1961, Mayfield's articulation of Left-inflected nationalist radicalism has received the majority of scholarly attention.¹² Analyzing *The Grand Parade* alongside Mayfield's advocacy and assistance to North Carolina activist and proponent of armed self-defense, Robert F. Williams, fills this gap in his intellectual and political biography and documents his transformation. Critical of the civil rights struggle's leaders and their failure to consider the plight of black workers, Mayfield would soon emerge as a leading figure in a budding black radical movement, one which embraced nationalism, pan-Africanism, and saw explicit parallels between movements for independence in West Africa with battles for citizenship in the United States.

Above all, this transformation further deepened the relationship between Mayfield's art and his politics. Though he had abandoned “protest fiction” and many of the tenets of the socialist realism that had dominated Black Leftist writers' work in the 1940s and 1950s, *The Grand Parade* emphasized how political and social conditions constrained by liberalism made grassroots movements not only possible but necessary.

¹² One notable exception is Kevin Gaines, who was the first to write extensively on Mayfield, first in an article in *Souls* in 1999 and later in his monograph published by UNC Press, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
While the novel elaborates an intellectual and activist project, it also emphasizes the intersection of the personal and the political. As Mary Washington pointed out in *The Other Blacklist*, Mayfield's semi-autobiographical character Alonzo “Lonnie” Banks makes the novel one of handful of works from mid-century black writers that examine, “the personal testimonies of black Leftists who were there in the midst of the activist 1940s and the Cold War 1950s, the kind of eye-witness testimony and private reflections that they tucked away to protect themselves from further intimidation and reprisals.” Foregrounding *The Grand Parade* in an analysis of the early growth of Black Power offers a narrative account of the dynamics of nationalism, integration, and black radical thought and discourse in the mid-twentieth century.

“The Objective Look at the Racial Integration Crisis”

When he returned to New York in early 1959, Julian Mayfield was no stranger to liberal efforts to integrate public facilities were playing out in the mainland United States, but he did not immediately set out to write the novel that would become *The Grand Parade*. Rather, buoyed by the positive critical reaction to *The Hit* and *The Long Night*, Mayfield immersed himself in New York's literary scene while seeking to adapt both novels into films aided by his friend, Sidney Poitier. Through his connection with Poitier Mayfield had a taste of Hollywood the previous year, after he was cast as the vivacious band leader, Pat

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14 Leopold Kohr, then a professor of Economics and Public Administration at the University of Puerto Rico, suggested that it was Mayfield's hope of getting *The Hit* turned into a film that prompted his departure from Puerto Rico, though corroborating evidence for that assertion is minimal. In another letter, Mayfield Poitier was associated with the project. See: Letter from Leopold Kohr to Julian Mayfield, 12 October 1960. SCH, JMP, Box 7, Folder 2, 1; Letter from Benjamin Pepper to Julian Mayfield, 20 April 1960. SCH, JMP, Box 7, Folder 2, 1.
Jackson, in the John Cassavetes vehicle, Virgin Island. The film, which also starred Virginia Maskell and had Poitier in a supporting role, was an escapist fantasy drama about bohemian newlyweds who settled on a small, uninhabited cay in the British Virgin Islands. The film was a one-off for Mayfield, but it led to a brief association with Cassavetes which included a job writing for the noir television drama, Johnny Staccato, in 1959. Filmmaking, however, seemed to dovetail with his authorial ambitions and between 1959 and 1960 Mayfield was involved in negotiations to write film adaptations of both The Hit and The Long Night. He also screen-tested for the part of Jim in the upcoming MGM Production of Huckleberry Finn. When the film projects based on his novels failed to materialize and he lost the Huckleberry Finn part to Archie Moore, Mayfield began work on the project that would become The Grand Parade.

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15 Virgin Island was adapted from the 1953 memoir Our Virgin Island written by Robb White III. The film featured Cassavetes and Maskell as a young Anglo American couple who settle on a small, uninhabited island in the British Virgin Islands. The island where White and his wife settled, now known as Marina Cay, now uses the home they constructed as a reading room for an exclusive private resort. See: Robb White, Our Virgin Island (New York: Doubleday, 1953).

16 Mayfield used the pseudonym “Gerald Orsini” for this writing, for unstated reasons. Considering that he had only recently left the Communist Party and was not then a member of the Screenwriter's Guild, I suspect that this was a political as well as a financial decision. Research has not uncovered a script for the episode or even notes in Mayfield's archive, but contemporary newspaper accounts indicate that the episode Mayfield wrote, “Viva Paco!”, revolved around Puerto Rican friend of the lead character Johnny Staccato. Paco, an up-and-coming Puerto Rican boxer, disappears before his bout with the champion and the opponent claims his disappearance was cowardice. Cassavetes titular character goes to Spanish Harlem to find Paco, who had been kidnapped, so that he may fight and protect his reputation. Contemporary newspapers indicate this episode aired first in October 1959 and aired several times between then and 1962. See: Untitled, The Sun (1837–1992), Baltimore, MD, 18 October 1959, A13; “Today's Programs On Television,” The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959–1973); Washington, DC, 24 April 1960, 145; Wednesday Television Programs The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959–1973); Washington, DC, 13 June 1962, D8.

Having followed events in the United States closely as a journalist and a radio announcer in Puerto Rico, Mayfield's published work upon his return revealed exasperation and frustration at the discourse and rhetorical response to urgent and insistent African American political demands. He indicated his appreciation for the growing mobilization of African American peoples in boycotts and public protests, but the limited objectives of these movements concerned him. Having experienced the freedom from an overt “color line” in Puerto Rico, he expressed disdain toward mainstream civil rights advocates and their fight for access to public accommodations. Furthermore, the increased visibility of black writers in New York reinvigorated Mayfield's concerns over their methods of protest and the impact of their social commentary. In writing a novel that would ostensibly be marketed to all Americans, black and white, Mayfield sought a route out of the “insoluble dilemma” he had identified at the Henry Hudson Hotel in February 1959. How could he criticize liberal political objectives with regards to racial integration and still appeal to the largely white and liberal audience who had the means to purchase his book?

As Mayfield wrestled with this conundrum, the novel that emerged paradoxically fulfilled editors' demands to broaden his appeal beyond “Negro themes,” even as it was critical of the integration of public accommodations, housing, and schools that was embraced by the most well-known civil rights activists. The limits of racial integration in Puerto Rico at the forefront of his thoughts, Mayfield set to work challenging the emergent post-Brown liberal consensus on race through art. Since 1954, integration in the United States had served as a key plank in liberal politicians' noble plans to address the second-class citizenship of African Americans. As an important intervention in the status quo, Mayfield's novel portrayed regarded integration as a cynical collision of social, political, and cultural
factions vying for power with little interest for what would serve African American communities.

This “behind the scenes” portrait adapted real-life examples of integration—with key details changed to suit his narrative—to support his thesis that integration would not alter the socio-economic conditions of the majority of African Americans. These details not only lent veracity to his narrative, but also provided him with characterizations and situations that allowed him to level criticism at all of the participants involved. Delving into the “nitty gritty” of racial integration politics, *The Grand Parade* emphasized the moral and social bankruptcy at its heart as it demonstrated the fundamental inadequacy of desegregation of public accommodations to fundamentally alter the lives of African Americans.

In his frustration with the white literary establishment, Mayfield recognized that, despite James Baldwin’s eulogy for the “protest novel,” a piece of narrative fiction that limited its focus to “Negro-ness” would be unable to escape that designation. He therefore spent time writing a novel that was primarily populated with white characters while

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18 When James Baldwin had pronounced the protest novel dead in his 1949 essay “Everybody’s Protest Novel,” he declared his intention to move beyond the sterile categories of “Negro-ness” in his writing. Baldwin made little distinction whether those categories were products of white racism or defensive constructs by blacks, a move which frustrated many of his contemporaries, Mayfield included. Rather, his concern was “to prevent myself from becoming merely a Negro; or, even merely a Negro writer.” Baldwin recognized that “the world tends to trap and immobilize you in the role you play,” and saw little distinction in whether or not that trap was the result of hatred or an uneasy sort of kindness. However, it would be a mistake to regard many of the Black-themed works that emerged in the 1950s from the Harlem Cultural Left as protest novels descended from *Native Son*, though they were often marketed as such. Instead, as Lawrence Jackson has argued in *The Indignant Generation*, those writers sought an audience for Black drama that “neither emphasized white relationships nor grounded itself in comedy, song, [or] dance.” In short, while the works of writers like John O. Killens, Rosa Guy, Alice Childress, and Mayfield himself were focused on “Negro-ness,” they resisted the urge to “bring greater freedom to the oppressed,” as Baldwin described. Furthermore, theirs was an effort to produce socially conscious works for a black audience. Mayfield, who was critical of Baldwin during this period, would later embrace the writer and his work. See: Lawrence P. Jackson, *The Indignant Generation: A Narrative History of African American Writers and Critics, 1934–1960*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 457; James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, Edited by Edward P. Jones, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 157.
marketing himself, “as an American, as opposed to a Negro writer.” In an interview with New York Courier literary critic Evelyn Cunningham shortly after the book's publication, Mayfield noted how his experience growing up behind the veil legitimized the perspectives he advanced in his writing. “I have been exposed to two different worlds within the same society,” he explained to Cunningham, “talent permitting. I can reveal a certain truth about both.”19 The “certain truth” that unfolded in The Grand Parade's convoluted narrative was that the process of racial integration was less about improving the conditions of African Americans and more about the ambitions of politicians and social elites.

Though the NAACP's Roy Wilkins also criticized the, “token integration” of, “four, or 12 or 20 Negro students” into white schools, his whiggish perspective that the presence of black students could, “only be regarded as a beginning of school desegregation” infuriated Mayfield.20 In The Grand Parade, Mayfield flipped this argument on its head. In exposing the machinations behind the battles over racial integration, the novel emphasized that token integration would not alter the lot of the majority in measurable ways. It would not challenge white dominance in social, economic, and political life in the United States. Rather, it would allow some African Americans access to white institutions and accommodations while leaving the majority behind.

A sprawling work, The Grand Parade's primary plot was interwoven with a disorienting number of sub-plots which combined to illustrate a cross-section of structural shifts in the


post-war American economy, political re-alignment within the black and white working classes, the abandonment of the Democratic Party by wealthy whites, and the beginnings of white flight to suburbs. The book also reflected Mayfield's belief that these issues were both regionally specific and national in scope, challenging popular perceptions that struggles over racial integration and “the Negro question” were limited to the Deep South. The fact that Mayfield deployed this critique at the very moment the mainstream Civil Rights Movement was seizing the moral high ground in national politics provided a direct challenge to the movement's leadership and their tentative white allies. However, they proved to be a difficult target, as evidenced by the confused critical response to the novel. Nonetheless, in probing these ideas in-depth through a piece of narrative fiction, Mayfield's delved into the social and cultural impact of the structural changes, evincing a deep frustration with the options currently available—though he did not offer potential solutions.

The Grand Parade opened with a short vignette that vividly portrayed the changes wrought by the post-war economic boom. After extolling the wealth of post-war America, Mayfield described two unnamed men settling a traffic dispute by repeatedly smashing their automobiles into one another. Their gladiatorial contest left their cars destroyed, but the men were unbloodied. Exhausted and exhilarated, the men emerged from their battered vehicles to embrace before a cheering crowd. In this age of abundance that followed the Second World War, Mayfield's introduction emphasized how a celebration of national prosperity narrowed the definition of social advancement to a naked consumerism, masking the unevenness of its distribution. The obvious contrast to this national narrative of progress was that African Americans had seen little improvement in their economic status.
Though leaders in Washington, D.C. had, since the late 1940s, begun to take notice of African American demands for full citizenship, rhetoric did not easily give way to policy. Republican presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower had pledged, “to build a sure foundation for sound prosperity for all here at home” in his acceptance speech at the 1952 Republican National Convention, but his administration's recalcitrance and uneven attention to civil rights made it clear to African Americans that they could expect little in the way of meaningful policy changes from the first Republican president elected since Herbert Hoover. Many in the black elite, however, remained committed to the idea that liberal political power on the local level could be marshaled to make incremental changes in employment, education, and public accommodations—changes that would eventually result in new opportunities for advancement. Mayfield's fundamental disagreement with this position was informed by his experiences in Puerto Rico and the Northeast, where he had experienced how informal color lines were enforced in ways that negatively affected African-descended peoples. These ideas informed prose that lay bare the machinations of power in which the black elite played a subordinate role, even as they demanded all African Americans place their hope within the confines of a liberalism that Mayfield considered merely another form of white supremacy.

For this third novel, Julian Mayfield opted for a setting that was far different, and far more expansive, than the Harlem that had informed his first two novels. *The Grand Parade*

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was set in an unnamed border state in the fictional town of Gainesboro. The story opened on the city's ambitious, liberal Mayor, Douglas Taylor, who decided to initiate a platform of reform and integration which, he hoped, would give him a chance at a senate run. Across town, Taylor's African American counterpart, City Councilman Randolph Banks, publicly praised Taylor's plan and threw his political weight behind the young mayor. Cynically, Banks recognized that by delivering black votes to Taylor he, too, could rise in city politics. Initially, this reform program was met with little in the way of opposition. News of the plan to integrate the city's schools, however, soon attracted activists from elsewhere.

Shortly after Mayor Taylor announced his integration plan, two traveling segregationists arrived in Gainesboro to organize white resistance in the form of the White Protection Council, modeled after the White Citizens Councils that emerged in the wake of the Brown decision. The men, Clarke Bryant and his associate Hank Dean, appealed to the

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22 Gainesboro’s proximity to Baltimore and Washington suggest that the city was located in Eastern Maryland as it bore many parallels with Cambridge, MD. The term “border state” has historically referred to those states that permitted slavery but did not secede from the Union during the Civil War. Typically, this list is limited to Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, but some historians include Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia as those states did not secede until after the attack on Fort Sumter. West Virginia is also considered a border state by some, due to its secession from Virginia in 1863 and joining with the Union shortly thereafter. Notably, the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri—in which black people remained enslaved even as their soldiers fought for the Union—were exempt from the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. In using a “border state” as the geography for his story, Mayfield drew an important distinction between practices of segregation in the Deep South from other parts of the nation. While all states had various forms of segregation, border states tended to be in a liminal space between the de jure racism of the Deep South and the de facto racism of the Northeast. See: Jean H. Baker, The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858 to 1870 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Barbara Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); J. Robert Brugger, Maryland, A Middle Temperament (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); William C. Harris, Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011).


24 The formation of White Citizens Councils began in 1954 and 1955 in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. The councils organized resistance to desegregation efforts, in addition to working closely with the Ku Klux Klan and other violent, vigilante organizations to intimidate and terrorize activists who opposed Jim Crow.
city's wealthy elite while they stoked fears of unfettered black male sexuality among the city's white working class. They were successful in their efforts and resistance to Taylor's plan grew among citizens, white and black alike. Reticence from black parents reflected fears of the violence that Bryant and his followers repeatedly emphasized and the black community leaders felt similarly. In the novel's final pages, Mayfield contrasted the school's successful integration with the assassination of the Mayor at the hands of Bryant's young acolyte, Hank Dean. Integration, Mayfield revealed in *The Grand Parade*, could be successfully implemented and the costs would be great, but the benefits for the African American community would remain minimal.

Despite the dispiriting picture that Mayfield painted of liberal politicians, black community leaders, and the political machinations that resulted in integration, a number of critics missed the book's critical perspective entirely. Steven Preston of Worcester, MA celebrated the heroism and sacrifice of Mayor Taylor: “the reader ends the book with the feeling that the battle will be won in time because some white people care enough, even giving their lives, for a fair deal for the coloured race.” A negative review in the *New York Times* took Mayfield to task for the novel's poor organization, but nonetheless praised his detailed presentation of the social forces of, “racism and bossism, of ambition and corruption.” The problem, the *Times'* critic Joseph Blotner noted, was the ways in which Mayfield's portrayal “produce[d] a dulling effect that ultimately defeats the purpose they are


meant to achieve.”26 The subtext of this comment was that the real heroes of the book were those leaders who were able to bring about integration as a meaningful compromise between segregationists and radicals bent on upending the social order. By minimizing the heroics of these brave liberal politicians, Blotner implied, Mayfield's novel did the integration movement a disservice. Reviews such as these reinforced the perception that the novel was a straightforward account of an integration struggle with a sympathetic portrait of the white liberals who sought to improve the lot of African Americans, challenged by white segregationists and black radicals alike.

Considering *The Grand Parade* alongside Mayfield's trenchant critique of U.S. racial policy reveals a distinct lack of sympathy or regard for the white social workers, ambitious politicians, and white benefactors that Mayfield created. In turn, the novel points to how white support for racial integration stemmed from naked self-interest, political gamesmanship, and white paternalism. Black leaders were not spared from critique in Mayfield's novel. Their characterization as ineffectual, morally bankrupt, or unwilling to break free from the white institutions and organizations which had economic and political power over them was damning. While not explicitly nationalist or separatist in its orientation, *The Grand Parade*’s narrative dismissed the potential of the existing black elite as leaders in any meaningful struggle, a fact reflected in work Mayfield subsequently published in *Commentary* and *Dissent*. Hopelessly tainted by their association with white power structures and institutions, these characters offer evidence the growing influence of nationalism on Mayfield's radical Leftist critique of class relations.

Though *The Grand Parade* fell short of publishers' expectations, as one of a handful of books to express these sentiments in narrative fiction, it remains an important early articulation of an emergent resentment and frustration with liberalism that would culminate in the coming decade. The novel gave voice to a growing chorus of critiques of liberalism's inadequacy in addressing the economic and class components of oppression—ideas that would gain broad acceptance in the mid-1960s, both with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Poor People's Campaign" and with Stokely Carmichael's call to "Black Power." It is also significant that only one other black writer, Frank London Brown, examined civil rights struggles beyond the Deep South during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement. Unlike Brown's nuanced and poignant story of struggles over integration in Chicago's Trumbull Park neighborhood, *The Grand Parade* cast a broad net, an effort to attract a wider readership while resisting the label of "protest novel," even as its prose undermined the liberal sentiments of its readers.

As his comments to Cunningham and Wolfe demonstrated, Mayfield presented the story of Gainesboro from multiple angles, examining the reasons behind actions by politicians, community leaders, and grassroots activists through detailed character portraits. However, instead of compact narrative which argued that integration was liberal grandstanding or simply inadequate to combat the history of institutional racism in the

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27 *Trumbull Park*, Brown's powerful novel examined the integration of a Chicago Housing Authority project on the South Side, was a grim story of white supremacist violence that evoked none of the stereotypes about desegregation common to the era. Of Brown's debut novel, Sterling Stuckey wrote that it, "signaled the advent of a new and brilliant flowering of creative effort on the part of Negro writers." Brown, who was born in Chicago in 1927 and would go on to sign his name to the FPCC ad alongside Mayfield in the *New York Times* in April 1961, died suddenly in 1962. See: Frank London Brown, *Trumbull Park* (Chicago: Regnery Press, 1959); Richard Guzman, *Black Writing from Chicago: In the World, Not of It?* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press, 2006), 155.
United States, what emerged was a complex, interlocking character study of a medium-sized American city. There was a downside to this complexity, however. Compelling back-stories for minor characters and an overly convoluted plot unmoored the book from its central arguments, diffusing its message. Literary shortcomings aside, the novel showed that the tragedy of integration was that it had the potential to succeed. To get at the impact of that argument, however, it is necessary to historicize the novel's construction.

Writing *The Grand Parade*

Unlike his earlier novels as well as much of his later writing, the genesis and the construction of *The Grand Parade* can only be inferred from the final, published product.²⁸ No early drafts or correspondence relating to its origin are known to exist. Lacking such material, the context of Mayfield's life, writings, and travels during this time serve to explicate his motivation and goals. That *The Grand Parade* drew heavily from real-life examples of integration makes this task easier, offering insight into the novel as a portrait of black intellectual politics and activism surrounding racial integration at a key moment in the Civil Rights Movement. The reforms initiated by the fictional Mayor Taylor of Gainesboro drew from examples of desegregation efforts from Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee, where the *Brown* decision prompted local activists and school boards to initiate changes through legal channels although Mayfield made substantive alterations to Gainesboro's desegregation fight to aid in narrative coherence and highlight specific objections that he had to mainstream civil rights activism in 1960. Perhaps the most obvious of Mayfield's

²⁸ *The Hit*, for example, was adapted from a one-act play 417 which he had begun during the summer he spent Camp Unity. It went through several drafts, evidence of which are present in Mayfield's archive.
influences was the climactic confrontation at the heart of the novel, based on the integration of Clinton High School in East Tennessee.

Located in Anderson County near Knoxville, Clinton was only a short distance from the federal nuclear research facility at Oak Ridge, whose high school was desegregated in 1955. In 1956, Federal Judge Robert Taylor, responding to a group of African American claimants, noted Anderson County’s failure to comply with the Brown decision and ordered the high school to desegregate with, “all deliberate speed.” White leaders called on the population to resist the measure and subsequent protests heightened tensions in the area.

The announced plan for desegregation drew itinerant white supremacist John Kasper to the

29 The town of Oak Ridge was established in 1942 as living quarters for workers at the four enrichment plants that would produce uranium for the Manhattan Project. Sixty thousand acres were acquired by the Federal Government in Anderson County for the purpose, but the site was kept a closely guarded secret from residents and the state government alike. Both the enrichment facilities and public facilities in what would be the town of Oak Ridge were segregated, despite technically being on federal land. In December 1953, Oak Ridge’s town council resolved to integrate the high school, several months in advance of the Brown decision of 17 May 1954. Scheduled to be integrated at the beginning of the 1955 school year following the Brown decision, some citizens urged a school boycott, but the first day of school was peaceful and uneventful. According to journalist Bob Fowler, two African American students made the Oak Ridge basketball team that year, but they were not permitted to play in away games since segregation was still in force throughout the rest of Tennessee. The smooth transition of Oak Ridge in comparison to Clinton has been attributed to that city’s status as a federal enclave, as the city was under the jurisdiction of the Atomic Energy Commission (later folded into the Department of Energy in 1977). See: James Sparrow, “Behind the Atomic Curtain: School Desegregation and Territoriality in the early Cold War,” The Tocqueville Review/La revue Tocqueville 33, no. 2 (June 2018): 115–139; Russell Owell, “Help Wanted for Secret City: Recruiting Workers for the Manhattan Project at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1942–1946,” Tennessee Historical Quarterly 58, no. 1 (April 1999): 52–69; Janice M. McClelland, “A Structural Analysis of Desegregation: Clinton High School, 1954–1958,” Tennessee Historical Quarterly 56, no. 4 (December 1997): 294–310; Bob Fowler, “Before Clinton or Little Rock, Oak Ridge Integration Made History,” Knoxville News Sentinel, 16 February 2009, Online edition, <http://archive.knoxnews.com/news/local/before-clinton-or-little-rock-oak-ridge-integration-made-history-ep-410364049-359586141.html> Accessed 22 October 2016.

30 That case, originally filed in 1950 was known as McSwain et al. v. County Board of Education of Anderson County, Tennessee. After ruling against the plaintiff in 1952, Johnson was forced to hear the case once more in the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education and the 1956 decision reflects the decision's impact. While that story was not as dramatic as the one Mayfield tells in The Grand Parade, it would go on to have important ramifications on future desegregation initiatives, especially in Memphis and Nashville, prolonging the process through legal and illegal means. See: “McSwain v. Bd. of Ed. of Anderson County,” Hastings Law Journal 9 (January 1957): 175–190; Janice M. McClelland, “A Structural Analysis of Desegregation: Clinton High School, 1954–1958,” Tennessee Historical Quarterly 56, no. 4 (December 1997): 294–310.
town in late August accompanied by a young associate, Asa Carter, and the two immediately began organizing a White Citizens Council. Kasper, a protégé of fascist, anti-Semitic poet Ezra Pound, took the lead in organizing whites who objected school integration with the tacit approval of city authorities. He held public rallies and lobbied local politicians, encouraging people to take increasingly violent measures to maintain the status quo. As a result of these efforts, several black students were assaulted in June 1956. Although police arrested Kasper, they did not file charges and he was soon released. Threats were subsequently made to other African American students who declared their intention to attend Clinton High School, but authorities refused to act.

Over the remainder of the Summer, Kasper and Carter organized local whites in preparation for the beginning of the school year. On the first of September, Kasper and Carter organized local whites in preparation for the beginning of the school year. On the first of September, Kasper and Carter organized local whites in

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31 Born in 1929, John Kasper learned of Pound's works as an undergraduate student at Columbia. In 1950, he sent the poet a letter comparing him favorably to Fredreich Nietzsche. Pound responded positively and the men struck up a friendship, exchanging hundreds of letters between 1950 and 1963. During the early 1950s, Kasper opened a bookstore called “Make it New” in Greenwich Village, Manhattan, and featured Pound's works prominently alongside other far-right, anti-Semitic, and white nationalist literature. Kasper relocated to Washington in 1954 and opened another book store in order to be able to visit Pound regularly while the poet was imprisoned in St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Kasper reacted to the 1954 Brown decision by declaring that racial integration was “a Jewish plot” and founded the Seaboard White Citizens Council in Washington to prevent that city's schools from following federal desegregation mandates. When he received word that Clinton High School was set to integrate in 1956, he moved again, bringing with him a young man whom he had met in Washington, Asa Carter. A detailed analysis of Kasper and Pound's relationship has recently been written by Alex Marsh, who examined the voluminous correspondence between the two, asserting that, “Kasper was more than a rabble rouser; he was a serious transmitter of Pound's ideas who imagined himself as the successor to James Laughlin as Pound's publisher. Pound's idiosyncratic Confucianist, Fascist, Jeffersonianism, and Kasper's homegrown Christian anti-Semitism fed off each other, influencing Pound's great poem and Kasper's “southern strategy”—ultimately having an obscure but real effect on the American political landscape.” Pound's biographer, J. James Wilhelm, argued that the poet's association with Kasper was one of the reasons Pound remained imprisoned until 1958, despite passionate please by friends, such as Ernest Hemingway. In an interview with George Plimpton in 1958, Hemingway told Plimpton that Pound should be released to write in Italy. Of Kasper, Hemingway told Plimpton, “I would be happy to see Kasper jailed as soon as possible,” noting that, “I am sure that it will take a footnote to this paragraph in ten years to explain who Kasper was.” See: Alec Marsh, John Kasper and Ezra Pound: Saving the Republic (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), xiv–xv; James J. Wilhelm, Ezra Pound: The Tragic Years 1925–1972 (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 204–206, 208; “The Art of Fiction No. 21,” The Paris Review 18 (Spring 1958).
Carter held a rally at the Anderson County Courthouse, days before the school year was to start. Their group was met on the courthouse lawn by a counter-protesters, both black and white, and the two factions escalated their rhetoric to a violent mêlée, resulting in numerous injuries but no deaths. Kasper was jailed again and released on bail, leaving town soon afterwards, but not without a contempt charge. Kasper subsequently traveled to Washington, DC and then Florida where he joined forces with, and drew the ire of, fellow segregationists. Following Kasper’s departure, a bomb was set off in Clinton High School on 5 October 1958 and the school was destroyed. Fortunately for students, faculty, and staff, the bomb exploded on a Sunday and no one was injured.

In contrast, The Grand Parade’s traveling segregationist, Clarke Bryant, was written with significant differences from his real-life inspiration. These artistic changes highlight
Mayfield's interest in how struggles for racial justice beyond the Deep South were affected not just by internal forces, but by external ones as well. Unlike Kasper, the fictional Bryant hailed from Mississippi, but had been active in organizing White Citizen's Councils in nearby Washington D.C. prior to his arrival in Gainesboro. Mayfield transformed his assistant, Asa Carter, into a troubled acolyte named Hank Dean, driven to prove his masculinity through violence by his abusive father. The fictional Bryant's voice, however, was taken from Kasper's own publications.

Bryant articulated common refrains from ardent segregationists in the Deep South, who celebrated Jim Crow as a gift that the South had bestowed upon a nation troubled by the threat of racial integration. His words also served as the vehicle by which Mayfield was able to insert some African American criticisms of Northern segregation as well. Furthermore, Bryant's character illustrated how the inaction of the state in addressing segregationist organizing allowed violence against black citizens to continue unabated. Mayfield also used the character of Bryant to point to the similarities between liberal integrationists and segregationists. Though the former may have officially opposed Jim

34 In *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, C. Vann Woodward differentiates Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, and Florida as mid-South states (as opposed to border or Deep South states). In the first edition of the book, published in 1955, he points to the ways in which those states were “inclining toward the example of the border states rather than in the opposite direction” (i.e. the Deep South). Citing examples from Longview, Texas, Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Elaine Arkansas, Woodward notes that, while opposition to Jim Crow seemed to waver initially, it was soon shorn up by legislative and executive pressure. Citing the “Declaration of Constitutional Principles,” which managed to get 101 out of 128 legislators from eleven states, Woodward points to the interplay between factions within the broader Southern region, which was differentiated politically and socially. See: C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 161.

35 Mayfield's decision to make Bryant hail from the Magnolia State is suggestive of a belief that a white supremacist from New Jersey might not be as convincing, despite Kasper's reputation.
Crow, both were driven by the same underlying anti-black racist beliefs in African Americans constituted an unruly, undisciplined, and violent population.

To bolster this point, Mayfield wrote a telling exchange between Bryant and Gainesboro's leading white philanthropist, Rosalia Stanley, in which he highlighted how a commitment to philanthropy was not mutually exclusive with anti-black racism. Though she identified as a liberal and claimed that, “everything Bryant said was repulsive to [her],” the meeting between the two was genial. Advocating a deepening of segregation in Gainesboro and the imposition of formal Jim Crow-style laws, Bryant implored Stanley that there would be dire consequences if his demands went unheeded. “Integration in the schools will lead to interbreeding, which you know will only weaken the white race,” he explained. Though Stanley expressed concern for the deplorable conditions of Gainesboro's black ward, Greenpoint, her exchange with Bryant revealed her paternalism toward the neighborhood's black residents, whom she believed were responsible for their poverty and their poor living conditions.36

Stanley also pointed out that the North had successfully integrated, but Bryant ironically responded with a common refrain among of Mayfield's contemporaries: “only the facade of racial integration existed in the North.” That region's misguided upending of the racial and social order, Bryant explained, had not resulted in harmony, but in white flight, soaring crime rates, juvenile delinquency, illegitimate births, and moral degeneracy. “Integration does not work in the North,” he concluded.37 And, while she professed her

37 Ibid., 243.
“love” for the “benighted Negroes of Greenpoint,” Stanley was swayed by her discussion with Bryant, revealing the paternalistic and racist assumptions that Mayfield believed lay beneath the window dressing of philanthropy and charity white liberals championed.\footnote{Ibid., 242.}

Unable to convince Stanley to publicly support his program, her refusal to condemn the segregationist lent Bryant's organization legitimacy at a critical moment in the plot. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this exchange was in the subtly of Stanley's shift. Despite not fully embracing Bryant's cause, their meeting prompted her to curtail her support for the Mayor's integration plan, demonstrating a tacit approval by the city's white liberal elite for the growing backlash.

In making Clarke Bryant a product of the Deep South who heads north to stop a school integration, Mayfield both sought to create a more convincing foil for Mayor Taylor and Councilman Banks and to substantiate the ways in which the battle over integration was becoming a struggle of national significance.\footnote{Mayfield, a student of Du Bois, rejected any notion of Southern exceptionalism when it came to racism, which he had personal experience with in the North, the Midwest, and the West, especially during the tour of \textit{Lost in the Stars} during 1950.} Early cases, such as those in New Orleans and Little Rock, highlighted the battleground nature of the border states during the civil rights era. Writing the Clarke-Stanley dialogue, Mayfield's words echoed C. Vann Woodward's analysis that the battle over integration was also an inter-regional battle.\footnote{Woodward.} Bryant, representing the Deep South, envisioned a clear and present danger to racial segregation in the Deep South if the \textit{de facto} expressions of Jim Crow were to crumble in border states. In
emphasizing the connection between segregation and social harmony, Bryant’s arguments convinced many of the city's businessmen and politicians that the divisions emerging after Mayor Taylor’s integration announcement were not a recipe for future stability.41

The importance of Bryant's arrival in Gainesboro also highlighted how men like him spurred the development of mass opposition to integration and the ways in which they were able to operate without government interference. Notably, no organized mass movement appeared to oppose Bryant and Carter's efforts. Black political and religious leaders made speeches and objected to the formation of the White Protection Council, but they lacked organizations or mass community support to address the burgeoning segregationists directly. Though such movements had been successful in Montgomery and would become a key factor in the Civil Rights Movement’s strategies in Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama with the Freedom Riders and later the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), The Grand Parade emphasized how the racial justice struggles of the late 1950s lacked broad-based support from those groups which had the most experience organizing across class and racial

41 Unlike Gainesboro, where the narrative ends following the confrontation at the school and Mayor Taylor's death, in Clinton the riot was only a prelude to more violence. As a result of the confrontation at the Anderson County Courthouse, Governor Clement sent in the National Guard. The Guard remained in Clinton for two months, allowing the Clinton Twelve to attend school. During that time, there were no further incidents. Following the National Guard's departure, Clinton's school board remained committed to desegregation, as did many in the community. Each day, the Clinton Twelve were escorted to school by volunteers, including a white minister of the First Baptist Church, Reverend Paul Turner. In December 1957, Turner and several of the students were attacked by a mob while walking to school. The Reverend was severely injured in the attack. No arrests were made. Despite the violence, Turner continued to preach against the immorality of segregation at the First Baptist Church in Clinton until he relocated to Nashville in 1961 and became a professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. In 1980, Turner was dismissed from his position and soon after committed suicide. After the attack on Turner and the Clinton Twelve, violence once again died down until the following school year when the high school was destroyed by a dynamite bomb. As a result, the Clinton Twelve were sent to nearby Oak Ridge High School until Clinton High could be rebuilt, while white students were sent to white high schools nearby, effectively re-segregating the town. The town's school system remained segregated until the completion of the new Clinton High School in 1960. See: June N. Adamson, “Few Black Voices Heard: The Black Community and the Desegregation Crisis in Clinton, Tennessee, 1956,” Tennessee Historical Quarterly 53, no. 1 (1994): 30–41.
lines: the Left. This argument was also the most overlooked aspect of the book. In pointedly examined the marginalization of the American Left through the character of Alonzo “Lonnie” Banks, Mayfield's art served to reinforce the political arguments he would subsequently make about the decline of the Left and the implications of anticommunism within mainstream black freedom struggles.

The New Politics of the Old Left

In 1970, Julian Mayfield expressed ambivalence on his decision to join the Communist Party as a young actor in New York. Having grown up immersed in the writing of Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, Mayfield explained to interviewer Malaika Lumumba, he was drawn to the Communist Party because he felt that it, “offered the best advantage, the sharpest weapon by which to attack society.” Experiences in New York in the early 1950s, however, soured him on the revolutionary nature of the organization and, during his time in Puerto Rico, he quietly retreated from active participation in the Party. From his vantage point, the U.S. Communist Party's actions during the late 1940s and early 1950s stood in stark contrast to its radical rhetoric. “When I look back on it, it seems to me that the Communists were about the most law-abiding people in the country. We talked a


43 Following Mayfield's resignation from the CNA in February 1954, he remained active in the Party until his departure from New York in March, when he and Dr. Cordero left for Puerto Rico. In his autobiographical manuscript, he examined his decision to leave the party and concluded that, “not ever having been a public Communist I felt no need to resign publicly.” He also reflected on this decision, noting that, “[l]eaving the party was no great strain on me. I have observed that I was in the party for my own purposes, mainly to use it to achieve my objectives and I was leaving it now that it had become clear to me that my membership in it would not further these objectives.” During his time in Puerto Rico, he recalled that, “[m]y main regret was the expectation that many comrades whom I respected most might now begin to regard me as a traitor and an enemy. (They did not.)” See: Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 132–133.
good deal about socialism and spouted Marxist ideology to the extent that we understood it.

But, usually our energies went into trying to reform American society as it is constituted now.”

By joining the Party at the height of the Second Red Scare, implicit in Mayfield's recollections was a longing for the halcyon days of the 1930s and the era of the Popular Front. Though he had been a child, his introduction to the Party had come at the hands of men and women who had directly experienced a moment in which a vibrant, organized, and militant Left had been successful at mobilizing men and women to directly confront

44 Julian Mayfield Interviewed by Malaika Lumumba, 552–517.

45 The “Popular Front” refers specifically to the association of socialist, social-democratic, Communist, and center-Leftist groups which collaborated on political, labor, and cultural issues between 1934 and 1939. In 1934, the Communist International (Comintern) proclaimed “The People's Front Against Fascism and War” in response to the rise of Nazi Germany and instructed local Communist Parties to form alliances with all anti-fascist parties in a bid to isolate fascist dictatorships. While this policy floundered in the United Kingdom, the CPUSA's backing of President Roosevelt's “New Deal” and subsequent alliances with liberals, socialists, and other Leftists led to what historian Kermit McKenzie has called, “[an] imaginative, flexible program of strategy and tactics, in which Communists were permitted to exploit the symbols of patriotism, to assume the role of defenders of national independence, to attack fascism without demanding an end to capitalism as the only remedy, and, most important, to enter upon alliances with other parties, on the basis of fronts or on the basis of a government in which Communists might participate.” In the United States, the Popular Front was not only characterized by political collaboration, but also cultural collaboration. In his account of this “cultural front,” Michael Denning argues that this front was the product of, “a new generation of plebeian artists and intellectuals who had grown up in the immigrant and black working-class neighborhoods of the modernist metropolis.” Urban, cosmopolitan, “ethnic,” and very often non-white, these groups marshaled cultural production as a means to oppose fascism, racism, and the defense of the rights of workers, “in the interests of a truly human society in which all forms of exploitation have been abolished; in behalf of a new cultural renaissance.” African Americans were welcomed into these movements, but as Richard Wright and Harold Cruse's accounts suggest, they experienced marginalization and chafed against the ways in which these groups were inevitably controlled by whites. See: Kermit E. McKenzie, Comintern and World Revolution, 1928–1943: The Shaping of a Doctrine (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 159; Michael Denning, The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century (New York: Verso, 2010), xv–xvi; Mark Naison, “Remaking America: Communists and Liberals in the Popular Front,” New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism, ed. Michael Brown, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993; Bill V. Mullen, Popular Fronts: Chicago and African-American Cultural Politics, 1935–46 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Biondi, Martha. To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
mistreatment of workers, violence toward African Americans, and American imperialism. This he contrasted to the anemic “passive resistance” of the Civil Rights Movement, which he saw as lacking both the necessary critics of class and political economy. Reflecting back on his sentiments following his return from Puerto Rico, he recalled that “I could not participate [in the Civil Rights Movement] because of my attitude toward Martin Luther King's passive resistance philosophy.” Acknowledging the central importance that economic justice had in the movement, he nevertheless disagreed with the tactics embraced by activists like Bayard Rustin and King. Julian Mayfield saw marches, boycotts, and legal challenges as inadequate solutions for the development of the black political power he sought.

In *The Grand Parade*, this reminiscence was reflected in one of the secondary protagonists, the younger brother of City Councilman Randolph Banks, Lonnie Banks. The narrative arc of younger Banks examined the marginalization of Leftists in the United States in the wake of McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare. When Bryant and Dean arrived in Gainesboro, there was no organized group that existed challenge their efforts, a consequence of the persecution and blacklisting of the town's Leftists. Even the confrontation at the school at the novel's climax was a poorly organized effort. This narrative also reflected his belief in the inadequacy of black leaders in politics, the church, and the community, who lacked the organizing skills and the connections to the black working class that he argued the

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47 Julian Mayfield Interviewed by Malaika Lumumba, 552–17.
American Left had possessed. This absence, his narrative indicated, had important ramifications for the movement—as well as its history. “These men and women who had gotten all of this organizational experience in the Communist party or on the Left of the American political spectrum, are no longer around,” Mayfield told Lumumba in 1970. As a result, “it is as if the civil rights movement in the South grows out of nowhere, as if—as if nothing had happened before.”

This claim has been examined in more depth in recent scholarship, especially that of proponents of the “Long civil Rights Movement” thesis, including Jacquelyn D. Hall, Robin Kelley, and Glenda Gilmore. “Long movement” scholars have argued that the Leftists like Mayfield formed key linkages between the 1920s and the Civil Rights Movement, bringing with them traditions of organizing and longer historical perspectives. In positioning both the Popular Front and the Civil Rights Movement as elements of long durée history of a broader black freedom struggle, long movement scholarship has argued that the role of the Left, particularly the black Left, has been overlooked and silenced as a consequence to anticomunism in popular culture and in the academy. In presenting his own experiences through his characterization of Lonnie Banks, Mayfield’s novel humanized the experience of Leftist radicals at the end of the Fifties. More than simply contextualizing their activism as part of a continuous movement or evidence of rupture, the experiences of people like Mayfield complicate this dichotomy, revealing how the interpersonal relationships were affected by the continuity of activism and disabling ruptures of anticomunist persecution.

48 Julian Mayfield Interviewed by Malaika Lumumba, 552–25.
In addition to demonstrating the intersection of personal ambition, paternalism, and cynical disregard for African American peoples, *The Grand Parade* was also intended to serve an educational role. “Those of us who write and teach and who have had experiences before,” Mayfield told Lumumba in 1970, “must . . . constantly remind [the younger generation] of where they came from and how they got to be what they are now.” In 1960, however, Mayfield’s desire to educate the younger activists in the movement was tempered by the ever-present threat of anticommunism and blacklisting. The result was that Lonnie Banks’s story, rather than being centered, was merely a thread woven into the rich tapestry of Gainesboro. Even as his plight illuminated a missing component of the black freedom struggle, the political pressure on publishers and writers remanded his story to the background.

Though Mayfield used many autobiographical details from his own life and the lives of the black communists he had known to construct the character, Lonnie Banks differed substantially from the young communist that spent time walking Harlem’s sidewalks with Paul Robeson and attempting to recruit “Harlem’s Godfather.” When his character was introduced, Lonnie Banks was bereft, having been expelled from the Communist Party only days before. Giving voice to the bruised and battered perspective of the black Left in the post-McCarthy era, Banks’ sense of loss contrasted Mayfield’s clean break from the Party after his move to Puerto Rico. However, both Banks and Mayfield, who had remained a steadfast adherent of the Communist Party throughout the Red Scare, expressed concern following the death of Stalin and subsequent revelations by Khrushchev in his “secret

49 Ibid., 552–23.
Unlike Mayfield, who left the party quietly and voluntarily, Banks was forced to resign after he gave a paper that he had written entitled, “The Americanization of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.” In it, Banks emphasized the need for “ideological and tactical independence from the Soviet Union,” a heretical notion anathema to the Party's doctrine.51

Mayfield does not explicitly reference labor leader and activist A. Philip Randolph in this description, the fictional paper in the novel bears more than a passing resemblance Randolph's final speech before the National Negro Congress (NNC) in 1939.52 As the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Randolph resigned from the NNC following the Soviet invasion of Poland and the subsequent signing Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. “Negroes,” he told fellow members of the NNC, “do not reject the Communist Party because it is revolutionary or radical or because of its alleged extremism. They reject the


51 Mayfield, The Grand Parade, 201.

52 The National Negro Congress was founded in 1935 at Howard University as a collaborative organization founded with the goal of fighting for black liberation. Affiliated with the Communist Party, the party worked to forge relationships between white and black workers during the Great Depression, fighting against war, fascism, and racial discrimination. In addition to Randolph, major figures involved with the organization included John P. Davis and James W. Ford. The organization survived Randolph's departure in 1939, but merged with other labor groups in 1946 to form the Civil Rights Congress in 1946. See: Erik S. Gellman, Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
Communist Party because it is controlled and dominated by a foreign state whose policy may, or may not, be in the interests of the United States or the Negro People.”

Furthermore, Randolph argued that, “American Negroes will not follow any organization which accepts dictation and control from the Communist Party. American Negroes will not follow any organization which accepts dictation and control from any white organization.”

The notion of local control of the American Communist Party was also central to Harold Cruse's criticism, as laid out in the *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* in 1968. Like Mayfield, Cruse left the party in the mid-1950s, in part due to what he perceived was the overwhelming influence of whites and Jews on doctrine and strategy and the lack of consideration for the specific racial and social conditions of African Americans. Unlike Cruse, however, Mayfield remained convinced of the utility of Communist Party tactics and strategies and avoided criticizing the Party publicly.

In *The Grand Parade*, the consequences of Banks' expulsion had salutatory effects for Mayfield's narrative. For one, it brought the long estrangement of the Banks brothers to an end. The elder Banks sympathized with his younger brother's predicament and reached out, but his efforts were thwarted by Lonnie's pride and his status on the local blacklist. A touching tale of an attempt at fraternal reconciliation, Lonnie's story following his expulsion


54 The fictional dispute was grounded in various attempts by factions within the U.S. Communist Party to resist Moscow's influence and control. The most well-known example was Jay Lovestone who attempted to steer the Party away from the USSR in the 1930s and was excommunicated for his efforts. Unlike Lovestone, who later joined forces with the AFL-CIO and provided intelligence on the Party, Lonnie Banks remains an ideologically committed communist. See: Robert J. Alexander, *The Right Opposition: The Lovestoneites and the International Communist Opposition of the 1930s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); Ted Morgan, *A Covert Life: Jay Lovestone: Communist, Anti-Communist, and Spymaster* (New York: Random House, 1999).
also highlighted the “social death” of Leftists in post-McCarthy American. Expelled from the Party, Lonnie's past associations meant that all but the most menial laboring jobs were unavailable to him. Over the course of the novel, he fails repeatedly at securing employment due to his past.

The insular nature of the party and their lack of connection to the broader black community meant that the absence of an organized Leftist movement, versed in tactics and strategies to resist interlopers like Clarke Bryant, left Gainesboro's population unable to confront the violent influence of the White Protection Council. The result was that the integration of black students into white schools became the only viable option. The marginalization of an organized, anti-racist Left contributed to the limitations in their collective action and kept those actions segregated by race and virtually silent on matters of class difference.

The inclusion of a character like Lonnie Banks in *The Grand Parade* also offered a novel portrait of a black left in the aftermath of one of its most significant ruptures. Historically, accounts of African American communists have been shaped by the renunciation of the Party by Richard Wright. Originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in August 1944, the polemical essay, “I Tried to Be A Communist,” repudiated Wright's early association with the Party. Other important black Leftists who publicly rejected their past affiliation with the Party included Max Yergan and Langston Hughes, but Wright's public

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55 The article was revised and later published as one of six essays in: Arther Koestler, *The God that Failed* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949).
attack made him a lightning rod for praise from anti-communist liberals and criticism from former colleagues.\textsuperscript{56}

Unsurprisingly, white critics unanimously ignored the character of Lonnie Banks in their reviews, but Mayfield's friend Shirley Graham Du Bois recognized the importance of the character and mentioned him in her review in \textit{Freedomways}. In the Summer 1961 issue, Graham praised the novel's “symphonic” voice as accurately capturing the, “tempo, confusion, speed, noise, violence, bad and good, frustrations, fears, vitality, hopes, dreams, and love—which is our country today.”\textsuperscript{57} Mayfield's perspective on the complicated politics of integration was refreshing in that it demonstrated how “being a Negro in the United States is something distinct and different.” More importantly, Graham wrote that, unlike Wright, Mayfield “does not write out of despair,” but instead he “writes with vision.”\textsuperscript{58} Graham's comparison of Mayfield to Wright was particularly timely, especially as the black literary community was still reeling from Wright's death from a heart attack in Paris the previous December. In drawing a comparison between Wright and Mayfield, Graham

\textsuperscript{56} Hughes, who appeared before HUAC between 24–26 March 1953, spoke in a circumspect manner about his associations with the Party. Though he refused to identify his comrades, he did testify about its organizational structures, its goals, and its impact on his writing. Hughes was forthcoming about his own seduction by and slow rejection of Communist ideology. According to biographer Laurie F. Leach, Hughes announced his intention to appear as a “friendly witness” and even rehearsed his testimony with his lawyer, Frank D. Reeves, and Roy Cohn. In contrast, Max Yergan, one of the founders of the Council on African Affairs and a defiant Communist Party member during the 1930s, became an informant to the FBI and reported extensively on the extent of his associates and former friends' activities in the Party, including Paul Robeson, Louis Burnham, Shirley Graham Du Bois, and Alphaeus Hunton. See: Laurie F. Leach, \textit{Langston Hughes: A Biography} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 134–136; David H. Anthony, \textit{Max Yergan: Race Man, Internationalist, Cold Warrior} (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

\textsuperscript{57} Shirley Graham, “The Time is Now,” \textit{Freedomways} 1, no. 2 (Summer 1961): 223.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 219.
attempted to undo the reductive view of black Leftists, intending to broaden the horizons of readers and critics alike.

As Mary Washington pointed out in *The Other Blacklist*, this account of the inner turmoil and lived experience of a Black ex-communist that Mayfield portrayed in the character of Lonnie Banks is unique in American literature. For Washington, Julian Mayfield offered “an alternative vision of communism” that contrasted with Richard Wright's public denunciation. Banks' memories of the Communist Party were positive and his expulsion left his character bereft, challenging narratives of black alienation within the Party. Though, “the meetings had been long and the work hard,” Mayfield wrote that Banks' days “had been filled with purpose.” Mayfield's account was an argument that African American experience with the Communist Party was not easily reducible to the vocal rejection by Wright, the volte-face of Yergan, or the quiet repudiation of Hughes.

In writing this character for *The Grand Parade*, Mayfield challenged readers to understand how, despite his frustration and despair, Banks remained steadfast in his adherence to and investment in the tactics and strategies deployed by the Party—despite his frustration with its ideological and institutional orthodoxy. Banks, though he was let down by his comrades and his party, did not give up on his commitment to an insistent economic and material analysis of the condition of African Americans in the United States. Neither did Mayfield. Their attachment to leftist critiques of capitalism, of class relations, and his


overwhelming concern for the material realities of black people served to reinforce this position.

Banks' character was not written to garner sympathy for the downfall of the American Left nor explain the appeal of the Party to the reader. On the contrary, his story arc emphasized the impact of the Left's marginalization in post-McCarthy America. In widening the frame of available perspectives, Lonnie Banks not only allowed Julian Mayfield to examine the difficult compromises for ideological radicals after the success of a decade of anti-communism, but the character also reflected Mayfield's attempts to make sense of his own move away from the Party in the mid-1950s, even as he advocated for the Cuban rebels hiding in the Sierra Maestres in the latter half of the decade.

Though the subject of the Cuban Revolution was not an element of *The Grand Parade*'s expansive narrative, Mayfield's connection with the revolution and its impact on his thinking clearly influenced the novel's hopeless conclusion. If integration could not work, what else was there? Examining Mayfield's experiences with Cuba and Fidel Castro's visit to New York in 1960, which happened in the midst of writing *The Grand Parade*, highlight how Mayfield's rejection of liberalism as a viable solution to American racialism was intertwined with his embrace of revolutionary nationalism in Cuba and his subsequent influence of Robert F. Williams and the North Carolina native's repudiation of non-violent activism.

“An Unbelievable Kind of Revolution”

The formative role of Cuba in the development of black nationalism and militancy in the 1960s has been examined in depth by several historians who have generally agreed that
Cuba's anti-racism was targeted to resonate with African American radical political culture. As an early advocate for the revolution and its goals, Julian Mayfield's writing been a central component of these conclusions. In a 2001 article, professor of English Cynthia A. Young explored how direct contact with revolutionary Cuba affected the thinking of African American radicals, their political commitments, and their subsequent activism. Young focused on writings and reflections of Harold Cruse and Amiri Baraka, examining on how their initial disagreements with one another on the subject of Cuba's revolution gave way to “common intellectual and political ground” over the course of the 1960s. The intellectual transformation of those two men, one a young Beat Poet and the other a dour social critic, elaborates how black radical thought coalesced alongside in parallel with the rising the New Left—a consequence of the limitations of liberalism in the United States and the insistent call of Third World nationalism. However, Cruse and Baraka were just two of nearly fourteen African American writers and thinkers who visited Havana in the Summer of 1960. Widening the focus of Young's analysis to include the writings of others highlights how the terrain of this “common ground” was shaped by a wider variety of experiences.

Mayfield's association with Cuba grew out the relationships he maintained with fellow black Leftists in New York. In March 1960, he received a phone call from Richard Gibson, inviting him to sign his name to an advertisement that the organization Gibson had

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founded with fellow CBS journalists, was planning to run in the *New York Times*. Under the aegis of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) the ad, which ran on 6 April, accused major U.S. journalists and news outlets of bias in reporting on the subject of Cuba. Joining Mayfield in asking, “What is really happening in Cuba?” were other intellectuals, authors, and dissidents, including James Baldwin, John Henrik Clarke, and Robert F. Williams. The ad was also the world’s introduction to the FPCC and the organization declared its members' solidarity with Cuba's revolutionary government and announced their intention to counter bias in media accounts of the revolution's sweeping changes to the island nation.

Not only did the statement's repudiation of U.S. foreign policy signal the beginning of a new Leftist movement, but subsequent reports contained in FBI files of many of the signatories illustrated a renewed effort by the Federal Government to identify and blacklist radicals who criticized U.S. foreign policy. Through his participation in the FPCC, Mayfield's advocacy for the Cuban Revolution refined and refocused his activism shifting his

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63 It is unclear when exactly this call came. Mayfield's response to the subpoena to appear before the Senate Internal Subcommittee on Security as a result of his membership in the FPCC suggests that he added his name as a matter of course, perhaps failing to consider potential consequences. Journalist Richard T. Gibson was born in Los Angeles in 1931. At 18, he published a fiery criticism of African American protest fiction entitled, “A No to Nothing” (1949) for the Kenyon Review. During the 1950s, a Whitney Fellowship afforded him the opportunity to study in Rome and he later relocated to Paris where he became associated with *Présence Africaine*, the Pan-African literary journal. During his time in Paris he became an antagonist of Richard Wright, who wrote of their public disagreement in his roman a clef novel, *Island of Hallucination*. Having returned to the U.S. in 1959, Gibson was studying journalism at Columbia while working as a freelance journalist at CBS when he joined fellow newsmen Alan Sanger and Robert Taber in organizing a group to publicize media bias against the Cuban Revolution. See: Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*, 131–133.


perspective on the relationship between the United States, African Americans, and the Third World. Despite being in the midst of writing *The Grand Parade*, Mayfield not only found time to visit Havana with Cordero, but the experience re-oriented his thinking toward the changing relationship between the state and anti-racist activism. The FBI's renewed interest in Mayfield following the appearance of his name in the FPCC advertisement, offers insight into both his actions, but also the ways in which the Eisenhower administration sought to disrupt the relationships being forged between African American radicals and Cuban revolutionaries.

![Advertisement](image)

Figure 2: The advertisement published on 6 April 1960 was organized by Robert Taber and Richard Gibson with funds obtained from Raulito Roa, the son of Cuban UN foreign minister Raul Roa.

In March 1960, the modest home Mayfield shared with Cordero and their son in Queens received a phone call from an FBI Agent posing as a credit inspector. A memo in Mayfield's FBI file documents the call, indicating that it was answered by a Spanish-speaking woman who answered a series of questions related to Mayfield's credit. “Julian Mayfield is always at home,” the unnamed agent wrote, “he does not go to work; however, he does his
writing at his residence.”\textsuperscript{66} Echoing earlier reports gathered by the FBI’s San Juan office, the memo is significant not for what was discovered, but for the timing of the call. Even before the ad ran in the \textit{New York Times} in April, this phone call suggests that the Bureau was aware of the organization's existence and those who were associated with it. Until recently, how the FBI came by this information was a mystery, but a 2018 article in \textit{Newsweek} magazine, outing Gibson as having been on the payroll of the Central Intelligence Agency, suggests that Gibson himself may have provided that information to the Bureau.\textsuperscript{67}

As renewed surveillance on Mayfield indicated, the response to the FPCC was sudden and significant. Early in 1960, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover expressed his worries that the FPCC had “the capacity . . . to mobilize its efforts in such a situation so as to arrange demonstrations and influence public opinion.”\textsuperscript{68} According to FBI historian Athan Theoharris, a few days after the publication of the April advertisement William K. Harvey, the head of the CIA's Cuban affairs department, assured the FBI counterintelligence chief Sam Papich that “this Agency has derogatory information on all individuals listed in the attached advertisement,” implying that surveillance had begun in advance of the

\textsuperscript{66} Following the publication of \textit{The Hit}, surveillance on Mayfield appears to have ceased entirely. There is a gap in his FBI file from April of 1957 that lasts until March of 1960.

\textsuperscript{67} The article, published online on 15 May 2018, reveals that Gibson's identity as an informant and asset of the CIA was revealed through the 2017 release of documents relating the assassination of JFK. Gibson, who is still alive as of the publication of this article, has not commented on this accusation, nor has further research uncovered what Gibson shared with the CIA. See: Jefferson Morley, “CIA Reveals Name of Former Spy in JFK Files—And He's Still Alive,” \textit{Newsweek}, 15 May 2018, <http://www.newsweek.com/richard-gibson-cia-spies-james-baldwin-amiri-baraka-richard-wright-cuba-926428> Accessed 17 May 2018.

\textsuperscript{68} While Hoover's statement could be regarded as being alarmist for the sake of reinforcing the prominence for his agency, the amount of documentation on the FPCC and those associated with it suggest that the Bureau regarded the organization, and its association with the Cuban government, as a significant threat to national security. Hoover quoted in: Van Gosse, \textit{Where The Boys Are}, 243.
advertisement's publication.\textsuperscript{69} In gathering information on suspected “communist subversives,” the FBI provided intelligence for the two committees which served as the primary locus of state anti-communist efforts: the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS) and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

In July 1959, just seven months after the revolution had ousted dictator Fulgencio Batista, Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi opened up the first public inquiry on communism within the Cuban Revolution. Cuban defectors, such as Major General Pedro L. Díaz Lanz, were called to give testimony about Moscow's influence in the island's new government.\textsuperscript{70} Declarations of solidarity by African Americans did not go unnoticed, and several African Americans were subpoenaed to appear before the SISS and HUAC between 1959 and 1962, including Mayfield and Gibson.\textsuperscript{71} That growing backlash, however, did not

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\item[70] Díaz, the personal pilot of Fidel Castro until his defection in the Spring of 1959, claimed that many of Castro's lieutenants and aides were Communists. He stated that the Cuban leader was now taking orders from Moscow. He sought to explain his own involvement by arguing that the Cuban Revolution had originally attracted Cubans who sought, “security, our human rights, democracy, elections . . . you know, what you have in the United States.” The revolution, however, had been hijacked by a Communist vanguard led by the Castro brothers and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara under orders from the Soviet Union. Diaz's three hour testimony, later published under the title \textit{Communist Threat to the United States Through the Caribbean} argued that Communists were pressing for a “negro revolution” in the United States and were actively trying to “subvert the American Negro against his own government.” Diaz cited Cuba's anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and anti-capitalism as evidence of the regime's hidden communist agenda. When questioned about “anti-American” propaganda by Sourwine, Diaz pointed a public showing of the 1958 Stanley Kramer film, \textit{The Defiant Ones}, as an example of this anti-American propaganda. After a public showing, Castro reportedly told the audience that, “this is democracy; there [sic] is what you have in the United States; this is imperialistic Yankee; there is inhuman system.” Diaz expressed confusion about Castro's perspective on the film, which, in his mind, had been designed to shift public opinion in the United States, “against racial segregation.” While the committee did not press for a more detailed analysis of Castro's remarks, it is notable that Mayfield had also rejected the film earlier that year for many of the same reasons. \textit{See: Communist Threat to the United States Through the Caribbean}, Diaz testimony, 25; SISS report cited in J. Lee Annis, \textit{Big Jim Eastland: The Godfather of Mississippi} (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 1837.

\item[71] Mayfield was subpoenaed in April 1961, the result of a subsequent ad placed by the FPCC entitled “An Appeal to Conscience” which denounced the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. While Gibson testified in July
\end{footnotes}
deter radical African Americans who saw the potential inherent in forging bonds of solidarity with an anti-racist and anti-colonial government ninety miles south of Florida.

One of those radicals was Robert Franklin Williams of Monroe, North Carolina. In June 1960, Williams, another of the signatories of the April Letter, left for Cuba at the invitation of Gibson. Spending the month of June as a guest of the state, Williams returned to the United States and began a series of public speaking appearances in which he extolled the revolutionary potential of the island for its Afro-Cuban inhabitants and expressed announced his intention to return. When questioned by John H. Clarke, Williams explained that it was “because I wanted to see this social miracle again.” The North Carolina native and Marine Corps veteran saw in Cuba something that he characterized as, “unbelievable to a Southerner—particularly a Southern Negro,” a place where the government was actively anti-racist and intent not only in integrating public facilities, but in remaking those institutions out of whole cloth. On the fourth of July, 1960, an issue of the Cuban literary magazine *Lunes de Revolucion* featured writings of “Los Negros des U.S.A” was published in Havana. With contributions by Julian Mayfield, Langston Hughes, Sarah E. Wright, Maya Angelou, Harold Cruse, James Baldwin, and Richard Gibson, the magazine examined how the experiences of these black writers challenged the claims of the United States as a “land of

1961, Mayfield claims that his lawyer, Leonard Boudin, called the subcommittee's secretary and let it slip that Mayfield was not white and the committee rescinded its subpoena. Mayfield writes that it was Paul Robeson's forceful repudiation of the committee during his testimony in 1956 that meant that, “[s]ince then, committees with Southern chairmen—and most committees have Southern chairmen—had avoided summoning black radicals whenever possible.” See: Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 215–217.

the free.” 73 Even as the magazine was making waves in the United States, the FPCC was planning another public relations coup.

In early July, sixteen African American writers and intellectuals arrived in Havana, where they would be guests of the state for ten days. That trip, which would have important consequences for Cuban-African American relations, also had important ramifications for Julian Mayfield and Ana Livia Cordero's future. Unlike their travel companions, Julian and Ana Livia did not fly directly from New York to Havana. Instead, the couple flew first to San Juan to drop off their son, Rafael, with his grandparents before continuing on to Havana. It is likely that this is the reason the FBI was unaware that the couple were in Cuba until several days after their arrival. According to a memo in Mayfield's file dated 22 July, the San Juan FBI office was advised that Mayfield and Cordero had been in Havana for over a week.74 Several memos followed in quick succession and agents expressed concern and confusion over the family's whereabouts. The memos indicate that agents were unsure if the Mayfields had relocated or were simply visiting the island. In spite of its impressive array of agents and resources, the FBI was unable to confirm that the Mayfields had returned to New York until several days after their plane had landed when a local informant confirmed it in an August memo. This visit by African American writers not only invigorated domestic radicals like Williams and Mayfield, but it provided first-hand experience for those who


74 Julian Mayfield FBI File, Untitled Memorandum, 4 August 1960.
would go on to be critics of U.S. empire and proponents of Third World Solidarity movements.  

Though the Bureau was aware of the gathering of African Americans in Havana in July of 1960, the files of those involved were devoid of mention of the specific activities and events until after their return to the United States and paid informants were able to gather information. This silence documents contrasts with a flurry of memos which provided details of daily life, excerpts from unpublished manuscripts, gossip, and private information of their lives in the United States. This distinction illustrates the ways in which Cuba was a space that limited surveillance during the early 1960s. Black radicals, accustomed to the knowledge that they were being surveilled, had a temporary respite from the institutional gaze of white supremacy—an attractive, albeit temporary benefit. As guests of the Cuban government, Mayfield and Cordero joined fourteen other African American authors and intellectuals in Havana, including John H. Clarke, Sarah E. Wright and her husband Ed Clark, John O. Killens, Robert Williams, and Richard Gibson, among others. Though some twenty-four people had been invited, several, including Alice Childress, Langston Hughes, and James Baldwin, declined the invitation. Their reasons were varied, but concerns about the impact of a resurgent anti-communism figured prominently. Their refusal, however, was not without consequences for broader Afro-Diasporic solidarity efforts.

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75 The official severing of U.S.-Cuban diplomatic relations occurred on 3 January 1961.

76 In a poignant section of his autobiography, Mayfield relates an encounter with the lauded Afro-Cuban poet Nicolas Guillén, who was appointed as the head of Unión Nacional de Escritores de Cuba after his return to the island in 1959. At a cocktail party held shortly after their arrival, Guillén arrived and loudly demanded of the visitors, “where is Langston Hughes? He is one of my oldest friends. He should be here!” Guillén, who had befriended Hughes during the Hughes’s first trip to Havana in 1921 was saddened when he learned that his old friend was not present. For the same reason that Hughes had felt compelled to keep his name off the FPCC letter in the Times, he was also reticent to travel to a country which was already fending off
For many of the visitors, Mayfield included, what they witnessed was nothing short of astonishing. “Many of those who refused to go just could not credit the accounts of the revolution we brought back,” Mayfield wrote, “it was an unbelievable kind of revolution and it was happening just ninety miles from the Florida coast.” What many had long considered to be impossible had become, in Cuba at least, a reality. Though they were staying in the chic Hotel Presidente, the visitors mingled freely with the local population who came and went

charges of communism. Those present understood that, having already sat before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1951, Hughes might not be eager to do so again. Like Hughes, men and women who had received invitations through the FPCC decided the extent of their participation with one eye on the response their attendance might generate. See: Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 213–214.

amid the columns in the hotel's enormous, Art Nouveau lobby. Mayfield and Cordero witnessed families converting the opulent, empty homes in Habana Vieja into multi-family dwellings and saw how new laws were putting an end to legal segregation in public accommodations and employment. They saw black faces in officer's uniforms and in positions of civilian power. The trip, which began with cocktail parties and tours touting the accomplishments of the young government in Havana, culminated in a nationwide celebration of the anniversary of the Movimento de Julio de 26 in Santiago de Cuba, on the island's far eastern end, after a long and dusty train ride.78

For many of the visitors, the experience of Cuba proved life-changing. LeRoi Jones' account of his visit, “Cuba Libre,” declared, “the Cuban trip was a turning point in my life.”79 The Beat Poet praised the government's commitment to radically remaking the Cuban nation and the impact it had on the people whom he met on the trip. Busy attempting to meet his publisher's deadline for *The Grand Parade*, Mayfield was unable to write about the political and social ramifications of the encounter until the following summer.80 Unlike Jones, Mayfield's piece focused less on his personal transformation and instead lauded the

78 The July 26th Movement was named for the attack on the Moncada Barracks in the city of Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953. Fidel Castro, then an unknown lawyer, helped plan the attack with a group of young revolutionaries. The uprising, which was quickly, and brutally, suppressed, resulted in Castro's arrest. During his trial, he spoke out against the oppression of Batista's government and famously claimed that, “History Will Absolve Me,” the title of the speech he gave during the court hearing. Exiled once again to Mexico, Castro was joined there in 1955 by a group of 82 fellow exiles, including brother Raúl Castro, Camilo Cienfuegos, Huber Matos and Juan Almeida Bosque. There, they organized the group that would begin the guerrilla fight against Batista, sailing from Mexico on the yacht *Granma* in the Spring of 1956. See: Aviva Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2015).


80 However, Mayfield did publish a short article in the *Chicago Defender* in October, following Fidel Castro's visit to New York in September 1960.
convulsive changes initiated by the new state. “The Cuban Challenge,” was primarily interested in the Cuban government's anti-racist policy developments, which challenged common anti-black practices in hiring, education, and public accommodations. Far from merely erasing the color line, as he had seen in Puerto Rico, Mayfield noted that Cuba's new government was radically and systematically remaking the social order by placing Afro-Cubans in positions of power. In Cuba, liberal calls for fairness and “color-blindness” were summarily ignored. Mayfield scoffed at claims that the practices were violating the rights of white Cubans, insisting that, “the only right [the government] violate[s] is the right to be a bigot.”

Even as he celebrated Cuban anti-racism publicly his private musings reflected concerns with Fidel Castro's grasp on the politics of race in the United States.

Publicly, Mayfield declared that Fidel Castro was eminently qualified to lead his own nation, buts privately he questioned the leader's understanding of racial conditions across the Florida Strait. “The naive and unrealistic faith which Fidel and some of his closest comrades seem to have had in the 'revolutionary potential' of black Americans,” was disconcerting. In one instance, Mayfield recalled a speech Castro had made predicting a revolutionary uprising of African Americans in the South. If they could only be given Russian rifles, Castro argued, a revolution would solve the “Negro problem” in the United States. The idea that such an uprising could possibly succeed was met with derision by Mayfield who was shocked when he saw other visiting African Americans nodding along with Castro. “I was called cynical,” he recalled, “when I said that if the rifles passed into their hands on Monday, the United

States government would be that much richer on Tuesday.” In spite of the history of racist institutions and violence, the majority of African Americans, Mayfield believed, nevertheless retained a deep attachment to the American nation and feared jeopardizing their status, second-class though it may be.

The dominance of non-violent civil rights efforts in the U.S. was evidence enough for Mayfield that black Americans were not yet ready to take up arms against their government. “Blacks had fought like tigers for the U.S. government in every one of her wars,” he mused in his autobiography, “but they always laid down their arms when they came home.” This belief in the patriotism of African Americans was also reflected in The Grand Parade, where he pointed to the ways in which black citizens of the fictional city of Gainesboro, despite their treatment, still did not see violent action as necessary or even possible. If Cuba represented a model to be emulated, it would have to take into account the specifics of the African American experience beyond the small group of radicals in attendance. With time, Mayfield came to see that, even as Cuba’s new government attempted to radically remake their society, they ran up against familiar limitations.


83 Ibid., 191–192. Unfortunately, Mayfield does not seem to have been aware of a number of examples to the contrary. In particular, the uprising of African American soldiers returning from WWI in Houston, as well as the number of returning WWII veterans who became important leaders in racial justice struggles in New York, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Illinois suggest that, while some African American veterans may have laid down their arms, they were still willing to fight for their citizenship rights. See: Adriane Lentz-Smith, Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Chad Williams, Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

By 1961, Mayfield reluctantly concluded that revolutionary Cuba, despite its impact on the burgeoning global Afro-Diasporic solidarity movement and its domestic anti-racist policies, had not yet undone the centuries of racist and imperialist policies that kept Afro-Cubans at the bottom of the society they had built. Racial disparities had shifted the conversation in Cuban public life, sometimes with strange results, but racism remained deeply embedded in the island's social, economic, and culture life. Ultimately, Mayfield came to agree with Jones's assessment of the revolution as transformative, but focused more on how it was remaking Afro-Diasporic solidarity, not his own personal sentiments. The broader importance he placed on developing this solidarity prompted him to publicly minimize Castro's flaws, especially during the Cuban leader's infamous visit to Harlem in September 1960.

“An Oasis in the Desert”

Seldom has the visit of a world leader to the United States made such an impression as Fidel Castro did when he arrived in Harlem during the last week of September 1960. Fidel Castro's first tour of the Eastern United States, in April 1959, had been a more light-hearted affair. The Cuban leader was photographed visiting the Bronx Zoo, eating ice cream with American children, paying his respects at the grave of George Washington, and laying a wreath at the Lincoln Memorial. He asserted his anti-communist bonafides to an overflow audience at Harvard's Dillon Field House after accepting the invitation of Harvard president

85 During the long train ride from Havana to Santiago de Cuba that he recounted in his autobiography, Mayfield recalled what had happened when the train carrying “los negros Americanos” pulled into small Cuban towns “As a measure of how bad things must have been before the revolution, the [Cubans] would often go and awaken a poor guy whom I supposed to be the only black man in town and hold his hand up to show [Robert] Williams that blacks and whites were now united in revolution.” Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 194.
and future National Security Advisor to President Kennedy, McGeorge Bundy. “We are against all kinds of dictators,” Castro told the assembled crowd, “[and] that is why we are against communism.” The second visit proved far more controversial. Due to speak at the United Nations on September 27, Castro arrived on the Sunday the 18th to wildly enthusiastic crowds at LaGuardia Airport. The delegation's exuberance at the welcome soured after they settled in to their hotel. A day after their arrival at the midtown Hotel Shelbourne, Castro's delegation decamped and relocated uptown to Harlem's Hotel Theresa.

Castro's decision to relocate to Harlem, diplomatic historian Brenda G. Plummer argued, “constituted a watershed” in U.S.-Cuban relations. “Not only because it coincided with a critical juncture in the history of U.S. race relations,” Plummer asserts, “but also because it marked a departure in conventional ways of perceiving, and prosecuting, the Cold War.”

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87 Accounts of this conflict have been explored elsewhere in more detail, especially in Cynthia Young's article, “Havana Up in Harlem.” According to Castro, the Shelbourne demanded a $10,000 deposit and Castro refused to pay. Media accounts from New York tabloids cited barbaric behavior of the visiting Cubans portraying them as “uncouth primitives” which had “killed, plucked, and cooked chickens in their rooms at the Shelbourne and extinguished cigars on expensive carpets.” There is also a minor debate over who was responsible for Castro's move uptown. According to Mayfield, it was Richard Gibson who suggested Castro to move uptown to the Theresa. In contrast, Van Gosse claims it was Robert Taber that suggested the Theresa to Castro. (Gosse, 151) Ralph Crowder, writing in 2000, claimed that “Raul Roa Kouri . . . communicated with Richard Gibson and Robert Taber, leaders of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) about hotel accommodations in Harlem. Taber informed the young diplomat that "[Malcolm X] had already suggested that we use the [Theresa] in Harlem." The recent book by Rosemari Mealy repeats Crowder's claim, suggesting that it was Malcolm X who had the initial idea and Taber and Gibson handled the logistics. Whomever was ultimately responsible, the Cuban delegation took over the hotel for the entirety of their stay. See: Ralph L. Crowder, “Fidel Castro and Harlem: Political, Diplomatic, and Social Influences of the 1960 Visit to the Hotel Theresa,” Afro-Americans in New York Life and History 24, no. 1 (31 January 2000): 79; Rosemari Mealy, Fidel & Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting (New York: Black Classic Press, 2013), 122.
In making Harlem his base of operations for the U.N. speech, Castro inverted the city's normal racial hierarchy. In contrast to the staid confines of the U.N. headquarters in tranquil Turtle Bay, Cold War diplomacy played out along raucous Lenox Avenue as Indian Prime Minister Jawal Nehru, Guinean President Sekou Touré, Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev made pilgrimages uptown to meet with Cuba's bearded, fatigue-clad, cigar-chomping leader. This spectacular inversion embarrassed the State Department as it drew attention to the second-class citizenship of African Americans in New York City. Mayfield wryly called the Theresa “as dingy a place as you can find” in his autobiographical account of the event, but Castro's stay at the Harlem institution was less about the accommodations and more about making a statement about U.S. race relations, something that few world leaders, save Khrushchev, had dared to do.

The move also legitimized Castro's rhetoric about solidarity across the African diaspora for many Harlem residents. In a nation which assumed foreign leaders would avoid inflaming already delicate race relations, Castro's dramatic move uptown, “was a direct slap in the face of U.S. racial practices.” Calling Harlem, “an oasis in the desert,” he made the most of the controversy, entertaining Third World leaders, local black radical activists, and famously meeting with the Nation of Islam's Malcolm X. African Americans and U.S. race relations abroad had long been a component of Cold War rhetoric, but Castro's visit to Harlem placed those issues front and center for the whole world to see. Castro himself was


90 Ibid., 1.
well aware of what his visit had accomplished noting, “we are very happy here. I think this is a big lesson to people who practice discrimination.”

Perhaps most shocking, especially for white Americans, were the cheering crowds that greeted Castro upon his theatrical arrival to the Theresa. Black newspapers were quick to reassure readers that many bystanders were merely curious, even as Mayfield pointed that even those who had no love for Castro were sympathetic to his move uptown. Although, Mayfield acknowledged, “they know little about him like most Americans . . . they know a little something about being mistreated in hotels and having their rightsrestricted.”

Mayfield was at home in Queens writing when he received the news of Castro’s impending move from Richard Gibson. He immediately jumped into his car and set out for Harlem. Though he arrived at the hotel before the Cuban delegation did, a crowd had already gathered outside when Castro emerged from his rented black limousine.

Local residents were not the only ones curious about the Cuban leader setting up shop in Harlem, numerous influential African Americans came to pay their respects or protest Castro’s presence in their neighborhood. Ralph Bunche and Jackie Robinson both spoke outside of the Theresa, criticizing Castro’s use of Harlem for his own “grandstanding.” Bunche pointed out that many residents of were suspicious of Castro’s motives and critical of his politics, however, few could disagree with the ways in which Castro's visit shined a spotlight on Harlem at a key moment in African American political history. Cordons of the police protected the hotel throughout the stay and many businesses

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91 Ibid., 1.

92 Partial letter from Julian Mayfield to “Maga,” 25 September 1960, SCH, JMP, Box 7, Folder 13, 2.
nearby were forced to shut down during the visit, one exception being the nearby “Chock Full O'Nuts” franchise which, according to Mayfield, did record business. Castro's UN speech, the real reason for his visit, decried U.S. interference in the affairs of a sovereign nation, but has largely been reduced to an afterthought in historical accounts. Despite the circus-like atmosphere outside the Hotel Theresa, media accounts indicated that Harlem residents and African Americans throughout the nation were paying very close attention to the visit.

Following Castro's departure, the Chicago Defender published a lengthy article on the impact of the Cuban delegation's stay in Harlem, attempting to explain the appeal of the Cuban leader with quotes from bystanders. “Harlem Labels Castro's Visit as Propaganda,” reported the statements of working-class men and women who expressed mistrust and curiosity at the Cuban leader's presence. Herman Griffin, a laborer, revealed an ambivalent patriotism when he told the paper, “I resent his presence because he did it for a publicity effect on Negroes. I don't like the way he has attacked this country.” But, Griffin pointed out, “I think that Castro is right . . . about some of our government's policies towards Latin America's countries in the past and I can't denounce Castro for taking a stand on that.” After a decade of virulent anti-communism, many Harlem residents quoted in the article took pains to delicately parse the reasons that crowds of African Americans from all over the city had made the sidewalks around the Theresa impassable. An unnamed assistant supermarket manager insisted out that the presence of the crowds was not necessarily indicative of

support. Many were motivated by curiosity, “the same as anybody would have . . . [it doesn't mean anybody agrees with him],” the anonymous man reassured readers.

It was no accident that Harlem residents came to the corner of Lenox Avenue and 125th Street to see for themselves what Fidel Castro was about. That corner had a long, storied history of radical street speech and lively debate between black nationalists, Garveyites, Leftists, and communists.94 Building on the corner's history as a gathering place for public political discourse, the people came because the Cuban government had initiated a propaganda campaign aimed at African Americans shortly after the revolution. In January of 1959, Castro told hundreds of reporters that “as revolutionaries and idealists we are against discrimination in any form.” He pledged that the new Cuban government “[would] work to eliminate every kind of discrimination in Cuba.”95 Castro's claims about the changes his government drew praise and scrutiny in African American newspapers, especially when he admitted, “we do have a problem here, but not anything like that in the South in the United States.”96

Though Castro's statements were calculated to appeal to black Americans, as articles in the Chicago Defender and Baltimore Afro American revealed, many remained suspicious, open to the possibility of radical social change in Cuba, but leery of Castro's methods and claims. Harlem residents interviewed by the Chicago Defender reflected this internal conflict. “If there

94 This was due in part to the presence of the African Memorial Bookstore, which was founded by Lewis H. Michaux in 1932 and remained in operation until 1974, though it was forced to relocate due to the construction of the State Harlem Office Building in 1968. See: Joshua Clark Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods: The Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).


96 Ibid 1,11.
is no discrimination against the Negro there now,” Arnold Earle tentatively concluded, “there must have been a major change in Cuba—there was discrimination there before Castro took over.” Another man, responding to claims by the Castro regime to have eliminated racism, demanded proof: “he'll have to show it to me . . . I don't believe it.”

As if anticipating the ambivalence from Harlem residents, Julian Mayfield was ready with his own defense of Castro and Cuba's anti-racist revolution. An article in the Baltimore Afro-American, published the same day as the Defender piece, announced boldly, “Cuba Has Solution To Race Problem.” Countering the concerns of those Harlemites interviewed by the Defender, Mayfield recounted his own experience in Cuba with Ana Livia three months prior. Mayfield stated that he had seen, “proof that it doesn't take decades of gentle persuasion to deal a death blow to white supremacy.” Cuba's racial hierarchy had been thrown down in a matter of months and, while racist sentiments had not been eradicated, the government's extensive efforts to counteract centuries of institutionalized racism in hiring, firing, economics, and culture had seen them muted. In direct contrast to the U.S. federal government, which publicly expressed a desire for social change, but rarely acted, the new Cuban regime had taken decisive action to “[snatch] away [white Cubans'] power to deny a man a job, a house to live in, or a chance to realize his best potential because of his color.” Harlem residents, Mayfield believed, should recognize that “the important lesson in the Cuban experience is that great social change need not wait on the patient education of white supremacists.”

In contrast to the ambivalence many African Americans demonstrated toward either the Democratic or Republican candidates in the upcoming election, Mayfield argued that Cubans of color stood decisively for the revolution, “and are willing to die to keep it.” Cuba demonstrated to working-class African Americans that the U.S. federal government was neither as committed nor as supportive to racial progress as boosters led them to believe. Identification with Cuban revolutionary governance also contributed to Mayfield's increasing sense that state power was a key element of anti-racist activism. This fascination with the state as a means for liberation dovetailed with Mayfield's growing obsession with personal power and black masculinity.

However, Castro, as a light-skinned Cuban, did not fit the profile of the kind of strong, revolutionary black man that Mayfield had previously found in Paul Robeson. While Castro's seizure of power and his proclamations inspired Mayfield's discursive support, he did not make plans to relocate to Havana. But he was inspired by fellow visitor Robert F. Williams in Havana, a man whose interests were more closely aligned with his. Following reports of increasingly violent confrontations between Williams and local white terrorists in Williams' home town of Monroe, North Carolina, Mayfield decided to see for himself what was going on in the small railroad town.

**A Challenge to the Negro Leadership**

In an April 1961 article published in *Commentary*, Mayfield challenged the NAACP's dominance in the popular perceptions the racial struggle in the United States and offered

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98 Ibid., 9.
Robert F. Williams as an alternative. The failure of mainstream Civil Rights Movements to “produce more substantial and immediate results in the field of civil rights,” Mayfield argued, had undermined its legitimacy among the black masses. The lack of support was a direct factor in the “rapid growth of the militant, white-hating Muslim movement among working-class Negroes.” Echoing his portrayals of ineffectual and out-of-touch black leaders in *The Grand Parade*, Mayfield pointed out how grassroots sit-ins and direct action in service of voting rights in the Deep South by youth organizations, such as the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were gradually supplanting the NAACP's methodology of legal challenges to segregation. These grassroots movements presented “a united front to their common enemy, the system of white supremacy.” Unfortunately, the “negro leadership” was undermining that united front by insisting on narrow legal challenges and national solutions to local and regional problems. Nowhere was the undermining of local struggles more blatant than in the treatment of Robert F. Williams by the NAACP.

Robert Franklin Williams was thrust into activism in 1956 when his local NAACP was rendered leaderless by a rising tide of white violence. A native son, Franklin had returned to Monroe after a stint in the Marines and time working in Detroit. A railroad town and the seat of Union County, Monroe was located some sixty miles southeast of Charlotte along the Seaboard Air Line Railroad. Williams recalled that he took over the local NAACP because no one else wanted the job. After a series of confrontations over the segregated public accommodations, Williams’ frustration with local white supremacists boiled over into


100 Mayfield, “Challenge to the Negro Leadership,” 1.
action. Following the resolution of a court case in which a mentally challenged African American man had been sent to prison for two years for “attempted rape” the same month that two white men had been released after assaulting black women, Williams took to the steps of the Union County Courthouse and declared:

“We cannot take these people who do us injustice to the court and it becomes necessary to punish them ourselves. In the future we are going to have to try and convict them on the spot. We cannot rely on the law. We can get no justice under the present system. If we feel that injustice is done, we must right then and there, on the spot, be prepared to inflict punishment on the people.”

The statement was widely publicized and resulted in a quick response from the NAACP’s national president, Roy Wilkins, who suspended Williams from the organization. Despite the attempts to silence Williams, the questions he raised resonated with many African Americans, especially in Northern cities such as New York, Chicago, and Detroit. If state and local governments would not adhere to the rule of law and the federal government would not intervene, what were local movements to do in the face of violent attacks by white residents? If the system was unjust, what could law-abiding people hope to accomplish through legal, peaceful means? Men like Williams, Mayfield argued in Commentary, were going to “play an increasingly vocal role in the social maelstrom that is the American Southland.” In contrast, leaders like Wilkins had proven themselves inadequate to


102 After Williams refused to heed Wilkins’ demands that he should refrain from repeating this statement in interviews, Wilkins sent a telegram demanding that Williams suspend his activities as local NAACP president. Several weeks later, Williams attended the NAACP national conference and a hearing was held, which Mayfield dubbed Wilkins vs. Williams, that made his suspension official. See: Mayfield, “Challenge to the Negro Leadership,” 2–3.
the task of leadership by ignoring him. As such, Mayfield suggested, “a closer look at [Williams], his views, and the environment that produced him, may be revealing.”103

It was Mayfield's hope to get this “closer look” that originally brought him to Monroe in the spring of 1961. Having finished *The Grand Parade* in December 1960, Mayfield soon began raising money for Williams in New York. In April, he took a more active role in the newly formed Monroe Defense Committee (MDC), transporting food, blankets, and other supplies in his own car. During the first trip to Monroe his father, Hudson Mayfield, accompanied him and John H. Clarke as they drove Mayfield's battered Nash Rambler down south.104 In July 1961, Mayfield was able to secure press credentials from the *Cleveland Call & Post*, although he did not ever publish a story there. Since the publication of Mayfield's *Commentary* article, there had been a virtual media blackout of Monroe and Mayfield hoped that his reporting could put Williams back in the public spotlight. The story he got would almost cost him his life.

In the months before Mayfield's arrival, the situation in Monroe was a simmering cauldron of racial tension. After decades of segregation, an invigorated local NAACP led by Williams had begun a multi-pronged assault on Jim Crow. The group successfully integrated the Union County Library in 1957 and then set its sights on the city's swimming pool, built with Federal money and labor under the Works Progress Administration (WPA).105 There,

103 Mayfield, “Challenge to the Negro Leadership,” 2.

104 Hudson Mayfield's support was not the result out of advocacy for Williams' cause, but in his knowledge of how difficult travel to the South could be. He hoped to keep the younger Mayfield safe on his journey into Jim Crow territory, a fact that Julian recalled with fondness in his autobiographical manuscript.

105 One of the main reasons Williams set his sights on the WPA swimming pool, Tyson argues, was that the, “black children barred from these [swimming safety] programs swam in isolated farm ponds, muddy creeks,
however, they ran into a snag. The outright refusal of the Monroe government to offer a solution to the unsafe swimming conditions for African American children was accompanied by renewed white violence, in the form of night riders and threats from a resurgent Ku Klux Klan. In the summer of 1960, Williams wrote directly to President Eisenhower, but the president's response was less than encouraging.

“As much as the president deplores an instance of this nature and is constantly striving toward the time-honored principles of American equality,” Eisenhower wrote Williams in an article later published in the *Afro-American* read, “it is not within the purview of his office to act officially upon such cases.”

The following year, the so-called “Kissing Case” resulted in threats and attempts by local whites to lynch two boys, ages nine and ten, as well as their families for a game involving two white girls. Concluding that the strategy of nonviolence was insufficient in the face of these direct threats of violence, Williams refused to back down; rather, he planned on “meeting violence with violence” and “stopping lynching with lynching.”

Writing to the National Rifle Association, he received a charter to found his own chapter and began arming the men and women of the local NAACP chapter with M-1 Carbines and .38 caliber police special revolvers. A veteran himself, Williams drilled the men of Monroe in military tactics and organized them into platoons to form a

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“black militia.” Effective resistance, he believed, required organization, patience, and marksmanship.

When Julian Mayfield met Williams in Havana in July 1960, he only knew the square-jawed Southerner from the newspapers. “I expected to meet some sort of wild man,” Mayfield recalled, “for in every Southern town there has always been at least one black man who let it be known that he was willing to die if he could take a few white men with him.”

Those men, Mayfield wrote, were “rarely political.” They “kept to the shadows,” leaving the main thoroughfares for whites. Williams, in contrast, “belonged to a new breed of Southerner who wanted not only peace in the shadows . . . but demanded complete access to the main street also because his taxes helped maintain it.” In Williams, Mayfield discovered a steely resolve that was neither affect nor exaggeration.

Confronting Williams about the arsenal of guns he allegedly maintained as the men sipped rum on a balcony overlooking the Caribbean Sea, Mayfield recalled that Williams responded with a soft chuckle, “man, everybody knows that. The Crackers know it. The cops know it, and Roy Wilkins knows it. The next time you're in the states, come on down and see for yourself.” Julian Mayfield's advocacy of Williams in the news media increased the North Carolina native's name recognition and contributed to his rising influence on

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108 Tyson, Radio Free Dixie, 50.
110 Ibid., 201.
111 Ibid., 201.
black radicalism.\textsuperscript{112} Even as Martin Luther King Jr. dominated print and visual media with peaceful marches in Alabama and Georgia, Williams' quiet fury and military-style organization served as a welcome example for many Southern African Americans who did not relish becoming the targets of white vigilantes.

Mayfield's account of his time in Monroe have served as one of the most essential primary source documents of the events that would transpire in August 1961 and his analysis is reflected in historical accounts. Yet his own role in the events have often fallen by the wayside in favor of Williams' leadership and charisma. “There are some of us who might participate in struggle, but almost never lead,” Mayfield wrote in reference to Williams and the thirty-three-year-old journalist was an eager participant.\textsuperscript{113} Lumping himself in with other authors, journalists, organizers, and propagandists, he considered how his own novels and newspaper articles may challenge segregation discursively, but not directly. This contrasted with what Mayfield saw in Williams, a fact that would have implications for his future activism outside of the United States.

For Mayfield, the cold, calm anger that Williams evinced whenever he heard a new injustice marked him as a man who was not to trifled with. When Robert Taber and Richard Gibson received news during the Havana trip that they had lost their jobs due to their support of Castro, Williams' fury took Mayfield by surprise. Here was someone who knew the injustices of the past as well as anyone else, but felt “just as outraged at the last injustice


\textsuperscript{113} Julian Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 203.
or atrocity as [he was] at the first.” 14 The righteous anger he described was neither hasty nor hot, but cold, calculating, and patient. “It was Rob Williams's plain speech and undoubted sincerity and commitment which took me to Monroe,” Mayfield reflected, though he confessed wryly, “there might have been a little romantic appeal, too.” 15

Whatever romantic appeal drew Mayfield to Monroe did not last. Despite Mayfield's confession that he “fell in love with Monroe,” he remarked that this, “wasn't easy because Monroe was one of the most unaesthetic looking towns in the Southland.” 16 It was instead “a love affair with the town's black population,” who, by the time Mayfield arrived, was organized and united in defense of their community. In Monroe, “a man who did not carry a pistol or a rifle was considered foolish,” and Mayfield took to carrying a pistol for the first time (but not the last) in his life. 17 On his second day in town, he attended the funeral of a young black man who had been killed when his car had been run off the road into a ravine. “It was tit for tat,” Mayfield noted—“young Black men regularly engaged in the same practice.” The difference, however, “was they didn't have the police force of Chief Mauney . . . on their side.” 18

Sporadic skirmishes, which occurred throughout 1961, gave way to an uneasy stalemate until August 1961. That month a group of Freedom Riders, which included members of CORE, arrived in Monroe with hopes of defusing the tensions and using non-

114 Ibid., 203.
115 Ibid., 202.
117 Ibid., 28–29.
118 Ibid., 28.
violent tactics to integrate the town peacefully. Against Williams' advice, they set up the Monroe Nonviolent Action Committee and began implementing their ideas for how to help the citizens of Monroe. Their presence upset the precarious balance of power and ironically created the conditions for further violence. Most were white, with many having just been released from prison in Birmingham, a fact that incensed the local whites and confused local blacks.\textsuperscript{119}

Despite Williams' urging that the Freedom Riders avoid public protests, they organized a picket line on 20 August 1961, resulting in a week of arrests and violence. The following weekend, Monroe's white citizens initiated a riot that was, “condoned and instigated by the police,” in response to an organized picket of the Union County Courthouse. That Sunday, the 27 August 1961, the Freedom Riders arrived at the courthouse and were met by the sheriff, his deputies, and a large group of white civilians.\textsuperscript{120} When they realized that the protesters were unarmed, Mayfield recalled, “the white boys of Monroe had a field day.”\textsuperscript{121} Williams had refused to take part in the protest after he was told that he was not permitted to bring weapons, but when calls started coming begging for help and describing the bloody assaults of protestors by white police officers and citizens, he quickly sent out a caravan of cars to rescue them.

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\textsuperscript{119} According to Mayfield's account in notes from “Tales of the Lido,” Williams cautioned the Freedom Riders against this planned picketing. However, Freedom Rider James Forman's account indicates that he was leery of the plan, “[b]ut Williams was in favor of the plan. 'We can't stop now,' he said excitedly. 'Things are hot but we have to know how to make them hotter.' I didn't agree with him, but if he felt it was necessary than I was willing to help him with the picketing.” See: Mayfield, “Tales of the Lido,” 30; James Forman, \textit{The Making of Black Revolutionaries} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 189, 192–193.
\textsuperscript{120} John Lowery Oral history. Interviewed by Elsa Knight Thompson and Mike Tigar on 4 May 1962, \texttt{<http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_28-h707w67k6s> Accessed 21 October 2016>}
\textsuperscript{121} Materials from “Tales of the Lido” Folder 11 Box 15, 30.
\end{flushright}
Having arrived with Mae Mallory the previous night, Mayfield was one of those who drove out to rescue the Freedom Riders as they were being brutally beaten by police and local white residents. Accompanied by John Lowery, a young white man from the Bronx, the two men joined a caravan of eight cars headed to the center of Monroe. On the way there, a carload of local whites pulled up beside them “and shrilly invite[d] us to go back to New York or Moscow where we came from.” Still, “they [did] not attack for they recognize[d] that these are the crazy niggers who carry and use guns.” 122

Managing to pick up bruised and batterer protesters, Mayfield drove without incident until the car was sideswiped by “[a] car filled with white boys,” who pushed his car into the railing of a railway bridge. Terrified of the one hundred foot drop off the bridge, Mayfield kept his hands on the wheel until his car was rammed again. The men, seeing Mayfield’s New York license plate, asked him, “what are you doin’ down here?” 123 According to Mayfield’s account, he reached for his revolver, but was stopped by Lowery, who implored him to lower the weapon. Mayfield wrestled his arm away from Lowery, slapped the man, and pointed his pistol at the car beside him and answered their question, “I came to see your mother, motherfucker!” Before Mayfield could get off a shot, however, a local man traveling in a car behind him fired his pistol into the air. The car full of white men, now realizing that they were not attacking non-violent Freedom Riders, disengaged and sped away. 124

122 Ibid. 31.

123 According to James Forman, Julian Mayfield’s car was being driven by a man named Paul Brooks. Mayfield’s account, however, does not specify which car he was driving, but does mention that it had a New York license plate, suggesting that it was his. See: Forman, The Making of Black Revolutionaries, 197–198.

124 Notably, Lowery’s oral history includes no mention of Mayfield or of this incident on the bridge. Lowery had arrived in Monroe by way of Jackson, MS, and had recently been let of jail along with James Forman. According to Lowery, a Reverend Vivian of Mississippi told him that “Williams wanted freedom riders to
In the aftermath of the violent confrontation, as several Freedom Riders (including Jim Forman) lay bleeding in the Monroe County jail, the remaining non-violent protestors regrouped in at the Williams' residence in Newtown. At the same time, a white couple from nearby Shelby, NC drove into Monroe and turned down the Boyte Street, where the Williams family lived. The couple, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Stegall, later told reporters that they wanted to see for themselves what was happening in Monroe. Their car was stopped by a crowd of Newtown residents who forced the couple out on to the street. Some began hurling epithets at them while others called for their murder. Fearing for the couple's safety, Williams let them inside his home to protect them from the crowd, a decision that would have serious and unexpected consequences. At Mrs. Stegall's request, Williams telephoned the Union County sheriff to explain the situation and the sheriff in turn informed him that a warrant had already been issued for his arrest on the charge of kidnapping. A short while later, a neighbor came over and reported that the Lieutenant Governor had just been on television declaring that he had ordered the National Guard out to arrest Williams for “insurrection.” Williams immediately began making plans to flee Monroe.125

Escape to Africa

As darkness fell on the warm August night, Julian Mayfield was waiting nervously by the entrance to Newtown. A few hours before, Williams sent him to the home of a come up and form an integrated picket line,” but Williams' own discussion of the incident challenges this idea. According to his oral history, Lowery was also present at the Williams' house following the arrival of the Stegalls and it was he who moved their car away from the angry mob after the Stegalls entered the Williams household. For this, Lowery would be indicted, along with Mae Mallory and two men from Monroe, on charges of kidnapping.

125 Mayfield, “Tales from the Lido,” 36; Tyson, Radio Free Dixie, 181.
supporter and asked the two men to hide the two sub-machine guns that had recently been smuggled down.\textsuperscript{126} While the man dug a hole for the weapons in his backyard, Mayfield telephoned his pregnant wife, Ana Livia, to tell her what was going on in Monroe. He recalled that the call was made “rather dramatically, to say goodbye, just in case, because there was the sound of gunfire.” At six o'clock, Williams telephoned Mayfield again, telling him that, “if [we] didn't leave Monroe there would be a bloodbath.” Under the cover of darkness, Williams, his family, and fellow militant Mae Mallory crept down the road where Mayfield was waiting with his Nash Rambler. As Mayfield's battered car left Union County it passed trucks full of, “armed white men putting on their uniforms, pointing toward Monroe.”\textsuperscript{127} A few days later, after dropping Mallory with friends in New York City, the party crossed over into Canada and to safety.

Exile was not what Julian Mayfield had intended when he went to see for himself what was happening in Monroe. In Puerto Rico, Mayfield had sought build a new life with his bride, far from the blacklisting of McCarthyism and the stultifying effects of American racism, but instead he discovered the pervasiveness of white supremacy and oppressive reality of colonialism. Returning to New York, Mayfield put his talents as a writer to work in order to warn African American communities outside the South about limitations of liberal integrationism, but his message largely fell on deaf ears. Despite reservations about Cuba's

\textsuperscript{126} The supporter, Richard Crowder, was later arrested and tried by the state of North Carolina. The home that Crowder and Mayfield buried the weapons at belonged to his mother. These two sub-machine guns had been transported down to Monroe by Mayfield during an earlier trip. In the “Tales of the Lido” fragment which focuses on Monroe, Mayfield wrote that they had been procured by “a famous writer [who] made touch with a gangster in New Jersey.” That famous writer was revealed to have been Amiri Baraka (aka LeRoi Jones). See: Tyson, Radio Free Dixie, 179; Mayfield, “Tales from the Lido,” 36.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 36–37.
young revolution, he reveled in the freedoms that the anti-racist revolution offered him, in particular the freedom from FBI surveillance. He saw the calls of solidarity and its challenges to American foreign policy as an effective means to criticize liberals, both black and white, and he became an active and vocal supporter. Monroe, too, served to emphasize the flawed logic of non-violence as a tactic and encourage his embrace of armed self-defense as a way to protect and preserve black communities. Robert F. Williams offered a compelling reason to confront white supremacy on its own terms and reject black elites who were unwilling to address the economic and social issues affecting black masses.

In his account of his flight from Monroe to Toronto, Mayfield noted with frustration that the support he and the Williams’ received en route to exile did not come from African Americans. Much to his chagrin, it was white Leftists and fellow travelers who shielded Mayfield and the Williams family during their flight to Canada—a fact that darkened his view of the potential for revolutionary solidarity in the United States. From Toronto, the Williams family would depart for Havana, where they would spend the next seven years as Williams encouraged African Americans with his radio program, Radio Free Dixie, and Mabel taught English while raising their two sons.

Like the Williams family, Mayfield was reticent to return to the United States and he had good reason. Between September and November, 1961, FBI files indicate the Bureau not only utilized “technical or microphone surveillance” to watch the home that Mayfield shared with Dr. Cordero in East Elmhurst, Queens, but that they also paid informants to question her about his whereabouts.\(^\text{128}\) Cordero, however, skillfully eluded the Bureau and

\(^{128}\) Julian Mayfield FBI File, “Memorandum, Subject: Justification for continuation of technical or microphone surveillance,” 10 October 1961, 1.
protected her husband. According to the FBI's unnamed informant, Cordero lied about Mayfield's whereabouts, stating in September that he was, “back down South,” and claimed that the family had, “postponed [the] trip [to Ghana] until December and that they have decided to wait until the baby is born.” Cordero also suggested she might, “pack up and go to Venezuela with her parents,” deflecting the informant and the Bureau's attention. She was even able to retrieve the family's Nash Rambler. An agent, C. H. Stanley, reported that, “she stated that the car was returned to her by a friend whom she declined to identify.”

Dr. Cordero's deception provided Mayfield with time to cross back over the border and acquire a passport in New York on 11 September 1961. However, for the next two months, Mayfield had little to do but wait.

Having already been offered a job at the Ministry of Health in Ghana, Dr. Cordero contacted the ministry and was able to move up her starting date. Putting the family's affairs in order, the heavily pregnant Ana Livia and the couple's four-year-old son, Rafael, flew to London where they were reunited with Julian. Despite the fact that she was nearly thirty-eight weeks pregnant when they arrived, long past the point where airlines allowed pregnant women to fly, Cordero was able to convince the airline that she was earlier along than she appeared to be. From London, the family flew to Accra, where they began their new life.

Altogether, Mayfield, Cordero, and their two sons would spend nearly five years in Ghana, with Ana Livia and the children returning to the United States in 1966 and Julian

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129 Ibid., 2a.


131 Curiously, this passport contains a visa from the Ghanaian Consulate in New York, dated 8 November 1961. It is unclear if Mayfield traveled all the way to New York City from Canada in order to acquire it, or if Cordero provided this for him. See: “Passport 1961,” SCH, JMP, Box 2, Folder 3.
returning in 1967. During his exile, Mayfield would become even more vociferous critic of U.S. foreign and domestic policy, working to raise the profile of African American freedom struggles at home and abroad while functioning as an informal leader of an African American expatriate community in Accra. Finding employment in Flagstaff House, the President's Residence, as a political journalist, Mayfield wrote extensively for the Government of Ghana, in both official and unofficial capacities.

In retrospect, Mayfield's harsh critique of integration policies proved distressingly accurate. Concluding that the integration of African Americans into white spaces would be ineffective at challenging economic dislocation and violence endured by black peoples and their communities, *The Grand Parade* made it clear that, “the goal of integration was based on an incorrect assessment of reality.”

For his part, Mayfield also began to widen the parameters of his intellectual and political project during this era, looking beyond the borders of the United States, first to Cuba and later to Ghana where he would develop a deeper interest in the utility of state power as a revolutionary tool.

Foregrounding Julian Mayfield's literary output during this era renders the development of his embrace of a transnational black consciousness and state power more clearly. Illuminating how art elaborated and informed Julian Mayfield's political development at a moment of transition, this chapter offered a portrait of the artist as a political activist. It also reinforced his concerns with power, who had it, and how it was exercised. As the character of Randolph Banks reflected in *The Grand Parade*, “nothing succeeds like power—

the ability to control votes, money, and jobs—and nothing fails like the man, group, or party that controls nothing.”

133 Mayfield, *The Grand Parade*, 120.

To me the independence of Ghana will be meaningless unless it is linked up with the liberation of Africa.
— Kwame Nkrumah

Black Americans need to understand their relationship to Africa, but they need . . . to understand the forces which stand between them and the dignity only a free, strong Africa can assure them.
— Hoyt W. Fuller

Exile means that you are always going to be marginal, and that what you do as an intellectual has to be made up because you cannot follow prescribed paths.
— Edward Said

One of the first pieces of Julian Mayfield published after relocating to Ghana in November 1961 was an essay entitled “Ghanaian Sketches” in the volume Young Americans Abroad. Part travel memoir, part political analysis, and part cultural exploration, the essay's inclusion in the volume reflected an increasing American fascination with life in developing countries amidst the Cold War. The collection, which included essays on Brazil, Kenya, Iran, and Burma, reinforced the editor's argument that what constituted “travel abroad” had undergone important transformations in the aftermath of the Second World War. No longer

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2 Hoyt W. Fuller, Journey to Africa (Chicago: Third World Press, 1971), 74–75.


did Americans limit their travels to Europe or the Caribbean; young people were now traveling to Africa, South Asia, and Latin America.\(^5\)

In Mayfield's case, he wrote “Ghanaian Sketches” not only to offer his opinions on political and social turmoil in West Africa, but to challenge contemporary journalistic and scholarly accounts of conflict between Africans and African Americans. One such essay he referenced directly had been published the previous year by Professor Harold Isaacs. “Back to Africa,” which ran in the *New Yorker* in May 1961, asserted that fundamental national, cultural, and social differences between people of the Diaspora and people of Africa. In a poignant anecdote, Isaacs related an encounter with an unnamed African American man who lamented, “I came to Africa feeling like a brother, but there I was, I was not a brother. I was not Senegalese or Nigerian or Ghanaian, I was American . . . I would always be an outsider coming in. It's the way anybody looks at a stranger.”\(^6\)

In contrast, when he arrived in Ghana, Julian Mayfield wrote that he and his wife, Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, found themselves welcomed graciously into burgeoning community.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Estimates of the size of this community vary. According to Kevin Gaines, this community's population rose and fell and numbered between 150 and 200, depending on the time. Others, including Leslie A. Lacy, claimed that the group numbered over 300 at its height. Class and social differences between different social and national groups, combined with the fluidity associated with an expatriate community where people were constantly arriving and departing, however, suggest that a comprehensive census is impossible. See: Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7, 151; Leslie Alexander Lacy, *The Rise and Fall of a Proper Negro: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 22.
Among those who extended their hands in fellowship were fellow expatriates, including political activists, intellectuals, doctors, dentists, architects, and artists from throughout the African Diaspora who had heeded Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah's impassioned call “to help us build our country.” Holding few illusions about Africa, Mayfield could not help but be affected by the warm welcome. Like Isaacs, he recognized the significant cultural and social stumbling blocks to realizing Nkrumah's notion of African Unity. However, Mayfield argued that these divisions were no more permanent than other socially-constructed differences and were instead rooted in each group's historical understanding of the other.

The assumptions of distance between members of the African Diaspora were not inherent, but a product of colonialism and white supremacy. Growing up in Washington, he recalled, “every imaginable pressure had been brought to bear upon me as a child to make me ashamed of any connection I had with Africa.” That lack of understanding was also apparent in West Africa. “Unless he was educated abroad,” Mayfield explained, a young Ghanaian “simply does not know what racial discrimination is.” Unlike the man or woman, “who has lived in such white settler areas as Kenya, the Rhodesias, and South Africa, the West African has never experienced day-to-day naked white oppression.” In spite of these epistemological differences, Julian Mayfield's writing in Ghana highlighted the contribution that African Americans made in linking black radical traditions in the United States with the ideals that Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore had set forth in their articulations of

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Pan-Africanism. Confessing that he had arrived in Ghana, “in every sense a stranger,” Mayfield challenged Isaacs' basic premise. “A person's strangeness or his nationality may be an initial barrier to intimacy,” he wrote, “but in the end his attitude and behavior will determine whether he makes friends or enemies.”

“Ghanaian Sketches” underscored the dialectic Mayfield saw in forging African Unity in independent Ghana and emphasized the complex interrelationship between thought and practice as a core component of constructing community. He did not discount the ways that the challenges of building this unity on a personal level were related to the symbolic political goals of the Nkrumah government, nor the ways in which national difference, shaped by geographic distance, contributed to the conflicts between peoples of African descent. Taking a position within Nkrumah's government, Mayfield placed his skills as a journalist, a writer, and a public intellectual at the disposal of the Ghanaian state. Embracing the revolutionary state-building project in Ghana, Mayfield and other Afro expatriates believed, was the best means to realize the kind of liberation that best addressed the problems of sovereignty, culture, and political power in the United States and wherever black peoples were oppressed.

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This advocacy for Nkrumah's nation-building project emphasized a full identification with the promise of Ghana as a vehicle for the realization of Pan-African community, the potential of a “United States of Africa,” and the state-centered approach by which Diasporic Africans in the Western hemisphere hoped realize their own goals of political power.\footnote{Nkrumah's choice of the phrase “United States of Africa” to symbolize his dream of a politically united continent was another of his deliberate allusions to Marcus Garvey. In addition to the single, black five-pointed star that lay in the center of Ghana's yellow, red, and green flag and the decision to name the Ghanaian state shipping firm the “Black Star Line,” the phrase recalled Garvey's 1924 poem, “Hail! United States of Africa.” That poem, published in The Negro World, listed twenty-six possible African states, including Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zanzibar, Kenya, and many nations that came to exist after decolonization. The poem ends with the stanza: “Hail! United States of Africa-free! Country of the brave black man's liberty; State of greater nationhood thou hast won, A new life for the race is just begun.” See: E. David Cronon, Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 185–186; Marcus Garvey, “Hail! The United States of Africa,” The Negro World, 16 July 1927.} Despite the barriers that cultural differences and geo-political systems, Accra emerged briefly as a shining beacon of radical possibility for Afros and Africans alike who believed a different kind of nation-state was possible. For Julian Mayfield, the combination of personal relationships and the realization of common goals provided the scaffolding upon which a functional African Unity could be constructed.

This chapter considers the five years Mayfield spent in Ghana to historicize how the ideological parameters and quotidian reality of Diasporic community were reshaped by this prolonged encounter across the Black Atlantic. In writing for newspapers and magazines while working to understand and overcome the limits of belonging, Mayfield's embrace of African Unity at the height of the Cold War highlights the ways in which this process can be rooted in the Diasporic experience, shaped by African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans.
working on behalf of an African government. Ghana also sharpened Mayfield's focus on the subject that he had begun wrestling with in New York.

In talking about the Ghanaian nation-state, he argued, “we are talking now about power . . . a singular key for understanding the relations that exist between men and nations and societies.” In talking about power, Mayfield concluded somberly, “we are, unavoidably, also talking about race.” Into that nexus of race and power, Julian Mayfield argued the Pan-African nation-state of Ghana fundamentally challenged the global Cold War order by providing an alternative to white supremacy, whether it originated in the Soviet Union or the United States. Synthesizing distinct strands of pan-African writings with the individual experiences of Africans, Europeans, and Afro-Diasporic men and women, Mayfield's intellectual project, while often laden with symbolism, resisted abstraction and ideological orthodoxy. Rather, he focused on the practical task of forging African Unity on an interpersonal level amongst radically different peoples. Of singular importance to Mayfield's effort was the way in which the nation-state afforded radicals like Mayfield the space in which to realize the forms of sovereignty which they hoped to enact.

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13 Kwame Nkrumah had been educated both in the United States (Lincoln University) as well as in the United Kingdom (London School of Economics and University College). It was in the latter that he developed a close association with other black thinkers and activists, including George Padmore, Grace Lee Bogs, Errol Barrow, and CLR James. According to John H. Clarke, “the influence of the ten years that he spent in the United States would have a lingering effect on the rest of his life.” See: John Henrik Clarke, “Kwame Nkrumah: His years in America,” The Black Scholar 6, no. 2 (October 1964): 9–10.

14 Julian Mayfield, The Lonely Warrior draft manuscript, SCH, JMP, Box 13, Folder 10, 9.

15 Ibid., 9.

16 In her 2015 book, In Search of Power, Brenda Plummer chronicled the challenges and circumstances of African American activists and their search for power, liberation, and sovereignty in the Third World. By welding together the disparate historiographical disciplines of African American history and Diplomatic History, Plummer offers a unique reading, what she calls “hybrid history,” that offers an explanation why these movements ultimately failed to achieve the goals they elaborated. Instead of belonging, activists,
As Shirley Graham Du Bois opined in the pages of *Freedomways*, “building a nation is more than construction in stone and steel... the eyes of the people must be opened, their past given meaning and their future given hope.”

In his 1983 treatise on nationalism, Benedict Anderson argued that these, “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but in the style in which they are imagined.” For Anderson, this meant that the discourse that was articulated to unify the nation was as significant as its policies and practices. The history of Nkrumah’s nationalist project has not lacked for historical and political analyses, yet the efforts to overcome the mutual strangeness of Africans and Afro-Diasporic peoples, to give their shared pasts depth of meaning, and to propose a future that gave hope to dreams of true African sovereignty, remains underrepresented in the historiography.

“hoping to affect practical Pan-African linkages... continue[d] to face the resistance of nation-states to perceived infringements of their sovereignty.” In short, in their embrace of the nation-state, whether in Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, or Angola, the radical forms liberation activists embraced was constrained by particular state, national, and international conflicts, leading increasingly toward disenfranchisement and lack of rapport with nation-states more broadly. Chronicling the history of this search for power from 1955–1975, Plummer ultimately concludes that “a successful emancipatory global politics must break free of its auxiliary relationship with the state.” See: Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956–1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 32.


One book that recently considered this absence is Harcourt Fuller's *Building the Ghanaian Nation-State*, which analyzes, “the official ways in which Ghanaian national identity and the new nation-state were symbolically constructed, expressed, and contested.”\(^{20}\) In his argument that physical representations of the nation—statuary, postage stamps, paper money, and public spaces—offers scholars the means to re-contextualize the Ghanaian nation-building project, Fuller's thesis hinges on the ways that language played a central role in political rhetoric and propaganda. “Nkrumah,” Fuller writes, “brought to the struggle to build a Ghanaian consciousness a profound ability to “speak” in two sets of 'languages' . . . to navigate between two civilizations—one European and the other African.” One of the ways that Nkrumah was able to accomplish this was in the invitations he extended to African-descended peoples elsewhere in the Diaspora making their roles, often seemingly those of minor government functionaries, fundamental to Ghana's nation-building project.\(^{21}\)

At this intersection between language, symbolism, and rhetoric lay Afro activists like Julian Mayfield and his Diasporic counterparts. A prolific journalist writing for government
publications, an integral component of the Publicity Secretariat's mission to construct an
new African identity, and an informal leader of the Afro expatriate community, Julian
Mayfield's contribution to the national project in Ghana was broad and well-defined. In his
2006 monograph, *American Africans in Ghana*, historian Kevin Gaines considered the ways in
which the expatriate community that Mayfield joined illuminated the contradictions around
race and citizenship in the American Cold War liberal state. However, this analysis did not
extend to the contributions made by Afros to the Ghanaian nation-building project itself.

Focusing on Julian Mayfield's work in Ghana and the symbolic and discursive
processes which he engaged in to forge meaningful and productive relationships with
Ghanaians and other African radicals offers insight into the efforts to construct a functional
community across Diasporic divides. Though the experience of Afro expatriates pointedly
revealed the hypocrisy of an American state that promoted democracy abroad while
stymieing the efforts of domestic blacks, their primary efforts were devoted to working
together with West Africans to realize Nkrumah's goal of a United States of Africa.

Writing for African audiences about the struggles of African Americans and writing
for African Americans about the experience of working toward African sovereignty, Julian
Mayfield's work bridged the conceptual chasms that divided Diaspora from Homeland.
While his family's decision to settle in the country was itself a form of active participation in
Pan-African community construction, his writing had a far broader effect in encouraging the
mutual understanding that he struggled with on a daily basis. In published and unpublished
works, Mayfield's archive offers insight into the varying components of this process of
constructing relationships in the Diaspora and his use of African American discourses and
embrace of African political ideologies serve to highlight how he navigated between multiple
discursive registers. Contextualizing his writing through a historical examination of his intellectual biography, this chapter illustrates the ways in which the dialogues and dialectics of his approach to forging a Pan-African community were at once transnational and national, African and Diasporic.

At his most adept, Mayfield's contribution to the discourses of African Unity synthesized the works of more well-known scholars and activists like E. Franklin Frazier, W.E.B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, E. Essien-Udom, Robert F. Williams, and Frantz Fanon. As such, he has rarely been considered a significant intellectual contributor to the broader intellectual history of pan-African thought on his own. However, his idiosyncratic perspective, his penchant for the mordant anecdote, and his didactic observational skill offers intimate details into the mechanics and processes that lay beneath grand rhetorical expressions of African Unity. In particular, his writing highlights the processes by which Ghanaian state actors working under Nkrumah hoped to accomplish this daunting task of uniting people divided by national, geographic, and cultural identity. Furthermore, Mayfield's archive reveals the extent of the Ghanaian nation-building project's embrace of an expanding African mass media, print, and radio culture and the Diasporic collaboration that marked that turn.

In 1975, some eighteen years after the founding of Ghana and nine years after a military coup toppled the Ghanaian government, St. Claire Drake belatedly offered a measure of support to this project in Ghana. In an essay for *The Black Scholar*, Drake noted the scant attention that “has been paid to the Pan-African problem of *relationships* between
the scattered communities of the Black Diaspora and their relations with the Homeland.”

Drake proposed analyzing “the “flow” of ideas, people, and artifacts,” using “interdisciplinary techniques” to better address this problem. This, he believed, could help unite the “continental” school of Nkrumah and the “racial” school of Marcus Garvey. Ghana, he wrote, was perhaps the best example of harmony between these schools, in which continental unity did not preclude racial and religious solidarity.

Drake also considered that the construction of Diasporic community along Pan-African lines inevitably tended toward a, “dialectical unity of opposites” that “generate[d] continuous contradictions that must be resolved.” While the resolution of those contradictions was not the subject of his piece, the dialectics and dialogues of Diaspora have since become key elements of scholarly analyses of the African Diaspora since Drake's paper. However, the contradictions of the internationalism and black nationalism of Afro expatriates like Julian Mayfield remain unresolved.

A close analysis of Mayfield's writing demands reconsideration of the construction of personal relationships as an overlooked element of the Ghanaian nation-building project.


Ibid., 4–5 (emphasis included in original).

Ibid., 10; Drake's utilization of “dialectical unity” is a direct reference to Paolo Freire, the Brazilian educator and philosopher who emphasized that thought without practice was meaningless. Additionally, Freire pointed the ways in which concepts like power and freedom did not exist outside of such dialectical relationships. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire opined that, “[f]reedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.” Freedom, for Freire, was the result of praxis, or informed action. Drake allusion to Freire is deliberate, as his argument about the “dialectical unity of opposites” that “generate continuous contradictions that must be resolved” within Diasporic contexts necessitates historically, culturally, economically, and socially informed action. See: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 47.
The recollections and arguments contained in Mayfield's correspondence, memoirs, journalism, and unpublished writings offer a window into the practical aspects of forging Diaspora. To better understand how this writing reveals these processes, this chapter divides Mayfield's writing based on audience. The first section examines Mayfield's challenge to Cold War liberals using the essay “Ghanaian Sketches,” and other writings aimed at Black and white Americans alike. It illustrates his response to negative perspectives on African Unity that were brought to bear in service of liberal anticommunism and thwarting Soviet influence in West Africa. The second section examines the political journalism Mayfield wrote for African audiences, including articles for Ghanaian newspapers, such as the *Ghana Evening News* and *The Ghanaian Times*, as a means of communicating ideas about American racialism to Africans and swaying African opinion on American racial politics.

The third section considers the fictional writing Mayfield aimed at African Americans, which addressed the human side of Diasporic relationships, their problems, and the legacy of white supremacy. The fourth section chronicles Mayfield's engagement with critics on the Left which viewed African and Asian nationalist movements with suspicion and hostility while the final section examines an unintended audience of his writing, the United States foreign policy and intelligence bureaucracy. Through classified memorandum and declassified surveillance on Mayfield, his friends, and his family, the United States government came to view his unmediated radicalism as a threat to foreign policy goals in Africa and domestic civil rights politics alike. Taken together, Mayfield's extensive corpus during his time in Ghana offers a new reading of the broader implications of U.S. black radicalism of the Diaspora within histories of African nationalism even as it reveals the
extent President Nkrumah's project to influence the construction of a Ghanaian identity that was both national and international in scope.

“In Every Sense a Stranger”

The story of the Mayfield family's sojourn in West Africa began in Monroe, North Carolina when Julian Mayfield helped Mae Mallory, Robert F. Williams, Mabel Williams and their two sons escape federal kidnapping charges. After cautiously making their way to New York, the fugitives went their separate ways. Mae Mallory made her way to Cleveland where she attempted to disappear among the black women who made their living as domestic workers. Julian Mayfield and the Williams family then crossed over the border into Canada by car. There, the Williams family boarded a flight to Havana where they would live for much of the next decade.

Mayfield, unable to return to the United States, waited on his pregnant wife, Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, to work out the family's next step. Having been offered a job at the Ministry of Health in Ghana and due to start in December, Cordero was able to move the timetable for the position and began plans to depart earlier for West Africa. Maintaining secret communication through intermediaries, Dr. Cordero and their son Rafael made plans to meet him in London. Julian Mayfield flew from Toronto to Halifax, Nova Scotia and from there to Prestwick Airport where the family was reunited.


26 It has often been assumed by other authors that Julian was the one who had led the family to Ghana, but it was Ana Livia who had been invited to the country and Mayfield was her dependent. In the passport he acquired after leaving Monroe, the stamp for his Ghanaian Visa states that he was a “Dependent of Dr. Cordero of [the] Ghana Academy of Sciences.” See: Passport 1961. SCH, JMP, Box 2.

27 This was his first passport, having not been required to have one during the Havana trip the previous year.
On the last leg of his flight to London he found himself seated next to a Canadian man who spoke to him in a thick Scottish brogue. Despite having emigrated to Canada over half a century before, the man declared that he was returning “home” to Scotland and offered Mayfield some Canadian whiskey while the men made small talk. Discovering that it was Mayfield's first trip to Africa, the man evinced surprise. “You told me you were from Africa!” he exclaimed accusingly. When Mayfield tried to explain, the man's eyes narrowed and he inquired, “well, if you're not from Africa where are you from? And what the hell are you anyway?” Mayfield’s answer, that he was, “an American Negro, or an African-American, or an Afro-American, or—if you prefer—I am an American of African descent,” only confused the man further. “Lad,” the man chuckled, “I don't give a damn what you are. I just wish you would make up your mind and let me know.”

Mayfield offered this anecdote as a means to segue into a conversation about his own ambivalence about the move to Ghana, but it also served to highlight the discomfort that many white Americans and Europeans had with ongoing shifts in African American identity in the post-war era. In 1944, Gunnar Myrdal's *American Dilemma*, the Swedish sociologist argued that the solution to *de jure* racism was a shift to a de-racialized American identity shorn of racial and ethnic difference. At the same time the nation was pivoting toward this national narrative of colorblindness, the drive toward independent statehood in

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the Third World increased identification and participation of African Americans in African and Latin American liberation struggles. In writing that directly challenged this liberal discomfort with articulations of African solidarity by African Americans, Julian Mayfield marshaled his experiences in Ghana to analyze and discuss the issues of relationships across the Diaspora. Though he cited his experiences as evidence, Mayfield was quick to note the limits of such first-hand knowledge, admitting that “few Westerners, black or white, can say truthfully that they know Ghana or Africa.” Though they might not be able grasp all the cultural and social nuance they could, he believed, better understand the relationships they constructed with the individuals they encountered.

“Ghanaian Sketches” offered an analysis of the ways in which interpersonal relationships with Africans demonstrated or challenged prescriptive discourses of African Unity and undermined liberal narratives of African/Diasporic disunity. In this piece, Mayfield did not consider racial politics and political economy as mutually exclusive; instead he saw them as inseparable components of any meaningful analysis of the issues facing independent African nations. In much the same way as he dismissed tentative steps toward racial integration in the United States as hollow or symbolic, he echoed Nkrumah’s analysis that political independence in Africa was, “merely trappings as long as those states are so poor and under-industrialized that they cannot acquire the economic strength that is the only foundation for true independence.”

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31 Ibid., 203.
Similarly, while anti-black racism might not be an issue facing Ghanaians in their own country, its European and American articulations affected the ways in which former colonial powers engaged diplomatically, economically, and politically with European and African nations. By emphasizing the symbolic nature of political independence without economic sovereignty, “Ghanaian Sketches” offered readers a Nkrumah-inflected meditation on African independence that would serve as a warning for black and white Americans who viewed Africa through the lens of Cold War liberalism.\(^{32}\) It was also an intensely personal exploration of the process of forging unity across Diasporic divides.

That process, Mayfield argued, demanded that those who wanted to realize practical Diasporic solidarity accept the conditions that West African placed upon them and offer their full support toward the Nkrumahist program. His experience in Ghana, it should be noted, was not typical of the other Afro expatriates. He and his family had arrived with federal kidnapping charges hanging over his head and both the government and the community of expatriates were expecting him. After their long flight on 11 November, the

\(^{32}\) The term “Cold War Liberal,” while quite popular in historical literature on the Cold War, remains somewhat vague and undefined. The term has been applied to such men as Arthur Schlesinger, James Baldwin, Paul V. McNutt, Karl Popper, Adlai Stevenson, and Ralph Bunche based upon their rejection of fascism and communism as “totalitarian” and their overriding emphasis on liberal democracy and capitalism. Cold War Liberals were “cosmopolitan” (Hacohen), believed strongly in modernization as ideology and policy (Gilman, Latham), expressed concerned about the erosion between state and society (Engerman), and held strong beliefs in the importance of the individual and their importance as a touchstone of modern society (Broadwater). My use of the term in this dissertation assumes all of the above and includes the strong belief in the necessity of the projection of American power as a counter to Soviet imperialism on a worldwide scale and an outlook that was technocratic and meritocratic. See: Malachai Hacohen, “The Strange Fact That the State of Israel Exists”: The Cold War Liberals Between Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism,” *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 37–81; David C. Engerman, *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 2003); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Jeff Broadwater, *Adlai Stevenson and American Politics: The Odyssey of a Cold War Liberal* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994).
family made its way through the chaos of Queen Elizabeth's first state visit to Ghana to settle in the housing provided to them at Achimota College. There, after getting Rafael to bed, Julian and a very pregnant Ana Livia were enjoying the cool night air on their front porch when a black, Russian-made limousine pulled up to their bungalow. As the window rolled down, they were greeted by none other than Shirley Graham and W.E.B. Du Bois who had stopped by to welcome them to Ghana. This greeting by the Du Boises, who had arrived in October at the invitation of Nkrumah, not only cemented their reputation among the expatriates, but served as their introduction to the unique network of people that would become their new community.

Fifteen days later, on 26 November, Ana Livia gave birth to a healthy baby boy, whom the couple named Emiliano. In “Ghanaian Sketches,” Mayfield recounted how, later that month, a group of the family's neighbors celebrated the baby's arrival with an “outdooring ceremony.” This celebration was an Ewe rite that Mayfield reckoned to a Catholic christening, save for the fact that it began in the dark, cool hours before dawn and involved the consumption of a great deal of alcohol. Because he arrived “kicking and screaming on a Sunday,” the neighbors bestowed upon him the African name of Kwasi and

33 Henry Tanner of the New York Times estimated that nearly 500,000 Ghanaians turned out to see Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip upon their arrival to Ghana on 10 November 1961. The public outpouring of support for Queen Elizabeth surprised Mayfield, who recalled that, “many of the market women wore ankle-length dresses emblazoned with photographs of Dr. Nkrumah and Queen Elizabeth.” This stood in stark contrast to the fiery denunciations of British imperialism were a constant feature of Ghanaian newspapers in the years following independence. See: Henry Tanner, “Ghanaians Hail Queen in Parade: Nkrumah Vows Continuation of Esteem for Elizabeth,” New York Times, 11 November 1961, 7; Mayfield, “Ghanaian Sketches,” 182–183.

34 Henry would best be described in today's terms as a “fixer.”
welcomed the child, and the family, with open arms. The spontaneous celebrations surrounding Emiliano's birth had a profound impact on Julian and Ana Livia and their sense of belonging in Ghana. This heartfelt welcome by the community, Mayfield explained, belied Isaacs' claims about the insurmountable differences—cultural, national, and ideological—between Africans and African Americans.

Figure 4: Photograph of “outdoor ceremony” for Emiliano Mayfield. Photograph courtesy of Rafael Mayfield.

Such accounts of relationships between Africans and African Americans had been a genre of non-fiction writing for decades prior to the publication of “Ghanaian Sketches,” but one book loomed large in Mayfield's imagination as he wrote the essay. *Black Power*,

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35 An Akan custom that is often still observed is to name children after the day of the week they were born. Kwame, for instance, is for a child born on Saturday. The other names are as follows: Kwasi – Sunday, Kwadwo – Monday, Kwabenaa – Tuesday, Kwakwaa – Wednesday, Yaw – Thursday, and Kofi – Friday. See: K. Nkansa-Kyeremateng, *The Akans of Ghana: Their Customs, History and Institutions* (Accra: Sebewie Publishers, 2004).
Richard Wright's account of his 1953 tour of the Gold Coast Colony, animated many of the arguments that Mayfield deployed. Published in 1954, *Black Power* contrasted Wright's strident anti-colonialism with a tepid enthusiasm for African independence and cultural practices. At the time, black critics of the book seized on Wright's dismissive tone toward West Africans and his focus on their impoverished material conditions, superstitions, and the vast cultural gulf that separated him from his hosts.36

White critics were equally dismissive, but for different reasons. Michael Clark's biting review in *The New York Times* criticized Wright's “caricature of British colonialism . . . drawn . . . from the dreary old arsenal of Marxist slogans” while David E. Apter of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* declared that Wright, “demonstrates little understanding of the difficulties of social transformation,” in his criticisms of the “backwardness” of the Africans he met.37 Wright's travel narrative had struck a nerve precisely because the author rejected

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36 Walker, writing in the *New York Amsterdam News*, was more conciliatory, urging readers not to be put off by Wright's “irritating mannerisms.” “[T]here is no other book which can present so well the Africa of today to the descendants of the people who were torn away from it centuries ago and to whom Africa is not even a memory.” Historian David Levering Lewis called Wright's *Black Power* a “dyspeptic book” in his short memoir essay, “Ghana 1963” and noted the irony that Wright's daughter, Julia Wright Hervé, “clearly shared none of her father's aversion to Nkrumah's one-party state.” Kevin Gaines, though he notes the flawed nature of Wright's book, insisted that Wright's book nonetheless, “demands our attention for his revisionist reading of the condition of blacks in the diaspora, which he understands dialectically as the product of slavery, dispersion, and oppression, and simultaneously, as the necessary condition for black modernity and the forging of an anti-imperialist critique of Western culture.” Furthermore, the book should be considered an important, “account of the interface of global black radical projects with the configurations of hegemonic power they confronted” as well as a challenge to the reified “Diaspora-Homeland binary.” See: “Africa Talks Back: Richard Wright Discovers Africa,” *New York Amsterdam News* (1943–1961), City edition, 09 October 1954, 17; David Levering Lewis, “Ghana 1963: A Memoir,” *The American Scholar* 68, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 39–60; Kevin K. Gaines, “Revisiting Richard Wright in Ghana: Black Radicalism and the Dialectics of Diaspora,” *Social Text* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 75–101.

the Cold War liberalism of the United States and the Pan-African radicalism of Ghana simultaneously.

Though he did not mention him by name, Mayfield challenged many of the observations and opinions that Wright expressed in the book that was dismissively subtitled, “A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos.” In contrast to Wright's claim that “I'm of African descent and I'm in the midst of Africans, yet I cannot tell what they are thinking and feeling,” Mayfield emphasized that there was no special relationship between people of African descent and that any collaboration or communication depended on the individual's acceptance of difference and empathic understanding of the other. He rejected Wright's belief that the Diaspora was a barrier, not a bridge, to a global emancipatory black consciousness and instead cited how mutual respect could be forged despite cultural and social difference. “Ghanaian Sketches” also challenged Wright's critical treatment of Pan-African politics, economic disparities, culture, and superstition in the Gold Coast. Black Power, critics contended, not only reinforced Western tropes about the continent, but positioned Western modernity and capitalism as the ultimate savior of Africa—both from Soviet intervention and from themselves.


39 While this perspective on Africa is present in early Pan-African writings, especially that of Du Bois, Garvey, and Padmore, by the 1940s, most had abandoned the idea that Diasporic Africans needed to “save” Africa. While Kevin Gaines characterized Wright's anticolonialism as a means of recasting, “diaspora as the mobilization of black modernity toward a transnational, transracial community of struggle,” the articulation of an African American modernity remained deeply embedded with the shared language of Western superiority. Gaines asks, “What were the conditions either facilitating or mitigating the production and dissemination of knowledge between these intellectuals and audiences and vice versa? These questions move beyond issues of location framed by the diaspora “return” to the ancestral homeland as a gauge of authenticity. Their ultimate aim is an account of the interface of global black radical projects with the configurations of hegemonic power they confronted. Wright’s reflections on black modernity are exemplary and necessary for our response to the enduring material and spiritual crises of underdevelopment in Africa.
Wright's advocacy for modernization, though aligned with Nkrumah's own nation-building project, prompted rejection both from Nkrumah and Mayfield who rejected the stark Cold War terms with which Wright perceived the politics of African nationalist movements. Debating whether capitalism or communism was better suited for the continent, Wright dismissed the “African Socialism” promoted by Nkrumah as Soviet propaganda in blackface. To add insult to injury, Wright reduced the desire for African independence to “assuag[ing] [African] feelings of shame and betrayal,” resulting from the humiliation of colonization. Recalling Dominique-Octave Mannoni's thesis on the crippling psychological effects of colonization, *Black Power* offered an unflattering perspective on the inferiority of African civilization even as he insisted that, “none but Africans can perform [liberation] for Africa.”

The negative reception Wright's book had a dampening effect on his reputation among many of his contemporaries—Mayfield would later tell Hoyt Fuller that the book was indicative that Wright had lost touch with “the living American reality” during his exile in France—it nevertheless set the tone for accounts of African Americans traveling to Africa and among New World blacks.” See: Gaines, “Revisiting Richard Wright in Ghana: Black Radicalism and the Dialectics of Diaspora” 75–77.


Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* was published in 1950. In it, he abstracted his experience during the Malagasy Uprising (1947–1948) of Madagascar to all colonized peoples, arguing that their psychology was inherently “dependent” and that they would seek security in any kind of authority they could find. The Lacan-trained psychoanalyst was rebuked in 1952 by Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, but by then his analysis of colonial “dependence” had become a mainstay of popular and bureaucratic discussions of colonial peoples. See: Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008); Wright, *Black Power*, 350.
for well over a decade. In particular, two articles published shortly before Mayfield's piece emphasized conflicts and misunderstandings between Africans and African Americans while downplaying cooperation and dismissing pan-Africanism as an unsuccessful or untenable ideological project. The first was Harold Isaacs' aforementioned piece, “A Reporter at Large: Back to Africa.”

The other was journalist Russell Howe's essay, “Strangers in Africa,” which presented African Americans as out of touch with African cultural mores and unable to connect with locals. Africans, Howe wrote, saw in African-descended peoples, “stranger[s] from a different tribe whose ancestry . . . must have been slave.” Howe attributed these differences to essentialized notions of identity, such as nationality and American racialism, arguing that since “more than ninety per cent of U.S. Negroes are to some degree of mixed blood,” Africans did not see them as “African.” No matter what beliefs in unity were present, Isaacs and Howe reinforced Wright and Myrdal's perspective that national identity remained the most salient factor in race relations in the post-WWII era. As Isaacs concluded,

42 Excerpts from this interview with Hoyt Fuller were published in the January 1968 issue of Negro Digest. Mayfield's criticism of Wright is interesting because Mayfield himself had only returned to the United States the previous year, a fact that Fuller alludes to in the piece, which states, “[p]erhaps surprisingly, Mr. Mayfield agrees that Richard Wright lost touch with the, 'living American reality' by remaining in exile.” While Wright was a formative figure for Mayfield's writing and his political education, the criticism he aimed at his childhood hero in the 1960s and early 1970s reflected his shifting views of black writing more broadly. Fuller also explains in the piece that Mayfield was one of the few who did not select Wright as one of the three most important black American writers. Instead, he cited W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison as the most significant black writers of all time. Mayfield also told Fuller that there had been no novels by black writers “worth mentioning” since the publication of Invisible Man (with the implication that none of his three novels were worth mentioning). The feature, which included comments from nearly three dozen black writers and artists whose interviews appeared in this issue, also featured an extensive discussion of Black Art and the essay “Black Cultural Nationalism” by Ron Karenga. See: “Julian Mayfield,” Negro Digest XVII, no. 3 (January 1968): 16.


44 Ibid., 35.
“whether [the American Negro] likes it or not, he is American and in Africa he becomes an American-in-exile.”

“Ghanaian Sketches” both identified this genre, which Mayfield saw as part of a broader “campaign to dampen . . . identification among Africans and African Americans,” and challenged its basic underpinnings. Targeting the same readers as Isaacs and Howe, Mayfield argued that their conclusions were rooted in Western ignorance of African social, economic, and political conditions. To make his point, he offered his own experiences as evidence. While he had arrived a stranger, he rejected the notion that his warm reception was predicated on any essentialized notion of identity. Rather, he argued that forging relationships based on common goals required the right actions, careful discussion, and a willingness to listen. Despite a profound strangeness, it was this dialectic of “attitude and behavior” that served as the foundation of African Unity. Those who rejected this Hegelian, idealistic unity, Mayfield argued, would soon find themselves rejected by the African communities they encountered. Mayfield not only gave examples of the forms of attitude and behavior that led to rejection, but identified two groups and gave them unflattering titles as he laid their failure to connect with their African hosts.

45 Isaacs, “Back to Africa,” 108


47 Mayfield was not the only African American to push back against this narrative. Thomas A. Hart of Howard University wrote a laudatory account of his eighteen months in Ghana in 1962 in which he directly addressed Wright. See: Thomas A. Hart, “Ghana, West Africa As I Saw It,” The Journal of Negro Education 31, no. 1 (Winter 1962): 92–96.

The first group, “The Bitchers,” exhibited the national chauvinism that Isaacs had attributed to African Americans in his article. Mayfield argued in “Ghanaian Sketches” that these travelers to West Africa reaped the consequences of their assumptions and beliefs. These men and women were “products . . . of the mostly highly technological society in the world, and . . . they cannot adjust to a society where things do not work with the same snap and efficiency as they are expected to in a highly industrialized nation.” Mayfield argued that anger at poor sanitation, insensitivity to local cultural norms, annoyance at intermittent electricity, and frustration with bureaucratic inefficiency lay at the root of the Diasporic conflict that Isaacs claimed to have witnessed. The nationalistic chauvinism of “The Bitchers,” Mayfield wrote, meant that their failure to find common cause with West Africans was their own responsibility.

In another article, entitled “Uncle Tom Abroad,” Mayfield was similarly dismissive of African American expatriates who arrived, “on the payroll of the U.S. government or a private firm.” He compared their stated support for African nationalism or socialism with the fact that, “back home you could probably not get [their] signature for a petition defending the right of women to have babies.” The political commitments of these men and women, whom Mayfield disdainfully labeled “Uncle Tomus Americanus,” were ambiguous and calculated. Despite claims that they were working in the interest of their

49 Mayfield, “Ghanaian Sketches,” 188.


51 Ibid., 38.

52 While Mayfield did not mention anyone by name in this article, he made references in correspondence to the types of men and women he saw playing this role. In particular Mayfield singled out Adger Emerson.
African hosts, Mayfield noted that they never did, “anything that might annoy the local U.S. Embassy” and adhered to a strict philosophy that could be summed up, “Don't Rock The Boat.” At best, Mayfield believed, their presence leant legitimacy to the attitudes and policies of Cold War liberals who dominated U.S. foreign policy. At worst, they subverted the goals of Pan-Africanist politics, aiding neo-colonialism and global white supremacy.

Above all, Mayfield’s writing recalled the arguments of W.E.B. Du Bois as the younger author asserted that African Americans who valued their passports and international travel over working toward improving the conditions of their African hosts did more to aid the United States than addressing African political and economic needs. At a moment when young people in the United States were waking up to realize, “the only way to make Player as one of the “skunks and judases” that worked at the American Embassy in Accra. This was in reference to Player's role in the February 1964 protest by Afras at the U.S. Embassy. When the U.S. flag was lowered by protestors, Player retrieved it and rushed it back into the embassy compound to prevent it from being damaged. For this he was criticized in the Ghanaian Press, but after formal complaints by the Johnson Administration, an apology was issued. See: “Saves Old Glory,” Afro-American (1893–1988), 15 February 1964, 1; Mayfield also made reference to African American businessmen traveling to Ghana who hoped to take advantage of African naiveté in his draft manuscript of “Tales of the Lido” and in his play, Fount of the Nation.


54 W.E.B. Du Bois famously criticized African American attendees at the first African Writer's Conference in Paris in 1956 after he had been denied a passport by the U.S. Department of State. Du Bois had refused to swear a loyalty oath as laid out under the terms of the McCarran Act of 1950 and had his passport revoked in 1952. It was not returned to him until 1958. Despite being prevented from attending in person, Du Bois sent a telegram to Alouine Diop, who read the telegram aloud at the meeting's opening. In the telegram, Du Bois condemned the African American attendees, which included James Ivy (NAACP), William Fontaine, Horace Mann Bond, Richard Wright, and James Baldwin (who wrote about the meeting for Encounter). “I am not present at your meeting today because the United States government will not grant me a passport for travel abroad. Any Negro-American who travels abroad today must either not discuss race conditions in the United States or say the sort of thing, which our State Department wishes the world to believe. It would be a fatal mistake if new Africa becomes the tool and cat’s paw of the colonial powers and allows the vast power of the United States to mislead it into investment and exploitation of labor. I trust the black writers of the world [and that they] will understand this and will set themselves to lead Africa toward the light and not backward toward a new colonialism where hand in hand with Britain, France and the United States, black capital enslaves black labor again.” See: Toru Kiuchi and Yoshinobu Hakutani, Richard Wright: A Documented Chronology, 1908–1960 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2014), 338.
progress in a situation of oppression is to rock the boat, and to rock it with such violence that either it sinks or it becomes a decent place in which to live,” the failure by African Americans abroad was dispiriting. It was this disharmony of theory and practice, or in Mayfield's formulation attitude and behavior, which he believed was the source of the disconnection experienced by African Americans in Africa.

As opposed to facing alienation, Mayfield and Cordero experienced Ghanaian hospitality as if they were longstanding members of the community. In the “outdooring ceremony,” Mayfield recounted that even the relative poverty of their neighbors did not prevent them from bringing enough food to feed everyone in attendance several times over as well-wishers pressed silver shillings into their hands and offered their congratulations. As one of their newfound friends told them, the money was given “not because you are poor . . . but only as an expression of the joy we feel that this blessed babe has been born on the soil of Ghana.” Narratives of welcome and collaboration in “Ghanaian Sketches” explicitly countered the campaign represented by Isaacs and Howe, but the essay was more than an uplifting description of successful relationships within the African Diaspora. In describing these encounters, Julian Mayfield analyzed and emphasized what he believed to be the real causes of disunity and conflict in Diasporic communities—as well as offering solutions. Complaining about underdeveloped infrastructure, working in support of American and European governments, and failing to grasp the ways that African social and material conditions were rooted in colonialist thinking persuaded West Africans that some

55 Mayfield, “Uncle Tom Abroad,” 40.

African American visitors and government workers were unsuitable allies in the fight against white supremacy and colonialism.

Grounding his analysis of Afro-Diasporic relationships in a dialectical understanding of both people and political economy, “Ghanaian Sketches” demonstrated that ideological and political commitments shaped social relationships in Africa as much as racial, cultural, and material conditions. While American racialism did not necessarily translate to a nation where the daily, dehumanizing violence of white supremacy was unfamiliar to most of the population, the shared experience of second class citizenship in the land of their birth could, Mayfield argued, effectively unite people divided by geography and history. This perspective was a reflection of Kwame Nkrumah's own unifying framework for Ghana, what he dubbed the “African Personality.” In his writing, Mayfield clarified that his was not an African perspective, but an Afro-American one. Yet, it was clear that Nkrumah's framework influenced Mayfield's considerations and bookended his framing of African Unity in his writing.

**The Practical Language of Diaspora**

While Mayfield's writing served the broader Nkrumahist goal of uniting Africa under one government, it also demonstrated the changes that Nkrumah’s rhetorical framework for African Unity, the “African Personality,” was undergoing in the early 1960s. Nkrumah had resurrected the phrase in the previous decade, borrowing it from the nineteenth century pan-Africanist and educator Edward Blyden.57 Nkrumah expanded Blyden's definition to

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57 Edward Blyden was born in 1832 on St. Thomas in what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands. Blyden was educated in St. Thomas and in Venezuela before being rejected from Rutgers University in New Jersey. He subsequently set out for Liberia and began teaching there. The talk from which Nkrumah pulled the phrase “African Personality” was called, “Race and Study” and was given at the Young Men's Literary Association
encompass cultural and political sovereignty as a means to promote the ideas at a moment in history when both seemed possible. “In asserting our African Personality,” Nkrumah told an African American audience in 1958, “we shall be free to act in our individual and collective interests at any particular time . . . to exert our influence on the side of peace and uphold the rights of all peoples to decide for themselves their own forms of government.”58 Rather than be constrained by race, Nkrumah’s continental “African Personality” was calculated to be broad enough to encompass the Arab/Berber North, as well as white exiles from South Africa and Rhodesia.

“For too long in our history,” Nkrumah told Harlem crowds in 1958, “Africa has spoken in the voices of others. Now what I have called the African Personality in international affairs . . . will let the world know it through the voices of Africa’s own sons.”59 Rather than disqualify Julian Mayfield from speaking for the new Ghanaian state, the African American writer’s embrace of Pan-African nationalism and Nkrumah’s expanded definition of the concept meant that Mayfield was well-suited for the task.60 This commitment to

of Sierra Leone in May 1893. The talk was part of a series of lectures Blyden gave to Africans in response to the writings of European nationalists like Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), and Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872). Blyden used the term “African Personality” to distinguish intrinsic differences in the “European” and “African” character. The former of which he saw as competitive, combative, harsh, and individualistic while the latter he presented as empathic, sympathetic, and highly spiritual. Rather than worshipping science and industry and expressing hyper-materialist ideas, Blyden outlined the “African Personality” as collectivist, warm, and welcoming—the opposite of what he saw in modern Europe. See: Biney, The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah, 119–120.


59 Ibid., 35.

60 African Americans were not the only non-Ghanaians to serve the government of Ghana in this capacity. The framework Nkrumah envisioned was a broad enough category to contain anyone whose interests aligned with that of a united Africa free of colonial influence. This made for alliances that did not always align with what Ghanaian nationalism and continental racialism. While invitations to join the Ghanaian
African Liberation and Ghanaian Pan-Africanism allowed Mayfield to play a key role in Ghanaian rhetorical nation-building. As a writer for government-published newspapers and speeches for Nkrumah, Mayfield presented his own experiences for African consumption, linking struggles in the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean together for African audiences far afield from Accra.

Because most of Ghana's bureaucrats, professors, and other professionals had been trained in British and American schools, Nkrumah rejected them as having been tainted by colonialist thinking. In turn, they rejected his government. This political disagreement over the future of Ghana turned the campus of the University of Ghana at Legon and various government ministries into sites of opposition to the Ghanaian nation-building project. In response, Nkrumah bypassed their power, creating “secretariats” which would answer directly to him and placing in them men (and some women) he deemed sufficiently committed to the cause of Ghanaian economic, political, and cultural sovereignty. As Julian Mayfield and author and cultural diplomat Maya Angelou's roles in these secretariats demonstrated, this often meant looking to expatriates.

Pan-African political project were aimed at Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, white South African Communist-in-exile H.M. Basner and former Nazi glider pilot Hanna Reitsch, joined the Nkrumah government in pursuit of African sovereignty. This also meant that African Americans who came to Ghana in search of markets for their products or who worked for the U.S. Department of State were rejected, often to their surprise, by Ghanaian Pan-Africanists. Race remained but a single point of understanding, particularly for Afro expatriates, but national and class identities, Mayfield and other Afros wrote, could not be separated from racial ties. Unity lay at the intersection of these identities and Mayfield joined other Africans and expatriates in Flagstaff House in writing within this framework for speaking about and interacting with the broader geo-political discourses about Africa. See: Bernhard Rieger, “Hanna Reitsch (1912–1979): The Global Career of a Nazi Celebrity,” German History 26, no. 3 (2008): 383–405.

Ironically, Nkrumah and many of his closest ministers from the Convention People's Party (CPP) had also been educated abroad. Nkrumah himself had graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and the London School of Economics.
The Publicity Secretariat, located in the presidential residence at Flagstaff House, housed Mayfield's office until his departure in early February 1966. There he wrote newspaper articles, opinion pieces, radio scripts, press releases, and speeches before founding the short-lived journal, *The African Review*.62 This secretariat served as the primary propaganda organ of the Nkrumah government, producing and disseminating support for the state through a variety of channels, including newspapers, radio programs, pamphlets. The Publicity Secretariat's staff reported directly to Nkrumah. In contrast to the Ministry of Information, the Publicity Secretariat had few career bureaucrats and instead was made up of Convention People's Party (CPP) loyalists. However, as Julian Mayfield explained, despite the fact that Ghanaians and Afro expatriates spoke the same language, they did not always understand one another.

Since English was spoken by most Ghanaians, both the State Department and many of the Afro expatriates reasoned that, “language [gave] Americans a decided advantage over the Russians.”63 Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen “Soapy” Williams, who saw Ghana as a lynchpin of U.S. foreign policy on the continent, was determined to use this lingua franca to his political advantage. Using his department’s resources to influence Ghanaian public opinion and national policy through public

62 David Levering Lewis, who taught at the University of Ghana at Legon during the early 1960s, recalled Mayfield as being exceedingly busy and difficult to reach during this era. “One usually got to see Mayfield by invitation only—unless one was accompanied by [Preston] King, who seemed to have the widest possible entrée. Mayfield was preoccupied with the startup vexations of *West Africa*, a monthly journal he hoped to make the *Encounter* of the region (though it was subsidized by Ghanaian special funds, of course, rather than, as with *Encounter*, by the CIA).” It is unknown if Lewis was mistaken, as the magazine was titled *The African Review* upon publication of its first issue in May 1965, or if the name of the project changed at some point. See: Lewis, “Ghana 1963: A Memoir,” 47.

diplomacy, Secretary Williams nevertheless found himself scrambling to keep up with negative reports of racial turmoil in the United States in the foreign press.

Foreign service officers were instructed to emphasize a narrative of progress in United States race relations to combat the reports of violence. In a memo dated 13 June 1963, foreign service officer A. Morales-Carrion argued, “it is urgent that the U.S. Government make 'sweet uses of adversity' and turn the country's present racial dilemma from a serious liability into a positive asset in foreign relations.” Morales-Carrion suggested inviting the Organization of African States (OAS) Human Rights Commission to the United States examine the situation there. Though it would reveal the shortcomings of the United States, he argued, it would also “be an exercise in placing facts in perspective, perhaps even showing the world that the United States has few peers as a guarantor of civil rights.”

Morales-Carrion's plan was rejected, but it reflected the ways in which the Assistant Secretary's office was keen to draw attention away from the Soviet Union's daily fusillade of accounts of white violence against African Americans. In the wake of the violent attacks on black protestors in Birmingham, Alabama, the Soviet Union had devoted “twenty-three percent of its daily broadcasting to attacks on the American system,” and Morales-Carrion's plan appears to be part of a broader effort to blunt the impact of this criticism. Formal reports contained within Secretary Williams' classified personal papers reveal an organization

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concerned with the impact that radical voices like those of Mayfield, Shirley Graham, and other African Americans could have on West Africans and U.S. foreign policy in the region.

In response, the State Department coordinated broadcasts of the Voice of America radio and engaged African American musicians, including Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and Duke Ellington in “Jazz diplomacy,” to promote African American culture as American culture. The responses to Afro expatriate critiques, however, were more direct. Addressing the articles written by Mayfield indirectly, material produced by the State Department wrote press releases and produced propaganda of their own describing the complexities of the American system of state and federal power as a hurdle that could be overcome, leading to the gradual improvement of race relations.\(^6\) This counter-propaganda assumed that, since Ghana was an Anglophone country, the memos authors saw no need to consider how their language was perceived by African audiences.

Mayfield, however, recognized these assumptions about language obscured important epistemological differences. “The Russian[s] [are] used to dealing with the terms “colonialism” and “imperialism” as realities,” he wrote, and “[these] are all words that convey certain definite images to people in West Africa.”\(^6\) Americans, he argued, understood these words as abstract and theoretical concepts. Public diplomacy efforts by the Department of State and its subsidiary organization, the United States Information Service (USIS), he believed, failed to consider the tangible experiences with colonialism that sub-Saharan Africans inherently grasped. They did not, in Mayfield’s estimation, believe them to

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\(^6\) Mayfield, “Ghanaian Sketches,” 198–199.
be organizing principles of political activism nor did they see them as anything other than hollow, nationalist rhetoric. The distance between these ideological interpretations illuminates the ways that Julian Mayfield's work in the Publicity Secretariat recognized nuanced differences between peoples as he sought to make ideas mutually intelligible across divides of the African Diaspora. By offering historical context and accounts of anti-black racism, white violence, and government inaction, Mayfield's writing highlighted the important subjective differences between audiences in Africa and the United States.

Mayfield's earliest writing in the Ghanaian newspaper Evening News demonstrated the ways in which he and his superiors in the Publicity Secretariat believed that his personal experiences with racism in the United States could be effectively deployed and made relevant to West Africans. In his first series of articles, published between March 29 and April 6, 1962, he revisited the events that led to his flight from the United States “in an attempt to arouse African support for the defendants in the Monroe, N.C.”68 Four articles published over the course of eight days recounted his experiences in Monroe in detail, offering his first public statements of the events of August 1961.69 Introduced by the editor as “a famous United States author,” Mayfield was described as providing “an appeal which should bolster up tremendously Mr. Kennedy's progressive moves for integration.” Despite Mayfield's advocacy for revolution and his embrace of liberation, he or his editors clearly considered that his experiences would be better served as a means of indirectly influencing Kennedy's


69 The series began with an article entitled “Save Mae Mallory! Frame-Up in Monroe” and continued three articles under the headline, “Why they want to kill Mae Mallory?”: “Monroe, no man's land,” “Monroe USA: The powderkeg explodes,” and “Monroe, USA: the frame-up” published on March 29th, March 30th, March 31st, and April 3rd, respectively.
domestic racial politics as well as his foreign policy toward West Africa. Not only did this show the international reach of African media in the early 1960s, but highlighted a newfound responsiveness of the U.S. foreign policy establishment and its sensitivity to African affairs.

President Kennedy, historian James Meriwether has argued, shrewdly observed that favorable African policies offered a means to influence African Americans without upsetting Southern Democrats who held sway in the House and Senate. The articles that Mayfield wrote and his superiors in the Publicity Secretariat published suggest that they recognized this fact as well. “Save Mae Mallory! Frame-Up In Monroe,” Mayfield’s first Evening News article, explained the circumstances, historical context, and meaning of the charges arrayed against Mallory in ways calculated to shock and sway Ghanaian popular opinion. Describing daily injustices, unpunished and frequent white violence, and providing vivid descriptions, such as the ways in which Klansmen “would force a black woman to disrobe and dance for them on the sidewalk as they fired bullets near her feet,” the articles were well-received.

However, it was not just Mayfield’s words that were incendiary. The first article in the series also printed the famous and grisly photo of the aftermath of the 1919 “Red Summer” racial pogroms in Omaha, Nebraska alongside background on violence in Monroe. That haunting photo depicted the charred remains of Will Brown, a 40 year old meat-

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70 As James Meriwether has pointed out, Kennedy saw the efforts to bring African students to the United States and the offer of foreign aid to new African governments as a way to convince African Americans of his commitment to racial issues without angering the Southern Democrats whose votes in congress upon which he depended. As the title of his article suggests, Kennedy saw that African intervention was “worth a lot of Negro votes” in the United States. See: James H. Meriwether, “Worth a Lot of Negro Votes”: Black Voters, Africa, and the 1960 Presidential Campaign" The Journal of American History 95, no. 3 (2008): 737–63.

packinghouse worker, surrounded by grinning whites in suits and hats. No other reference was made to Omaha's “Red Summer,” but the message was clear: white violence against Blacks was deeply rooted in modern America.

Three subsequent articles followed, each featuring photographs of Mallory, Williams, and Mayfield as the latter detailed the events of the “Monroe Frame-up.” By historicizing and contextualizing their role in the violence directed against Monroe's black population, the visiting Freedom Riders, and the false charges of kidnapping, Mayfield's critique emphasized the futility and waning influence of non-violent, passive resistance. “What kind of town is Monroe, and why has it been the centre of the bitterest racial tug of war in the United States for the past five years?” Mayfield rhetorically asked, before explaining that the city's economic and social segregation made it emblematic of thousands of small towns in the U.S. South. In conjunction with economic deprivation, the town's white majority continued to terrorize the African American community with impunity, a direct challenge to USIA material which sought to convince Africans that conditions were gradually improving. Emphasizing the complete lack of control over their political and social lives that African Americans had in Monroe, Mayfield compared their lives with the African experience under

72 Brown had been accused of raping a 19-year-old white woman, Agnes Lobeck. Prior to his arrest, the local daily carried detailed accounts of the story along with pictures of Brown and Lobeck. A few hours after his arrest, a mob of 250 men gathered outside the courthouse. Despite Mayor Edward P. Smith pleading with the crowd to refrain from violence, he was brutally murdered and his body dragged to a major downtown intersection and then set alight. One of the witnesses to the violence was a young Henry Fonda, who later recalled, “It was the most horrendous sight I’d ever seen…My hands were wet and there were tears in my eyes. All I could think of was that young black man dangling at the end of a rope.” See: Orville D. Menard, “Lest We Forget: The Lynching of Will Brown, Omaha’s 1919 Race Riot,” Nebraska History 91 (Fall/Winter 2010); Bertha W. Calloway and Alonzo Nelson Smith, Visions of Freedom on the Great Plains: An Illustrated History of African Americans in Nebraska (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1998); Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell, The Gate City: A History of Omaha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

colonialism. The contrast between these articles and the liberal narrative of gradual improvements in American race relations was stark. The terror of white violence in Monroe Mayfield presented Ghanaian readers was designed to shock, echoing the continental experience with European colonial violence. The implication of such comparisons were clear. Colonialism and Jim Crow were products of the same ideology that Black peoples around the world faced: white supremacy.

“I began these articles with the intention of telling my readers about Mae Mallory,” Mayfield wrote in the fourth and final article in the series. “Yet,” he confessed, “I have hardly mentioned her because she played so little part in the events I have described.”

Though manifestly untrue, Mayfield made this claim with the intention of highlighting the punitive nature of the prosecution's case. He understood that the black defendants, which also included Monroe residents Richard Crowder and Harold Reape, would face a different justice system than white defendant John Lowery, a Freedom Rider from New York. In emphasizing that point to African readers, Mayfield lamented, “[Mallory] cannot hope to have a fair trial.” This was particularly dire because “no militant black woman can survive a lengthy sentence in a North Carolina prison.”

74 While it is true that Mallory spent much of her time in Monroe at the home of the Williamses, and not with the Freedom Riders or drilling with Williams' defensive militia, it is inaccurate to claim that she played no significant role. Not only was her presence integral to protecting the Stegalls from mob violence when their car was surrounded upon entering Newtown, she served as a key person in the support network that aided Williams' militia, ensuring that the self-defense committee was able to function. Mayfield's claims in this article were likely an attempt to present her as a more sympathetic figure for African audiences. In doing so, however, he succeeded in minimizing her role and contributing to the silencing of her long history of radicalism, which has only recently been reconsidered by scholars. See: Ashley Farmer, “Maladjusted Negro: The Political Thought and Activism of Mae Mallory,” Manuscript in possession of author.

75 Harold Reape's name is rendered as “Reepe” in some sources.

76 Julian Mayfield, “Why they want to kill Mae Mallory,” 5.
In light of these circumstances, “if [readers] believe that this worthy woman should not be condemned to certain death in the American southland, I urge them to address their pleas to the one man who now holds her life in his hands.” The article's final paragraph featured the mailing address of the White House and implored readers to contact President Kennedy directly. Appealing to the president of the United States seemingly clashed with the radical framing of the Monroe armed-self defense movement which, on the surface, suggests editorial oversight. However, this practical step also points to the fungibility of Mayfield’s ideological framework. As in many of his arguments, Mayfield’s writing evoked a cynical realism that recognized that there was very little an individual Ghanaian living in Kumasi or Sekondi could do to influence domestic policies in the United States aside from making their opinions known. Regardless, President Kennedy did not intervene in the Mallory case.

Although Mallory was eventually extradited to North Carolina, convicted, and sentenced to 16-20 years, she was freed after the Supreme Court of North Carolina threw out her conviction in January 1965.77

No direct evidence of audience reaction exists, but Mayfield’s ardent defense of Mallory apparently drew enough of a positive response that the Evening News soon

77 Arrested in Cleveland in October of 1961, Mallory was released on bail for nearly a year. In October 1962 the the Ohio Supreme Court rejected attorney Warren Haffner's plea to stop extradition to North Carolina and she was returned to prison. In December 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected appeals by attorneys Len Holt and Warren Haffner to stop her extradition and she was sent North Carolina in January of 1964. In February, an all-white Union County jury deliberated for 32 minutes before finding Mallory, Crowder, Reape, and Lowery guilty of kidnapping. Mallory was given the harshest sentence (16–20 years), while Crowder, Reape, and Lowery were given shorter ones. In January of 1965, the Supreme Court of North Carolina threw out the Union County verdict against Mallory and her three co-defendants on the grounds that the jury had systematically excluded African Americans from the selection process. Mallory was freed though the court reserved the right to indict Mallory and her co-defendants again in the future. See: Ashley Farmer, “Maladjusted Negro: The Political Thought and Activism of Mae Mallory” Manuscript in possession of author.
announced that Mayfield would be contributing “exclusive” articles three times a week.\footnote{“Plain Speaking,” \textit{Evening News}, 13 April 1962, North Carolina Central University, Shepherd Library, Microform Serial, 1 January 1962–1 July 1962.}

The column, “Plain Speaking,” reflected both the paper's colloquial tone and Mayfield's own direct, confrontational style. With a novel in progress, two small children at home, a wife working long hours as a doctor in the Ministry of Health and as the personal physician to W.E.B. Du Bois, and Mayfield supplementing the family's income by writing articles for U.S.-based publications like \textit{The Liberator} and \textit{Muhammad Speaks}, what is perhaps most surprising that the series ran for as long as it did.\footnote{\textit{Look Pretty For the People}, Mayfield's fictionalized account of life the black Cultural Left in Harlem was completed and sent to publishers in November 1962.}

In all, Mayfield produced thirteen columns, many of which mined previous his writing. In addition to the two articles about Cuba; there was a piece about Paul Robeson; three articles about nuclear war; an article about fellow journalist William Worthy, then facing federal charges for his visit to Cuba; an article considering the colonial roots of Black Christianity; and several that examined the cultural and social climate of the Cold War.\footnote{“There is Basis for Harmony Between Cuba and America” and “Barbudos and Colour,” “Paul Robeson the Singer,” “Sane Men Versus Nuclear War,” “The Double Talk of Nuclear Madmen,” and “Hiroshima: First Atomic Target,” “USA Journalist and his Troubles,” “Christianity Among Afro-Americans,” “Evian Agreement Betrayed,” and “Hurrah! Norton is in Trouble: War-Mongering Does Not Pay!”}

There was no announcement of the end of the series and the last article was published on the first of June, 1963. In comments made later in his manuscript about Nkrumah and Ghana, \textit{The Lonely Warrior}, Mayfield wrote that the end of the column came as a relief as “it became clear to me . . . that I had nothing to say worth printing three times a week.”\footnote{Mayfield, \textit{The Lonely Warrior}, 17.}
deprecation aside, these articles offer evidence of the ways in which the Publicity Secretariat marshaled an African American intellectual in service of forging African Unity by presenting evidence that contradicted the U.S. State Department's narrative of American racial progress.

These thirteen articles are notable for three reasons. First, despite Mayfield's vast archive, which contains copies of nearly everything he wrote, there are only photocopies of the first four articles about Mallory. The other nine articles are not present.\(^{82}\) Second, Mayfield was, as far as can be determined, the only African American writer with a regular column in the *Evening News* during this period.\(^{83}\) Finally, these articles reveal the broad outlines of the Publicity Secretariat's effort to disseminate knowledge and perspectives from the Diaspora to Africans. One article stands out in this respect. The article, entitled “The U.S. Revolution a lesson for Pan-Africanists,” was published on 15 May 1963 and used comparisons between the American revolution and Ghanaian independence to encourage support for the Nkrumah one-party state and its goal of a United States of Africa.

In the article, Mayfield characterized the revolution, “an uprising of colonial mercantilists against the taxation policies of the British crown and Parliament,” as only one step in the formation of the American nation-state. That nation was not, Mayfield argued, “automatically born when Lord Cromwell's troops stacked their arms on October 19, 1781.” Instead, what that emerged from the conflict with the British Empire was a loose confederation, “united only in their hatred for the British enemy,” and was made up of

\(^{82}\) Specifically, there are only photocopies of the initial four-part series on Monroe and Mallory. None of the other articles are present in his archive. I suspect this was due to the confiscation and destruction of his papers following the February 1966 coup.

\(^{83}\) While other writers from the United States and Caribbean were occasionally published, none had a regular column with a byline.
colonies which were more akin to independent states, rather than a single nation. It was left to the political and economic elite who, “resisted the idea of a strong federal government,” to knit together the disparate colonies and squabbling colonists. While he cautioned that, “it is a mistake to attempt to draw exact parallels from incidents of the past,” he likened the struggle to incorporate thirteen colonies under the Federal Constitution with Nkrumah's willingness to, “sacrifice Ghanaian sovereignty on the alter of African Unity.” Echoing statements made by both Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore, Mayfield concluded that the only hope for Africans to, “avoid being swallowed up by the great imperialist powers,” was political, economic, and geographic unity. Ghanaian sovereignty alone would be inadequate. Only full African sovereignty—political, economic, and cultural—would be sufficient to keep the empires of Europe, the United States, Russia, and China at bay.

In citing the United States as an example worth paying attention to for Africans, Mayfield's piece echoed earlier expressions of pan-Africanism which offered Western modernity as a solution to African problems. However, Mayfield was no starry-eyed utopian. The most significant element of the American Revolution for Mayfield was not the fight that led to freedom, but the steps taken after independence that organized—with great effort—vastly different spaces and peoples into a functional union. For Africans who saw only the great technological progress and vast wealth of the United States, it was a reminder that that nation had once been a patchwork of quasi-independent states at odds with one another whose union was not a foregone conclusion. Africans, Mayfield reasoned, had to look past their differences and conflicts and organize themselves about what they had in common: shared resistance to foreign domination, a yearning for control of their own destinies, and global white supremacy, which saw them all as less-than-human.
Though “Plain Speaking” ended abruptly in June 1963, Mayfield remained at Flagstaff House, advising the secretariat on matters that related to the expatriate community and contributing scripts to “News Talk,” a radio program that went out daily on the Voice of Ghana radio station. That summer, he founded the journal, *The African Review*, which would dominate his life during his final three years in the country. Mayfield's short stint as a regular columnist not only illustrated the messy politics of daily life, but it also sought to continuously connect local struggles with those affecting African-descended peoples abroad. As he drew people together who were separated by culture and nationality, his articles were read by tens of thousands of people on the continent. Though they might have understood concepts like family, state, intervention, American, African, European, and Ghanaian in distinct and often contradictory ways, he believed that emphasizing commonalities could overcome these divisions.

Julian Mayfield's journalism in Ghana shines a light on the ways in which translation worked *within* a given language, making concepts with distinct meanings intelligible to all.

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84 This was a position he apparently loathed. David Levering Lewis considered him “one of President Nkrumah's most trusted advisors” and someone who could be seen “by invitation only.” Despite the fact that many in the community considered Mayfield the *de facto* leader of the Afros, he resented the imposition on his writing time that came with that honor. In particular, he had choice words to say about African Americans who came “mostly from Chicago” who engaged in criminal activity in Ghana and ended up in his office begging him to stay their deportation. See: Mayfield, “Tales of the Lido,” 23, 26–27.

85 *The African Review* was a direct response to *African Forum*. That journal was published by the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC), the organization to which Mayfield had formerly belonged and was financed, in part, by the Central Intelligence Agency. See: *African Forum*, New York: American Society of African Culture, 1965–1968.

86 Reliable estimates for African readership are virtually impossible to come by. Circulation numbers for Ghanaian newspapers were unavailable at the time of this writing. I do know that Ghanaian newspapers circulated among Ghanaian expatriate communities in neighboring countries like Benin, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria, as well as in the United Kingdom. The high degree of illiteracy in Ghana also meant that many newspapers were often passed from group to group to be read by literate people to their friends and families, especially outside of major population centers.
Perhaps most important, the fact that Mayfield went from guest journalist, to regular columnist, and to the chief editor of a government-funded journal in such a short time suggests that he not only enjoyed the support of the Publicity Secretariat, but the confidence of President Nkrumah. As he undertook the intimidating task of starting a journal from scratch, Mayfield still managed to find time to write for other audiences, African Americans in particular. In this writing, Mayfield brought these discussions down to the level of individual relationships and the ways in which culture, race, and political economy were intimately intertwined. One example was the short story, “Black on Black.”

“Black On Black”

In this short story, Julian Mayfield tackled what was an increasingly a common occurrence in the Afro expatriate community: romantic relationships. The opening scene engulfed readers the storm of a lovers' quarrel. The couple, an African chieftain of the fictional nation of Songhay, Nana Kwamina Matusi IV, and a “female Belafonte from New York” named Bessie Bates, were fighting in the house of Mayfield’s fictional narrator, Henry. “He's ashamed of me,” Bessie told Henry as Nana sat uncomfortably nearby. Nana's pleas to end the spat and return home only enraged Bessie further. “Why . . . Are you

87 “Black on Black” was first published in 1971. However, early drafts in his archive show that the short story was written between 1965 and 1966 while Mayfield was still in Ghana and was revised several times. According to an article by Jean Bond that appeared in the New York Amsterdam News, the original subtitle was “Adventures in the Diaspora.” See: Jean Bond, “Literary Grapevine,” New York Amsterdam News (1962–1993), 30 October 1971, D1.

88 “Songhay” is a reference to the African empire of Songhai which had its capital at Gao and dominated the Western Sahel between the 15th and 16th centuries. At its height, the Empire of Songhai covered some 1.4 million km2 and comprised large portions of the modern nations of: Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and The Gambia. Mayfield's Songhay, also the setting for his novel and play about Kwame Nkrumah, Fount of the Nation, was a composite of Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, and Burkina Faso.
embarrassed? Is your chiefly dignity offended? Imagine how I felt sitting out in that damned kitchen while you talked to that old European bitch. Next thing you know, you'll want me to come in at the back door."

Unfolding largely through dialogue, Mayfield's narrator offered context on the history of their relationship, focusing on these fictional lovers navigating the hidden shoals of racial and cultural expectations in romantic relationships. In “Black on Black,” Mayfield presented a unique portrait of the quotidian experience of Diaspora for African American audiences, even as he demonstrated that factors beyond cultural difference accounted for the ultimate implosion of their love affair.

This short story's unflinching look at the dissolution of a relationship presented an even-handed, in-depth perspective on the difficulties of traversing the Diaspora. It also offered an early analysis of how these relationships existed at the intersection of race, class, gender, and conflicting perceptions of blackness. This was particularly significant as the period from the story's genesis to its final publication coincided with the rise of Cultural Nationalism as a political and artistic statement among black radicals. The messy personal politics of these relationships not only highlighted the impact of the personal in the politics of Diaspora, but pointed to the inadequacies of the subsequent debates between those who espoused black control and ownership of art and culture and those who emphasized armed revolution as the key to political power.


91 The ideological debate between these different forms of nationalism maps the fault lines between Black Power Movements during the mid- to late-1960s. Cultural nationalism, which Huey P. Newton derisively called “pork chop” nationalism, explicitly rejected the Marxist-Leninist framework, while the Black Panther
Bessie and Nana's conflict-ridden relationship offered insights into how the division between these poles of black radical thought was already something Mayfield was beginning to explore in Ghana. Nana and Bessie's love affair highlighted the emotional and personal costs of crossing cultural and social boundaries in the African Diaspora. Despite having promised Bessie marriage, Nana ultimately chose to accept a diplomatic post in Ethiopia. In the final pages of the story, Bessie was faced with the choice of following Nana to Addis Ababa while remaining his mistress or taking a job performing in Las Vegas. In spite of her love for Nana, Bessie chose to leave. While she was the one to end the relationship, it was Nana's refusal to compromise and take into account her needs that led to her departure.

“Nana's unwillingness to fully commit himself to marriage meant not merely the rejection of a woman by a man,” Mayfield concluded, “but the rejection of a Western daughter of Africa by Africa.”

Read alongside “Ghanaian Sketches,” “Black on Black” emerges as a fictionalized sequel of sorts which examined what happened after the initial elation of belonging had worn off and reality had set in. The story unpacked expectations of both sides of the Diaspora-Homeland binary and revealed the assumptions, hopes, and expectations that lay

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In the story, Mayfield implies that marriage to a foreign woman would have undermined his authority and his legitimacy and opened up the possibility of challenges from within the tribe he nominally led. See: Mayfield, “Black on Black,” 130.

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92 In the story, Mayfield implies that marriage to a foreign woman would have undermined his authority and his legitimacy and opened up the possibility of challenges from within the tribe he nominally led. See: Mayfield, “Black on Black,” 130.

93 Ibid., 132.
beneath. In contextualizing the history and analyzing the content of this relationship, Mayfield confronted the threats posed to African Unity from without and within, but revealed ambivalence on both sides to full commitment to its principles. As with many of Mayfield's stories, this fictional relationship was based in part on the lived experiences of people he knew. In this case, it was the relationship between Mayfield's close friend, Maya Angelou, and the Akan chief, Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, who hailed from Ghana's Western Region.

Nana Nketsia was a traditionalist chief who played an integral role in the Ghanaian national struggle and later served as the head of the Ghana Institute of Art and Culture, among other roles.\(^4\) Angelou had been a singer, dancer, prostitute, and writer before coming to Ghana in 1962 after spending time in Cairo with David Du Bois and her former husband, Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, who died in 1995, remains a celebrated figure in independence and politics due in part to his successful navigation of the partisan politics of post-war Ghana. Born 17 February 1913, Nketsia was educated at the Mfantsipim School in Cape Coast. His unswerving support for the Convention People's Party (CPP) was instrumental in its break from the United Gold Coast Convention Party (UGCC) and, despite being known as a “traditional” ruler in the Western Region, he broke with contemporaries and joined the struggle to free Nkrumah and the other “Big Six” nationalists from detention in 1948. In 1950, Nketsia joined the direct action against the Colonial Police in Sekondi-Takoradi, which had proclaimed a curfew in the region to stop organizing, and was beaten and imprisoned for his troubles. He eventually served almost three years in prison. Following the 1951 elections, in which the CPP won a majority in the Gold Coast provisional parliament, he was released and subsequently attended University of Oxford in 1952 where he received a bachelor’s degree in Literature and PhD in Social Anthropology in 1959. Upon his return to Ghana, he was appointed Secretary to the International Commission that advised the development of Higher Education in Ghana and, in 1962, he was appointed the first African Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana at Legon. During his short visit to Ghana in 1964, Malcolm X recalled in the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*: “When I was in Ghana... Nana Nketsia...said that as an African his concept of freedom is a situation or condition in which he, as an African, feels completely free to give vent to his own likes and dislikes and thereby develop his own African personality. Not a condition in which he is copying some European cultural pattern...if given the intellectual independence, (the African) can come up with a new philosophy...a social system, an economic system, a political system...different from anything...on this earth.” See also: Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1965); *The Ghanaian Times* Monday, 21 September 2009, 9–23.

\(^4\) Nana Kobina Nketsia IV, who died in 1995, remains a celebrated figure in independence and politics due in part to his successful navigation of the partisan politics of post-war Ghana. Born 17 February 1913, Nketsia was educated at the Mfantsipim School in Cape Coast. His unswerving support for the Convention People's Party (CPP) was instrumental in its break from the United Gold Coast Convention Party (UGCC) and, despite being known as a “traditional” ruler in the Western Region, he broke with contemporaries and joined the struggle to free Nkrumah and the other “Big Six” nationalists from detention in 1948. In 1950, Nketsia joined the direct action against the Colonial Police in Sekondi-Takoradi, which had proclaimed a curfew in the region to stop organizing, and was beaten and imprisoned for his troubles. He eventually served almost three years in prison. Following the 1951 elections, in which the CPP won a majority in the Gold Coast provisional parliament, he was released and subsequently attended University of Oxford in 1952 where he received a bachelor’s degree in Literature and PhD in Social Anthropology in 1959. Upon his return to Ghana, he was appointed Secretary to the International Commission that advised the development of Higher Education in Ghana and, in 1962, he was appointed the first African Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana at Legon. During his short visit to Ghana in 1964, Malcolm X recalled in the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*: “When I was in Ghana... Nana Nketsia...said that as an African his concept of freedom is a situation or condition in which he, as an African, feels completely free to give vent to his own likes and dislikes and thereby develop his own African personality. Not a condition in which he is copying some European cultural pattern...if given the intellectual independence, (the African) can come up with a new philosophy...a social system, an economic system, a political system...different from anything...on this earth.” See also: Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1965); *The Ghanaian Times* Monday, 21 September 2009, 9–23.
the South African civil rights activist and lawyer, Vizumi L. Make. While she obscured her relationship with “Nana” both in her published autobiographies and in personal correspondence and Nketsia's papers were destroyed after his death, evidence from Julian Mayfield's archive indicates that Nketsia was the “romantic other,” that swept her off her feet in Ghana. Mary Jane Lupton, who has also speculated that “Nana” was Nana Nketsia IV, arrived at her conclusion after noting the mutual friends that Angelou alluded to in both *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* and *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* as evidence of their relationship.

Mayfield's archive provides further evidence for this argument. While only some of their correspondence from Ghana survived, a September 1970 letter revealed Angelou's excitement to Julian about her lover's presence in Boston. “Nana is here. Here. At least in

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95 Though she had only intended to visit for a short while, the near-fatal car accident suffered by her son, Guy Johnson, shortly after her arrival, prompted her to stay for nearly two years. See: Maya Angelou, *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* (New York: Random House, 1986), 4, 13–15.

96 According to James Gibbs, after his death, Nana Nketsia’s “papers were destroyed when his house at Essikadu was set on fire by well-wishers 'out of fear that his papers might have some literature that maybe unwanted in the post-coup Ghana or contain some incriminating material.'” See: James Gibbs, *Ghanaian Theatre: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Llangynidr: Nolisment Publications, 2006), 169, Online: <http://www.jahn-bibliothek.ifas.uni-mainz.de/Dateien/Ghanabib_2012.pdf> Accessed 21 July 2017; In *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes*, Angelou describes being chauffeured to the home of her “romantic other” at “the Nana's request.” In *A Song Flung up in Heaven*, Angelou makes reference to her sadness at leaving this same lover, whom she described as, “a powerful West African man who had swept into my life with the urgency of a Southern hurricane.” See: Maya Angelou, *The Collected Autobiographies of Maya Angelou* (Toronto: Random House, 2004), 972–984, 1112–1114.

97 Specifically, Lupton notes Angelou's meeting of Kwesi and Molly Brew both in Ghana and in Mexico City, where they were in the company of Nana Nketsia IV. See: Mary Jane Lupton, *Maya Angelou: The Iconic Self,* (Santa Barbara, CA:ABC–CLIO, 2016).

98 This is due in part to Mayfield's personal papers being seized after the coup and the deportation of Ana Livia and the children in 1966. Much of what is present in his archive between 1961 and 1966 was what he had with him in Ibiza when the coup occurred. Ana Livia Cordero reported that the family's house was ransacked and her and her children were imprisoned prior to their deportation on 11 June 1966. See: “Puerto Rican Doctor Jailed and Expelled from Ghana,” 11 June 1966, SCH, JMP, Box 36, Folder 12, 1–2.
Boston,” she wrote in her flowing script. Nana Nketsia IV was indeed in Boston in late 1970, scheduled to give a series of lectures at the University of Massachusetts in December. He would go on to spend much of the mid-1970s as a lecturer at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Hampshire College. Further letters only make reference to him as “Nana.” In a letter to fellow Afro Tom Feelings in 1971 Mayfield admits that story was “a rather long piece about the Nana-Maya affair.” Though he does not identify Nana definitively, these further clues further bolsters Lupton's theory.

For the intellectual history of black expatriate literature, however, what was most significant about “Black on Black” was the way in which political economy was interwoven into gender, class, and cultural divisions in the portrait of their relationship. Bessie sought money and stability and Nana was focused creating an independent, modern, and decolonial nation. Bessie's explosion over her being hidden in the kitchen from a white woman rubbed salt in the wounds of a childhood spent under the specter of Jim Crow. Nana's inability to commit publicly revealed how culture circumscribed his political power. These objectives aligned with Mayfield's arguments that the underlying problems of Africa Unity could not be reduced to the cultural nor the social, but intersected with of the economic and political position of modern African nation-states and shifting gender politics on both sides of the Atlantic.

99 Letter from Maya Angelou to Julian Mayfield, 5 September 1970, SCH, JMP, Box 4, Folder 4, 2.


101 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Tom Feeling, 19 July 1971, SCH, JMP, Box 5, Folder 1, 1.
While Mayfield centered political economy as a significant force in these relationships, “Black on Black” was evidence not of its centrality or overriding importance, but its relationship to culture and gender. He emphasized political economy as a primary reason for African disunity, noting how “the unity which Africans have failed to achieve is more than countered by international financial combines which have managed to bury their differences,” he recognized the bind that African leaders faced.  

Political figures like Nana knew very well “how little room they have to maneuver in the intricate economic web that has been spun over them by the spiders of international monopoly capitalism whose legs stretch from Washington and New York, to London, Paris, Brussels and Bonn.”

“Black on Black” offered a critique of political economy disguised as an examination of cultural and social difference, weaving together these ideas seamlessly. Uniting his artistic sensibilities with his politics, “Black On Black” illustrated one element of the framework Mayfield had developed to promote an African Unity that was based on an intersectional notion of race and class—though his gender politics remained firmly patriarchal in orientation.

Cultural differences, linguistic barriers, national sentiments, and political economy played significant and intertwining roles in shaping divisions between Africans and those in the Diaspora—none could be discounted. Any solution to those divisions would


103 Ibid., 250.

104 Publicly, Mayfield was supportive and laudatory toward the women writers in his orbit, including Maya Angelou, Rosa Guy, and Alice Windom, who examined their own experiences through the intersecting lenses of race, class, and gender. Privately, however, Mayfield expected his partners to fulfill traditional gender roles, as select correspondence with Ana Livia Cordero and Sandra Drake indicates. See: Letter from Sandra Drake to Julian Mayfield, 15 August 1968, SCH, JMP, Box 4, Folder 14, 2–3.
have to take all these factors into account. However, as “Black on Black” emphasized, relationships and belonging, culture and social relations, national and transnational identifications, could not be disassociated from the material realities facing a postcolonial economy. In foregrounding the political and economic concerns that shaped national articulations of Black internationalism, Mayfield once again reflected earlier arguments by W.E.B. Du Bois and Kwame Nkrumah.¹⁰⁵

Written and revised several times during his last two years in Ghana, the final ending of “Black on Black” illustrated how the intertwined conflicts had by then become insurmountable. Mayfield's belief that Africans themselves were themselves unable to fully embrace the radical reconfiguration of their society necessary to realizing their stated goals. Similarly, African Americans were unwilling to sublimate their own desires for a usable past and self-discovery to put themselves fully in the service of their African hosts. The failure of the fictional Nana recalled that of Nkrumah, whose asceticism contrasted with his fiery public persona.¹⁰⁶ Bessie's failure, which was not derived from Maya Angelou's actual reasons

¹⁰⁵ In particular, “Black on Black” recalled W.E.B. Du Bois's 1928 novel Dark Princess. That novel examined the romance and union of an African American man, Matthew Towns, and the eponymous Princess Kauitya of Bwodpur, India. In Du Bois's story, the connections between of Pan-Africanism and Pan-Asianism overcame the obstacles that divided the lovers, including racist violence in the United States and revolutionary activism in Europe. Written almost four decades later, “Black on Black” offered vision of a union of Africa and its Diaspora, though smaller in scope, which suggested that Du Bois's utopian vision had soured in the intervening years. By then, Du Bois's vision of unity had become fragmented and precarious, challenged by broader geo-political issues, and riven with internal tensions. See: W.E.B. Du Bois, Dark Princess: A Romance (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁶ Notably, Nana Kiboda Nketsia IV did not share Nkrumah's public persona and, in this way, reveals the character of Nana to be a fictionalized composite.
for leaving Africa, suggested the lack of commitment and dedication among Afro expatriates that Mayfield witnessed.  

Each had rejected the other—and with good reason—but the consequences of their rejection were broader in scope than either cared to recognize. A year later, Mayfield's unpublished biographical portrait of Nkrumah, *The Lonely Warrior*, concluded that Nkrumah's most significant failing as a leader was not his radicalism nor his lack of political will, but that he had insulated himself from the complaints and voices raised by the inhabitants of the nation he governed, both native born and expatriate. In failing to navigate the continuous contradictions that the dialectic of African Unity created, Mayfield's fictionalized lovers illustrated the importance of personal relationships to the shaping of Diasporic politics.

"Black on Black" also closely examined the ways in which Africans and Afro expatriates heard each other without listening. Solidarity, the story indicated, was more than simply ideological, it required personal understanding and the development of a meaningful sense of belonging. While the short story sounded an alarm, the time it took to get from draft to publication blunted its influence. In writing designed to offer African Americans in the United States a complex, nuanced portrait of Diasporic relationships, Mayfield dispelled both overly wishful thinking and abject pessimism about the potential for African Unity. He also challenged white radical perspectives on the such Third World solidarity efforts.  

The pragmatic view of culture, gender, and race that was refracted through the lens of political economy in “Black on Black” did not fit neatly into liberal or Leftist ideological

107 Angelou's reasons for leaving Ghana were many, as she notes in her autobiographical accounts, marking Bessie as a composite character as well.
categories of artistic expression. His emphasis on materialism and class ran afoul of the reflexive anti-communism of liberals, black and white alike, but his insistence on the centrality of race and the importance of solidarity along racial lines also drew criticism from white Leftists. Like many non-white supporters and advocates for nationalist efforts in the Third World, Mayfield was no stranger to criticism from white Leftists, and his responses offer insight into the way transnational black radicals navigated the choppy waters of an era that had already pronounced the “end of ideology.”

The Young Radicals

In his “Letter to New Left,” published in October 1960, sociologist C. Wright Mills argued that the problem with Western intellectuals was in the way they “confuse[d] the problems of the intellectuals of West Europe and North America with those of the Soviet Bloc or with those of the undeveloped worlds.” Instead, Mills cautioned, “in each of the three major components of the world’s social structure today, the character and the role of the intelligentsia is distinct and historically specific.” Mills not only pointed to the ways in which geography and historical context mattered when it came to ideology, policy, and

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108 The End of Ideology was a collection of essays by Daniel Bell published in 1960 in which he argued that political ideology had become irrelevant to “sensible” people. A product of, “a kind of exhaustion of political ideas,” which Bell considers originating in the Second World War, the phrase has since become shorthand for the kind of anti-ideological ideology of technocratic liberalism that came to dominate political thought during the post-war era. It also refers to the ways in which Cold War liberalism's proponents challenged all ideologies except their own, whether they be Marxist, conservative, or classic liberalism. See: Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Nils Gilman, Mandarins of the Future (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

In response to Mills' letter, then-graduate student Michael Walzer organized a symposium of "young radicals" and published the results in Dissent magazine in April 1962. Expressing hope at the "new politics among the young; a new interest in radicalism and perhaps even in radical ideas," Walzer also argued that, while their radicalism signaled their commitment to change, young radicals nevertheless, "lack[ed] political perspectives." Asserting that he spoke both for himself and his peers, he wrote, "we are zealous but by and largely not committed; we are too often anti-ideological." The young radicals, which included Julian Mayfield along with Staughton Lynd, James Burnett, and others, responded to a series of questions provided by Walzer. The questions asked respondents, "In what ways do you identify yourself as a radical?" and specifically asked how they saw themselves in comparison to radicals in previous generations. Questions about political issues, levels of "commitment" and the responses that Americans should have to foreign, nationalist revolutions were also included. Responses, provided by editor Lewis Coser, highlighted fault


111 Ibid., 129.

112 Notably, Mayfield was the only non-white "Young Radical" whom Walzer invited to contribute. The others were: James Burnett, a member of the national Executive Committee and the Young People's Socialist League; Roger Hagen, editor of Committee of Correspondence Newsletter and a graduate student at Harvard; Jeremy Lerner, a novelist and writer for the The New Republic and New Leadership; Staughton Lynd, professor at Spelman College, writer on non-violence, and friend of Howard Zinn; Barbara Probst Solomon, novelist (The Beat of Life), expatriate, and Texan; Stephan Thernstrom, a new editor at Dissent and fellow at Harvard-MIT joint center for urban studies; and Robert Paul Wolff, a philosophy teacher at U. Chicago, writer for Dissent and The New Republic.
lines that divided white and black radicals over the subject of Third World revolutionary movements.113

Julian Mayfield's contribution reflected many of the arguments and situations he had examined in *The Grand Parade*, such as the marginalization of the Left, the post-war economic miracle, and the lack of mass movements which included the black working class. “Nowadays [the American radical] hardly talks about socialism at all,” Mayfield wrote, “but instead applies his efforts to separate issues such as civil rights or capital punishment . . . material wealth has dulled the sensibilities of an entire population.”114 While reinvigorated social movements, characterized by freedom rides, sit-ins, and campaigns against capital punishment signaled to some a renewed progressive movement, Mayfield argued these efforts were “only a pale reflection of the vigorous, militant Left that in the 1930s . . . drew its strength from the working class.” In other words, success for the political Left depended upon mass mobilization. Without this foundation, the American Left was little more than an intellectual echo chamber. Not only did the New Left lack mass support of the peoples it claimed to represent, Mayfield argued, its origins on university campuses meant that many of its key writing were inaccessible and often unknown to working-class radicals. Nor, he wrote, did the activism of these writers take cues from the concerns and the struggles of the people with whom they claimed to represent.

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113 It is unclear about the timeline of this piece’s publication. Only the published responses are present in Mayfield’s archive. However, based on *Dissent*’s budgetary constraints and Mayfield’s own writing, it is likely that Mayfield’s original piece was written prior to his arrival in Ghana. However, it does not differ substantially from the politics he expressed in “Ghanaian Sketches” or the newspaper articles from 1962–1963.

114 Mayfield, “The Young Radicals,” 143.
Never one to mince words, Mayfield cited the decline of this radical, mass-supported Left as a result of “the non-communist Left [which] threw in the sponge . . . when the reactionaries launched an all-out attack on the Communist Party.”¹¹⁵ Most of the “Young Radicals,” Mayfield lamented, were the intellectual descendants not of the Old Left, but of the surviving non-communist Left. Thus, they “seldom [questioned] the capitalist system, only its most obvious defects. [Their] objective is not to replace it, but to patch it up.”¹¹⁶

Mayfield began his essay with criticism, but he also offered solutions. Two groups existed which met his qualifications for substantive Leftist activism based on radical politics and solutions for black working classes. One was the group that he himself was a part of in New York: the “small group of black radicals, mostly writers and artists, working the large urban centers.” This group, the focus of Chapter 1, was significant in their lack of attachment to the programmatic hierarchy of the Old Left, but remained committed to understanding and realizing the programs of working peoples. “We belonged to no party, have few followers, and as yet no comprehensive program with which to appeal to our people,” yet, he pointed out, “if we serve any function at all it is to keep the fires of criticism lit under our recognized leaders.”

The other group that Mayfield considered a legitimate site of a radical mass movement were the Black Muslims of the Nation of Islam (NOI). By early 1962, the Nation boasted “nearly half a million members” among the “neglected and abused black working class.” In their own way, Mayfield argued, both the Nation of Islam and the Black Cultural

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 143.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 144.
Left offered an alternative vision for the future, grounded in fundamental and intersectional challenges to capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy. None of those challenges could be separated from one another, Mayfield argued, and to attempt to divide race issues from class issues would keep African Americans from joining mainstream Leftist groups and keep white Leftists from understanding the importance of the black radical tradition and the utility of advocacy for black governments and black nation-states in Africa and Latin America.

This untitled piece came in for the majority of criticism by *Dissent’s* editor Lewis A. Coser. Because Mayfield voiced support for Nasser, Touré, Nkrumah, Nasser, and Castro in the same sentence, Coser dismissed this piece as an “undifferentiated response.” This juxtaposition was, to Coser, evidence of an inadequate understanding of Marxian thought. That these leaders, “came to power against something [Mayfield] hates, colonialism,” did not take into account the specific historical and material processes that had brought them to power. Coser rejected Mayfield’s anti-colonialism as reactionary and considered his resistance to white supremacy as a “mindless activism, a know-nothing militancy the consequences of which I for one find somewhat frightening to contemplate.” True radicals, Coser wrote, were critical of the failures of Soviet and Chinese Communism, and he argued, “we fail in our obligations . . . if we refrain from attacking with all the vigor we can muster any

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117 Notably absent from this approach was gender hierarchy, something that Mayfield discussed very little in this era, though the women in the black cultural Left wrote extensively on the subject. See: Rosa Guy, Lorraine Hansberry, Alice Childress, Maya Angelou, Shirley Graham, Audre Lorde, Sarah E. Wright et al.


119 Ibid., 162.
tendencies toward totalitarianism which may appear in these new nations.” Coser’s repetition of the Cold War shibboleth “totalitarianism,” a favorite of both the anti-Communist Left and Cold War liberals, reflected a real concern for the potential of authoritarian rule, but its role as an oft-cited rhetorical defense of white supremacy did not help his case.

_Dissent’s_ editorial response to the symposium’s participants did not reserve their criticism for Mayfield alone. Coser had acerbic prose to spare and historian Staughton Lynd was taken to task for an unwavering faith in a Socialism that lacked “any hold on present realities” while Robert Paul Wolff, “argue[d] in a historical vacuum.” However, Coser’s most strident critiques went for those writers who “don’t seem to care enough for democracy.” Singling Mayfield out once again, he appealed to an historical “radical tradition,” the success of which was “precisely that it has taught men to transcend such narrow definitions of the situation, that it has led to the widening of our sympathies as well as our sense of involvement.”

The broader import of Coser’s attack on Mayfield’s black radical tradition was the way that even the non-Communist Left envisioned racial struggles as subsidiary to class struggles. Those movements that broke from Leftist orthodoxy by bending Marx to their own needs and calling nationalist projects “socialism” were an affront and could not be supported by veterans of the Old Left. “We have a right,” Coser concluded, “to cry out that

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120 Ibid., 162.

121 Ibid., 160.
the fish stink in Washington and in Havana, in Conakry as well as in Cairo.”\textsuperscript{122} The symposium, which drew several letters to the editor in subsequent months that reflected agreement among readers to Coser’s critique, provides evidence that mid-century Leftist thought, at least among\textit{Dissent’s} editors and readers, did not have room for African, Asian, and Latin American nationalist movements that did not bow to its criticisms.

Coser’s framing of radical thought in 1962 defined the limits of white Left radicalism in the early 1960s. Despite an early embrace of Revolutionary Cuba, a growing discomfort for African and Caribbean nationalist movements, Third World socialism, and black radicalism in the Diaspora increased in the pages of Left-inflected publications and among other white Leftists as the decade progressed. As Castro consolidated power and allied closely with the Soviet Union, New York intellectuals—Lewis Coser, Irving Howe, Michael Kazin, Henry Pachter, and Norman Mailer—criticized the concentration of power in the hands of so few individuals. Fears of another Stalin prompted wariness as struggling new governments implemented cults of personality and consolidated power in one-party states.\textsuperscript{123} Mayfield noted that he and other black radicals had similar concerns and the concentration of power, but at the same time recognized the impossible position facing African leaders. In much the same way that the young Mayfield had seen the Communist Party as best means of attacking the American system of white supremacy, he saw nationalist revolutionary nation-

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 161.

\textsuperscript{123} Notably, Ghana’s Convention People’s Party, Guinea’s Democratic Party of Guinea, and the Algerian National Liberation Front were some of the revolutionary nationalist movements that resisted democratic elections and multiparty systems after taking power.
states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America the only meaningful resistance to U.S. capitalism and global white supremacy.

Another exchange, this time in 1964, highlighted Mills' argument about European intellectuals confusing their problems with the historically specific problems facing Africans and Afro-Diasporic activists. In a series of articles published during the latter half of May, Mayfield and South African columnist H. M. Basner debated the speeches and intellectual project of Malcolm X, who had stopped in Accra for ten days during his five week sojourn through Africa and the Middle East. Basner, a white South African communist, sought refuge in Ghana in 1960 and joined the staff at The Ghanaian Times.\textsuperscript{124} On May 15, Basner criticized Malcolm in a strongly worded article entitled “Malcolm X and the Martyrdom of Rev. Clayton Hewett,” taking the former Nation of Islam minister to task for his lack of commitment to orthodox Marxian thought.

Malcolm’s speech, given on May 12, praised President Kwame Nkrumah as one of Africa’s “most progressive leaders” and lauded Ghana as model of African nationalism. In contrast to Basner’s critical tone, initial coverage by the Ghanaian press was positive and laudatory. Cassius Nimbo, another regular columnist in The Ghanaian Times, dubbed him “Malcolm Asibe,” and praised him for his promotion of Blackness and Africanness.\textsuperscript{125} Other accounts published in both the Evening News, and The Spark were similarly positive. Ghanaian journalists praising Malcolm for both his charismatic presence and the rhetorical support he

\textsuperscript{124} H. Miriam Basner, \textit{Am I an African?: The Political Memoirs of H. M. Basner} (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993)

\textsuperscript{125} “Asibe” appears to be an Akan surname and is also spelled Asibey. I have not yet been able to discern the significance of this designation though the context suggests it is a reference to Akan history.
offered for their struggles. Writers also took pains to counter criticisms of Malcolm X that were common in Western news outlets. Malcolm X, Nimbo argued, “has not come to Africa or rather Ghana to spread hatred for Whites in America. He has indeed come to reveal to everyone whose skin is black what this life on this planet should mean to him.”

Three days after Malcolm's departure Basner's piece, published under his weekly byline, excoriated the black leader for his deviations from Marxian orthodoxy. “By ignoring economic motivations and the class function of all racial oppression,” Basner wrote, “Malcolm X discussed the Afro-American position as if he hadn't a clue how American society evolved or how it can change in the foreseeable future.” The fact that “human solidarity” and the “class struggle” were absent from Malcolm X's rhetoric, Basner concluded, indicated that “his politics can only be of service to the American imperialists.”

In fomenting racial divisions rather than uniting men and women based on class solidarity, not only was Malcolm X's project doomed to failure, Basner argued, but he claimed that Malcolm effectively excluded both Karl Marx and John Brown from the pantheon of great liberators who “must be regarded as white liberators only.” In much the same way as Dissent's editors had criticized Mayfield for his “undifferentiated response,” and implied that his racial politics were a distraction from the true issues at hand, the critique Basner leveled at Malcolm X reproduced the doctrinaire communist line in one of the most widely distributed newspapers on the continent.


Leslie A. Lacy's account of Malcolm X's visit notes that the majority of the Afro expatriates were outraged by Basner's column and Mayfield immediately began to compose a response. This was not only because he had attacked one of their own, but also because dissent against allies of the Ghanaian government was unheard of in government publications—of which The Ghanaian Times most certainly was. Julian Mayfield's response to Basner, published on 18 May reflected both the frustrations of the Afro expatriates and pointed the uneasy relationship between Marx and Fanon in Mayfield's thinking.

More significantly, the exchange further reinforced the weakening of links between black and white Leftist thought as black activism grew more radical—and more racially conscious—worldwide. Basner's repudiation of Malcolm X's speech was, in Mayfield's response, “the classical Marxist interpretation of U.S. racial problems.” Basner's conclusion, that “the only solution is the overthrow of U.S. capitalism, and this can only be brought about by the unity of black and white workers,” had long been rejected by African American activists—and with good reason. This was because, as Mayfield pointed out, “no single factor has so retarded [the African American] struggle as [their] attempt to unite with liberal or progressive whites.”

As an example, Mayfield noted that at that very moment, the U.S. Communist Party agreed with both President Johnson and moderate black leaders on the threat posed by the

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130 Ibid., 2.
Black Muslims of the Nation of Islam. Black masses unallied with the U.S. State or the Communist Party, Mayfield noted, were a threat to the legitimacy of each. Echoing his essay in *Dissent*, Mayfield once again reasserted his point that no other group was as popular among disaffected and frustrated black workers as the NOI. He also pointed out the overwhelming whiteness of the U.S. Communist Party, an organization that “should be the most militant, and which should have a vast following among the most oppressed, [but] has almost no Negro Members.” Race was only salient to the Party, Mayfield argued, when it aligned with the interests of white supremacy. Otherwise it was to be subordinated to class struggles. Whenever race and racial solidarity challenged white control, whether on the shop floor or in the presidium, “white practitioners of the ideology showed themselves incapable of throwing off the virus of white supremacy.”

In defending Ghana’s Pan-African nationalism, Mayfield’s debates with white Leftists shaped subsequent articulations of Black Power in the United States and elsewhere. While not necessarily aligned with ongoing debates within the broader domestic Civil Rights Movement, Mayfield’s Third World orientation brought him attention and admirers in the United States. Melding a defiant anti-racism with Marxian critiques of political economy and demands for sovereignty, Mayfield’s radicalism was by no means universal, but in his attempt to make sense of the parallel and intersecting histories of Marxism and black radicalism, he

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131 In the previously cited memo from 12 June 1963, William J. Jorden explained to G. Mennem Williams that the, “Negro leadership wants to protect its flank from the Muslims, but more important it wants to get maximum gains on all fronts during the summer of the Emancipation Centennial.” See: William J. Jorden, “Memorandum to Governor G. Mennem Williams – U.S. Race Relations and American Foreign Policy,” 12 June 1963, RG 59, Classified Records of Assistant Secretary for African Affairs G. Mennem Williams 1961–1966, Box 3, NN3-59-90-13, National Archives and Record Administration College Park, MD.  

132 Ibid, 2.
offered a clear vantage point to view the persistent problem of white supremacy within the Left during the twentieth century. Mayfield's written conflicts with white Leftists were indicative the ways in which the black radicals were forced to navigate white supremacy despite being located in a black nation on a largely black continent.

According to fellow Afro Leslie Lacy, when Mayfield asked Malcolm X about his closed-door meeting with President Nkrumah, Malcolm's response was an urgent one. “He said a lot,” Lacy wrote, “but one thing he said which I will never forget, he said, 'Brother, it is no or never the hour of the knife, the break with the past, the major operation.'”

For all of its faults, the break with the past that Nkrumah hoped to realize in Ghana was the source of much of his support from the Diaspora; it was also motivated those who sought to overthrow him. While other studies have revealed the role that the United States Government played in overthrowing Nkrumah's government in a military-backed coup on 24 February 1966, that coup was only the culmination of nearly a decade's worth of surveillance, propaganda, and interference, a fact seen in the FBI files on the Afro expatriates and attempts to sow disunion among them and West Africans.

**Becoming Deschando**

On 20 November 1961, only a week after the Mayfields arrived in Ghana, FBI headquarters in Washington, DC received a report from the San Juan Office (SJO) reporting that Ana Livia had met Julian in London before flying to Ghana. The information,

134 The report details how their names were first marked off the passenger manifest and then rewritten by hand shortly before takeoff, indicating that there was some confusion about whether or not they would board the flight.
apparently gleaned from a surreptitious call placed to an acquaintance of Ana Livia’s at the Columbia University School of Public Health, stated, “both subjects plan to stay in Ghana for a long time, possibly years; may even take up citizenship in that country.” After a summary of the incident in Monroe, the Bureau announced that it was placing Mayfield on the unavailable section “Out of Country” status of their security index. A search for his passport was requested and the FBI placed a “lookout notice” with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on his file to ensure he would be arrested if he attempted to return to the United States. Though routine in the environment of anti-communism, the time spent on surveilling Mayfield in Ghana was indicative of broader concerns about black radicalism among those in the State Department and the FBI.

Surveillance on Julian Mayfield, his family, and his friends increased exponentially during his time in Ghana both as a result of his actions in Monroe, but also due to the fiery criticism he lobbed at the United States from his office in Flagstaff House. U.S. intelligence agencies looking to root out “suspected communists” and “Cuban sympathizers” remained overwhelmingly focused on Mayfield and other black critics of U.S. foreign and domestic policy. Public response to Mayfield’s publications in the United States was minor, as most of his writing was distributed in West Africa and Europe, but classified memorandum reveal that foreign service workers kept close tabs on his activities, his publications, and expressed

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136 The fact that Mayfield was able to cross the border from Canada and receive a passport while being wanted for questioning by the FBI has not been explained. His FBI file, however, does suggest that this an unusual occurrence.
concerns about its potential impact on African public opinion. If his FBI file is any indication, his writing was disseminated within the Departments of Justice and State and his name was well-known by embassy staff in Accra. This was most apparent after Mayfield's articles ran in the *Evening News*. Shortly after the series was published, the Embassy in Accra and the USIA station in Ghana sent a request to USIA headquarters in Washington, “in view of further upcoming articles on this subject and anticipated unfavorable reaction, we require soonest full background information on author Mayfield who purportedly was ‘only reporter present at Monroe race riots last August,’” as well as a “full background information on trial of Mrs. Mae Mallory, including her present status.” In response, Mayfield's FBI file was sent to the Accra USIA station.

Memorandum related to Mayfield from the Spring and Summer of 1962 focused on, “evidence of Subject's support for the Cuban Revolution,” but his political reportage was considered part the broader threat his “Anti-American Activities” posed to U.S. interests in West Africa. In a subsequent report, dated 5 September 1962, an unnamed FBI Agent reported to the main Washington Office that Mayfield was still writing for the *Evening News* and, “has done an excellent job in making favorable publicity in Africa concerning the Cuban revolution . . . [and] pointing out to the Africans the difficulties that the Negroes have to endure in the United States.” In the final paragraph of the first page, the agent

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137 Julian Mayfield FBI File, Untitled Memorandum, 10 May 1962, 2.

138 Though Mallory's FBI file was released in 2007, there is no indication that her file was sent to Accra.

139 Julian Mayfield FBI File, Memo dated 5 September 1962, 1.
reported that Mayfield was, “not using his name in connection with the articles he is writing, but describes himself as an Anonymous Special Correspondent.”

This claim is curious, especially in light of the fact that no record or mention of such anonymous articles is present in Mayfield's archive. Furthermore, Mayfield was never one to shy away from publicity and saw any attention as a platform upon which he could further expound his views.\(^{140}\) And, though this claim is restated several times in his file between 1962 and 1963, there are no mentions of the content of the articles in Mayfield's FBI file and the names of the informants who provided this information remain redacted. However, clues to this mystery have emerged in USIA documents from the Accra station at the National Archives.

In a unclassified memo dated 18 June 1963 from Accra to Washington, a USIA officer by the name of Lewis reported that an Evening News article published under the name “Deschando” critical of Kennedy's June 11 speech, was, “said to be Julian Mayfield, American Negro writer here.”\(^{141}\) The memo cites five quotes from the article to highlight Mayfield's criticism of American injustice and a lack of faith by African Americans in President Kennedy. The, “world believes [that the] white American has no regard for moral value,” Deschando wrote, “force is what the cowardly bully believes in.” The title of the piece, “The Speech that Cost a Human Life,” was further called “incendiary” in its rhetoric.

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\(^{140}\) One exception to this was his writing of an episode of the John Cassavetes detective series, Johnny Staccato, in 1959 under the pseudonym Gerald Orsini.

\(^{141}\) Accra to Washington, 18 June 1963, RG 306, United States Information Agency, United States National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, MD.
Subsequent research in Ghanaian newspaper archives between 1961 and 1966 has uncovered two more articles with the byline of “Deschando.” The first, “Can Fear & Mistrust Produce a Sound National Policy in Togoland” in January 1962, was published only two months after Mayfield's arrival in Ghana. The other article, “Forward to Ghana's Industrial Heritage,” was published in October 1963, and was a paean to Kwame Nkrumah's embrace of industrialization as modernization. It remains unclear whether or not these articles were written by Mayfield and, after careful analysis, it is doubtful that he was the author of all three. They lack Mayfield's penchant for anecdote, his jocular wit, and his vernacular tone; the articles are also dissimilar from one another. The grammar, syntax, and language suggest that there were different authors sharing the same byline. The fact that the first and third articles focus entirely on Nkrumah and African politics in nearby Togo is contrasted by the second article, which shares Mayfield's disdain for Kennedy and his policies.

Another notable mention in Julian Mayfield's FBI file was in the same 5 September 1962 memo and the USIA officer Lewis compared Mayfield to William Worthy, then facing federal charges after traveling to Cuba. The memo speculated that Mayfield was not using his name in the Evening News articles, “inasmuch as he fears reprisals by the FBI when he returns to the United States,” and was worried he may become, “a second William Worthy.” In light of the fact that, by September 1962, Mayfield had published little in

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144 Worthy was charged under 8 U.S. Code § 1185 - “Travel control of citizens and aliens.”
145 Julian Mayfield FBI File, Memo from SAC Miami to Director, FBI, 5 September 1962, 2.
Ghana, the memo remained focused on Mayfield's vocal support for Cuba and the potential harm to U.S. national security this support could do in Africa. Finally, Lewis directed that information prepared for dissemination about Mayfield remain classified as “secret” specifically to aid the foreign diplomatic establishment in its interactions with the Afro expatriate community.

It should be noted here that FBI agents and their sources did not always provide accurate information. In a memorandum dated 14 December 1962, agents recorded Mayfield's new address—Bungalow 5, Signals Road, Achimota School, Accra, Ghana—and stated that he was then employed as a “government officer” at the Department of National Institute of Health and Medical Research. In fact, this position in the National Research Council at the University of Ghana was the one that his wife, Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, held. The same memo advised Washington the “subject was appointed as a contributor of news articles from Ghana for “Freedomways” a quarterly review of the Negro freedom movement,” despite Mayfield's lack of a formal role with the magazine.¹⁴⁶

In another memo that was shared with the USIA by the FBI, a section entitled “Evidence of CP Sympathies” included in accurate information about Mayfield's relationship with John H. Clarke. According to the memo, “Mayfield was being appointed [Freedomways'] scout in Ghana to ensure that they will receive some worthwhile contributions from Ghana.” Letters from Clarke and Mayfield's archives during this time indicate that, while Clarke and Mayfield engaged in a frequent correspondence, their communication was mostly limited to the operations of the magazine and its monetary struggles. The FBI author of the

memo concluded that the goal of *Freedomways* was “to project a socialist and pro-Soviet orientation,” but the magazine's original sin was that it was critical of United States calls for democracy and liberty in the developing world even as the federal government made no little effort to allow the same for millions of black voters in the South.\(^{147}\)

The identity of “Deschando” is more than simply a minor mystery for scholars analyzing the Afro community in Nkrumahist Ghana; it demonstrates the ways in which political journalism by domestic-born critics of the United States became a focal point for U.S. cultural diplomacy efforts in West Africa. This fact is also borne out in the USIA archives. Record Group 306, the U.S. National Archives designation for the U.S. Information Agency, contain dozens of linear feet of “African Reaction Files.” These files include facsimiles, cuttings, translations, and analysis of articles that relate to U.S. civil rights struggles, opinions on U.S. foreign policy, and “anti-American sentiments” for consumption by State Department officials. Often glossed and annotated by readers, these reaction files paid special attention to racial issues and especially the whereabouts and contributions of African American critics of the United States. Once identified, these individuals would frequently be investigated by the FBI and often by the CIA. However, as the confusion between the positions held by Dr. Cordero and her husband, as well as the assumption that Julian Mayfield was “Deschando,” indicate information gathered by paid informants and gleaned from newspapers could be unreliable.

In the wake of the Congo Crisis, concerns about African public opinion were not demonstrated just by translating and forwarding articles from foreign newspapers and

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 3
surveilling on African American expatriates. The State Department and the CIA took proactive steps to promote certain Black politics while marginalizing other, more radical strains of internationalist and black Leftist organizing—a prelude to domestic counter-intelligence programs such as COINTELPRO. Furthermore, the State Department at the time was in the process of aiding and advising forced opposed to Nkrumah within Ghana.

The intense interest that the State Department, USIA, the CIA, and the FBI demonstrated in Afro-Diasporic unity and cultural movements has largely been folded into the historiography of the Cultural Cold War, but it is important examine the way this interest affected relationships in the Diaspora more broadly. Both FBI and CIA surveillance on relied heavily on paid informants, a process that sowed mistrust among the Afros in Ghana and elsewhere on the continent. New arrivals who did not come with recommendations from others were treated suspiciously, both by the state and by the Afro community. Africans hoping for neutrality as the superpowers funneled money and arms into places like Congo had their own suspicions of expatriates, driving a further wedge between the groups.


149 The extent of anti-Nkrumah efforts by the United States in Ghana has only recently begun to be declassified. Between 1957 and 1964, those efforts were largely overt, including agricultural aid, a well-funded Peace Corps program, student exchanges, and a significant USAID and USA presence in the nation. In the case of the Peace Corps, St. Claire Drake was a leading figure in the organization in Ghana following his arrival in 1957. However, after 1964 and Nkrumah’s increasingly anti-capitalist rhetoric, concerns over Communist sympathies within Nkrumah’s government and his developing relationship with Eastern European nations prompted an increase in surveillance and (suspected) covert operations. While no documents yet link the multiple assassination attempts on Nkrumah’s life to the United States, evidence has emerged that the United States was involved in aiding the plotters of the 1966 coup.
Even as Nkrumah began to deport Afros like Wendell Jean-Pierre for offering dissenting opinions, many remained committed to his nation-building program—though they became more cautious about voicing their critical views in public.\(^{150}\) Repeated assassination attempts linked to Ghanaian opposition groups contributed to President Nkrumah's gradual retreat from public view while increasing his paranoia.\(^{151}\) The United States support for the February coup was not the first effort to overthrow an African government, but that it took place in a nation with so many African American and Afro-Caribbean expatriates convinced many that African Unity required reckoning not only with individual relationships, but also the power and reach of other nation-states. For Mayfield, the lessons of Ghana were clear. Hard decisions were required of any leader who hoped to prevail against the Soviet Union and the United States and those decisions could not be made on the basis of ideology alone. To examine the difficult truths he learned in Ghana, Julian Mayfield turned once again to fiction to make his point.

**Fount of a Nation**

In his four-act play, *Fount of a Nation*, Mayfield turned once again to the fictional African nation of Songhay to consider the impossible position that newly independent African nations found themselves in upon attaining independence. Presenting a thinly-veiled version of Kwame Nkrumah as the President of the Republic of Songhay, Mayfield examined his desperate efforts to modernize a country while attempting to sidestep the...
international pressures of a global Cold War. The character of Robert, the leader's African American advisor, served as the President's primary foil, voicing arguments made by other Afro expatriates about Ghanaian politics. In one scene, Robert is angry after learning that the President has decided to accept American money in order to finance the modern harbor to open Songhay to international freight liners. “No matter how much your generation talks about revolution,” Robert stated accusingly, “it always ends up with you accepting things the way they are. We—my generation—must find another way.” To that, the President responded dryly, “when you find it, let me know.”

In probing the difficult decisions that African leaders had to make, *Fount of the Nation* also captured the intractable position that Afro expatriates found themselves in during the final years of the Nkrumah government. As many privately decried the cult of personality around Nkrumah, dubbed the Osgayefo or “Redeemer” in Akan, most remained publicly supportive of the government. Even Mayfield refrained from offering any criticism until after the government fell, keeping his negative opinions to himself between 1964 and 1966. Still, grounded in his eye for the political roots of everyday life, Julian Mayfield's writing refused to discount or ignore the material realities that framed the contradictions of Diaspora, whether they be in the air-conditioned offices of Flagstaff House, the modern lobby of the Ambassador Hotel, or on the crowded dance floor at the Lido nightclub. Similarly, he rejected calls to foreground class and nationality above race. In telling the story from the inside of the presidential office of Songhay, *Fount of the Nation*, once again examined the centrality of personal relationships to the operation of Diasporic thought. Collaboration

152 Mayfield, *Fount of the Nation*, Long version, SCH, JMP, Box 2, Folder 15, 138.
and cooperation in Songhay or Ghana required careful navigation of difference and there were limits. But, perhaps more importantly, the play demonstrated the ways in which Nkrumah's drive toward a simultaneous nationalist and continental notion of sovereignty demonstrated a profound, if incomplete, shift in the African political history.

That shift was the recognition of the profound need for an organized Africa to resist the neo-colonialism of former empires. Writing from Ibiza in the aftermath of the February 1966 coup that toppled Nkrumah's government, Mayfield argued that North Americans and Europeans who celebrated his downfall did so because of his “conscious attempt to transform the entire society into a modern socialist state.” Notably, in this passage, Mayfield does not use “nation,” but “society,” tacitly implying that Nkrumah's goals extended far beyond the tiny West African nation he governed. But, he points out, the “people of Ghana, especially those in the cities, were quite naturally more concerned with domestic economic stagnation and a dwindling public treasury, than they were with their international prestige.” The prestige of being a state that stood firm against Soviet, American, and European neo-colonialists “means little when there is not enough food for the children, nor enough money in one's pocket to buy that which is available.”

Overcoming this disconnect between the lofty goals of President Nkrumah and the daily needs of the people of Ghana was the reason for the rhetorical advocacy that Mayfield undertook at Flagstaff House. That the two were never brought into alignment was both the

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154 Ibid., 6.
source of Mayfield's frustration and criticism of the government as well as the foundation for the nationalist rhetoric he would take up in the United States and, later, in Guyana.

Though he initially sought to minimize his role in the Nkrumah government, he soon found himself fully “identified not only with Ghana's foreign policy objectives, but also with her domestic affairs.”¹⁵⁵ Many of his contemporaries, including Leslie Lacy, David Levering Lewis, Maya Angelou, Malcolm X, and Preston King, asserted that he was the de facto leader of the Afro expatriate community, much to Mayfield's chagrin. In Tales from the Lido, a series of vignettes written between 1971 and 1983, Mayfield recalls that his work was often interrupted by African Americans who had managed to get themselves in trouble in Ghana. His position also provoked frustration among Ghanaians. Inviting men and women from other nations to Ghana and paying them more than local salaries engendered criticism among many in Ghana, especially in such institutions as the University of Ghana and the military. Similarly, Nkrumah's courting of Kaiser Aluminum and the U.S. State Department in the construction of the Volta River Dam Project provoked mixed reactions among Afro expatriates who saw foreign development as compromising nascent African sovereignty—a position that Nkrumah himself would adopt only late in his administration. “To enter such agreements,” with former colonizers, Mayfield wrote ruefully, “is the same as inviting the late train robber Jessie James to count your money.”¹⁵⁶

Many accounts of Mayfield imply he departed Ghana as a result of the coup which ended Nkrumah's government on 24 February 1966, but in reality, Mayfield left the country

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 18.
¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 259.
nearly three weeks prior. Correspondence between Mayfield and fellow expatriates, including Preston King and Tom Feelings between 1966 and 1967 indicate that his dedication to his work, international travel, and long absences from home drove a wedge into his relationship with Ana Livia. In light of these exchanges, his move to Ibiza in February suggests that this desire to find a quiet place to work and write was also a formal separation. Though they would not formally sign divorce papers until 1971, Ana Livia and Julian's relationship never recovered from events in Ghana. Subsequent correspondence alternately reflected anger, frustration, and sadness at the dissolution of their partnership.

Figure 5: Dr. Ana Livia Cordero and Julian Mayfield, pictured here with their children Rafael (top) and Emiliano, c. 1963. Picture courtesy of Sandy Placido.

Africana Studies scholar Sandy Placido, who uncovered Cordero’s archives in 2013, has documented her continuing dedication to Puerto Rican nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and
Third World solidarity movements throughout the remainder of her life.\textsuperscript{157} In addition to her work at the Ministry of Health in Accra, Cordero served as W.E.B. Du Bois's personal physician during the last years of his life. Her time in Ghana did not diminish her commitment to Puerto Rican nationalism and she served the Movimento Pro Independencia (MPI) as its representative in Africa. Following her return to Puerto Rico in 1967 with her children, Cordero founded the Proyecto Piloto Trabajo con el Pueblo (Pilot Project of Work with the People), which aided many of Puerto Rico's poorest citizens. A dedicated transnational activist, Cordero's continued insistence on the presence of Puerto Rican representatives at conferences like the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Cuba helped weave Puerto Rico into the complex web of anti-imperialist activism that spanned the globe.\textsuperscript{158}

Contemplating all that had transpired since he had left the United States in the Summer of 1966, Julian Mayfield reluctantly concluded in early 1967 that the community he had been a part of in Ghana was no more. He weighed his options, noting that in Ibiza he had ample time to write and few distractions; he considered staying, but his friends would

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\textsuperscript{158} A more recent blog post about Cordero explains her legacy thusly: “Cordero developed insights and implemented strategies that are as relevant to transnational liberation struggles today as they were during the years that she lived. As a Puerto Rican female doctor who traveled widely and maintained relationships with prominent leaders throughout the African diaspora, she had a keen understanding of the ways that racism and imperialism intertwined. Her global perspective and activism speak to the tensions and solidarities that continue to evolve in Afro-Diasporic communities. A greater awareness of Cordero’s life will contribute to the bridges that need to be built and strengthened between Black, Latinx, African, and Latin American studies and communities.” See: Sandy Placido, “A Global Vision: Ana Livia Cordero and the Puerto Rican Liberation Struggle,” Black Perspectives, 10 December 2016, Online, <https://www.aaihs.org/a-global-vision-ana-livia-cordero-and-the-puerto-rican-liberation-struggle/> Accessed 2 February 2017.
not hear of it.\textsuperscript{159} In a letter from Maya Angelou, she implored him to “Come home!” “How can you say you're not coming back? The struggle is \textit{here}.”\textsuperscript{160} Noting that filmmaker Ivan Dixon had expressed interest in producing \textit{The Hit} and that black-oriented productions were becoming a real possibility in Hollywood, Angelou wrote optimistically about Mayfield's prospects. In May 1967, after five and a half years away from the United States, Julian Mayfield arrived in New York by ocean liner, ready once again to challenge white supremacy in his native land.

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\textsuperscript{159} In a letter to David Du Bois, Mayfield noted that writing was easy in Ibiza, “but it is hell when you need to do research.” Letter from Julian Mayfield to David Du Bois, 4 April 1966, SCH, JMP, Box 4, Folder 15, 1.

\textsuperscript{160} Letter from Maya Angelou to Julian Mayfield and Ana Livia Cordero. Undated (“1966” written later], SCH, JMP, Box 4, Folder 11, 1.
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The Black Revolutionary does not embrace violence as a religion, but only as a tactic, and only when he thinks he can win.
—Julian Mayfield¹

It was an uptight time. Being Black in America is an uptight situation.
—Ruby Dee²

Julian Mayfield returned to the United States at a moment when a militant posture in black radical movements dominated headlines, but he soon concluded that the revolutionary proclamations of the new generation of young radicals were as hollow as that of the liberal integrationism rhetoric that he critiqued in *The Grand Parade*. Despite his long-standing belief in the necessity of revolution and the search for sovereignty as key components of back self-determination, Mayfield criticized the masculinist militancy of figures like Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. In his April 1968 keynote address to the writer's conference at Fisk University. Mayfield argued that the militancy of the Black Panthers limited the possibility of meaningful revolution.

“*The Black Writer and Revolution*” was a wide-ranging speech, and Mayfield touched on a number of themes, but prominent in the piece was a practical distinction between the “militant” and the “revolutionary.” The militant, Mayfield explained, was irresponsible, immature, unthinking, and needlessly violent, one who “risks his own life, and more often the lives of others, in almost suicidal confrontations with superior power.” This


new militancy was also a reflection of the fragile state of black American masculinity: “Because he must always be busy proving he is a man, [the militant] can get a lot of black people killed without achieving real objectives.” In contrast, the revolutionary “is first and foremost a thinking person who takes his own manhood or her womanhood for granted.” The revolutionary “does not embrace violence as a religion, but only as a tactic, and only when he thinks he can win.”

This speech revealed how revolutionary ideology was less important for Mayfield than tactics, organization, and strategic planning in the service of fundamental social and political change. The Fisk conference, organized by Mayfield's fellow Harlem Writer's Guild alumnus John O. Killens, afforded the thirty-nine-year-old writer the platform to expound upon this heterodox intellectual project in which he prioritized practical revolutionary tactics and strategy over ideological declarations. Developed during and in response to his first year teaching at Cornell University, this project would be further refined over the next four years while teaching at New York University and the State University of New York (SUNY) Cortland. Working in the academy would have the additional benefit of bringing Mayfield closer to a generation of students who had come of age amidst the Civil Rights Movement and had turned toward radical alternatives.

The Fisk conference also afforded Mayfield a chance encounter with former acting teacher Frank Silvera that would alter the course of his career and take his writing in a radical new direction: Hollywood. Shortly after the conference, Mayfield joined the Jules Dassin's

3 Julian Mayfield, “The Black Writer and Revolution,” 1
4 Ibid., 3
new film project as a writer and lead actor on the Paramount Films Production *Uptight*, a film which further elaborated his arguments about the limitations and consequences of this kind of masculinist militancy. The story revolved around the betrayal of a black militant by a comrade, but the film's subject matter allowed for Mayfield to challenge the ineffectiveness of non-violent marches even as he warned against the violent response to the new black radical militancy. As an incisive critique of black radicalism that was produced and distributed by a major Hollywood studio, the film's message went largely unheeded and the film descended into obscurity.

If his experience with the Freedom Riders and forces of state repression in Monroe had further diminished his interest in the kind of non-violent activism embodied by Martin Luther King Jr., then his time in Ghana reinforced his preoccupation with masculine articulations of state power. As he later told William Marshall, “since I first went to Africa I have been fascinated by black men who hold power, what they do to get it and to keep it, their life styles, and why they often lose it.” Militant rhetoric and direct action taken by groups like the Black Panther Party for Self Defense and the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), Mayfield wrote, lacked mass broad support, practical tactics, and—most importantly—the ability to exercise meaningful power. In addition to being premature, Mayfield argued, these organizations would succeed only in bringing about a violent and potentially genocidal response from the white majority. Fears of such a response influenced both his writing and the lectures he gave while teaching in New York. By 1969, Mayfield emerged as one of the loudest voices warning against the “law and order” discourse of the

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5 Letter from Julian Mayfield to William Marshall, 18 February 1973, SCH, JMP, Box 6, Folder 8, 1.
Nixon Administration and the potential for large-scale persecution—and genocide—of African Americans.

This chapter examines the ways in which Julian Mayfield's search for a solution to the persistent contradictions and contentious debates that characterized the nascent Black Power Movement resulted in a piece of art that examined all sides of the debate—and succeeded in pleasing no one. If, as Peniel Joseph writes, historians are to understand Black Power as the means by which Black peoples “challenged the scope of liberalism, democracy, and the nation-state,” then analyzing the choice of a major Hollywood studio to give carte blanche to a formerly blacklisted director (Dassin), a “communist subversive” under surveillance by the FBI (Mayfield), and a veteran of the Harlem Cultural Left (Dee), offers a compelling narrative of a paradoxical moment in American history.\(^6\) At a moment when Attorney General Robert Kennedy had signed off on the plan to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” black social movements under the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), American culture industries saw profits to be made in portraying the struggles of black liberation.\(^7\) One a handful of films that sought realism and rejected caricature in its portrait of black radicalism, considering Uptight in this historical


\(^{7}\) The full paragraph is as follows: “The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder. The activities of all such groups of intelligence interest to this Bureau must be followed on a continuous basis so we will be in a position to promptly take advantage of all opportunities for counterintelligence and to inspire action in instances where circumstances warrant. The pernicious background of such groups, their duplicity, and devious maneuvers must be exposed to public scrutiny where such publicity will have a neutralizing effect.” See: Memo from Director of FBI, “Counterintelligence Program,” 25 August 1967, 383, <http://docs.noi.org/fbi_august_25_1967.pdf> Accessed 22 September 2017.
context reveals a portrait of an incongruous cultural moment in which black militancy was realistically portrayed on screen even as its proponents were persecuted, marginalized, and murdered by state forces.

As the first major Hollywood motion picture to seriously depict black militancy in the United States, *Uptight* challenged the dichotomous historiographical schema of black-oriented films in the 1960s and 1970s. Films from this era dealing with race have tended to be situated in the historiography as either as liberal integrationism (*Look Who's Coming to Dinner*, *In the Heat of the Night*, etc.) or exploitative (*Superfly*, *Shaft*, *Cotton Come to Harlem*, etc.).

The latter category, typically referred to as “blaxploitation,” came to dominate the industry in the early 1970s, much to the chagrin of many black writers, religious leaders, and social critics. Depicting the intellectual and political divisions in ways which challenge this

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8 While there were some independent projects which resisted this trend, this scheme is limited to films produced by major Hollywood studios, such as Paramount, Palomar, Universal, etc. which received widespread distribution in the United States and Europe. Other “integrationist” films include, *The Defiant Ones* (1957), *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959), *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1959), *Lilies of the Field* (1963), *The Bedford Incident* (1965), *To Sir, With Love* (1967). These films emphasized themes of interracial cooperation, integration, and understanding. Most featured black and white characters overcoming their differences and cooperating amidst extra-ordinary circumstances.

9 “Blaxploitation,” a portmanteau of “black” and “exploitation,” first came into use following the release of the 1972 film, *Superfly*. Response to that film prompted Hollywood NAACP President Junius Griffin to organize a panel that would rate portrayals of black characters in films such that, “our children are not constantly exposed to a diet of so-called black movies that glorify black males as pimps, dope pushers, gangsters, and super-males with vast physical prowess but no cognitive skills.” Cedric Robinson argued in 1998 that, “with a few exceptions blaxploitation was a degraded cinema.” In an article which emphasized the negative social and political impact of these films, he historicized the emergence of the genre as capitalism’s response to black anger and frustration—the production of a constant stream of negative imagery. The sexualized and hyper-masculine caricatures of black liberation activists depicted in those films further solidified a link between black radicalism and criminality. Blaxploitation, Robinson argued, was Hollywood's response to Black Power. In making films that emphasized the violence, sexuality, and degraded nature of Black life, Hollywood was, “sustaining a more muted integrationism, while conceding that Black social protest was an emergent force from a community with a historical dimension and an urgent moral impulse.” Author Sam Greenlee pointed out that, “the vast majority of the films are not black films, insomuch as they are produced, directed, and written mostly by white folks for black consumption. If anybody is obsessed with sex and violence, it is the people who make the films.” Addison Gayle pointedly wrote that, “[t]he best example of this kind of nihilism / irresponsibility are the Black films; here is freedom pushed to its most ridiculous limits; here are writers and actors who claim that freedom for the artist entails
schematic view of film, *Uptight* demands a reassessment of this framework. Additionally, Mayfield's role in the film, overshadowed in the historiography by his earlier work in Ghana, is integral to understanding the dynamics of black revolutionary rhetoric during a pivotal moment in the history of the Black Power Movement. The tepid reception to the film and its poor box office receipts have since relegated the film to obscurity, but, in considering Black Power as something other than the “civil rights movement's 'evil' twin,” the making of *Uptight* offers a new perspective on lesser-known artistic depictions of these political, economic, and social struggles. These conflicts contributed to the explosive rise and lasting influence of Black Power as a political, cultural, and social movement.

Placing *Uptight* and Mayfield's teaching within this historical context further integrates artistic expressions of black militancy and the development of Black Studies into the broader historiography of the Black Power Movement. Considering the ways in which lesser-known voices contributed to the intellectual history of the movement, Mayfield's work illustrates the artistic expressions of what historian Tom Sugrue described as the quest for “a political alternative to the racial liberalism that had prevailed through most of the postwar years.”


1960s. In their critical appraisal of the divisive nature of black politics in 1968 the film's writers—Dassin, Mayfield, and Dee—believed that by presenting a realistic portrait of the movement, an understanding of the limitations of specific ideologies could be reached. The result portrait, concise and honest, would allow for the conditions in which the solidarity necessary for liberation could be constructed.

Prior to his involvement in the film, Julian Mayfield sought work in the academy as a means to remain financially independent and afford him to the time to continue his own writing. Despite his best efforts, teaching proved a burdensome task and left him with little time for his creative work. However, in his syllabi for various classes and in the lectures he gave in New York and Ithaca, Mayfield offered compelling arguments about the perils of militancy without strategy, the dangers of collaboration with Johnson's Great Society, and the broken promises of Black Studies programs. “The Black Writer in the Revolution” was not only an analysis of the state of black politics, but a sounded an alarm, warning listeners of the effect that continued “unthinking” militancy would have on the African American population. Mayfield believed that the U.S. government not only had the means to initiate the large-scale detention of African Americans and white allies, but was preparing to do so. Existential survival, then, became a primary concern as reflected in his speeches, writing, and public experiences.

**Black Techniques of Survival**

Arriving in the United States in late May 1967, Julian Mayfield's homecoming came at a incongruous moment in American cultural and political history.\(^{11}\) Though the

\(^{11}\) According to his passport, Julian Mayfield arrived at the Port of New York on 27 May via the S.S. France having departed on 22 May from Southhampton in the U.K. According to his FBI file, he traveled in a 2-
instruments of state surveillance and repression were aimed squarely at “black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings,” popular fascination with black radicalism made it a highly sought after commodity by film, television, and book publishing companies. In addition to the culture industry, protests and direct action by a new generation of black students at primarily white institutions prompted universities to begrudgingly form the nucleus of Black Studies programs, hiring black professors and lecturers to avoid bad publicity and further armed takeovers of campus buildings. As he had for most of career, Mayfield sought success on his own terms. During his year in Spain, hoping to avoid entanglements that might prevent him from pursuing an idea or a project that interested him, he worked doggedly on finishing the two books he had begun in Ghana. When neither The Living Ghana or The Lonely Warrior were accepted for publication, Mayfield recognized that, despite the low cost of living in Ibiza, he was low on money and out of options.

At the urging of former Ghanaian University President Connor Cruise O’Brien, he applied for and was given a teaching fellowship at Cornell University at the newly created Society of the Humanities. The formation of the Society of the Humanities in late 1966

berth room accompanied by a “Mrs. Mayfield.” However, Ana Livia Cordero was arrested in Ghana and deported the previous year and was living in Puerto Rico at the time. Correspondence indicates that the woman traveling with him was Sandra Drake and the two had a romantic relationship between 1966 and 1967. See: Passport issued 25 November 1966, SCH, JMP, Box 2, Folder 4, 3.


13 *The Living Ghana* was a interdisciplinary book that examined the history, culture, biology, and social trends of the West African nation. Mayfield began the project with fellow Afro Leslie A. Lacy, but finished it alone after Lacy returned to the New York following the coup. *The Lonely Warrior* was biographical sketch of Nkrumah, focusing on his rise and fall. Mayfield also completed *Fount of the Nation*, a play which examined the problems of post-colonial leadership in West Africa, on Ibiza, but he did not seek publication.

14 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Connor Cruise O’Brien, 1966, SCH, JMP, Box 6, Folder 12.
marked Cornell's attempt to address vocal complaints by black students about the lack of Black Studies programs, low numbers of black faculty, and overwhelmingly Eurocentric curriculum. Hiring a non-academic published writer like Mayfield was a stop-gap measure to address increasingly vocal student demands. It proved not to be enough. The following year students armed with rifles and shotguns seized Straight Hall in April 1969, protesting the lack of black faculty. The students held the building for several days before they peacefully departed. However, when Julian Mayfield received the news that he had been awarded a year-long junior fellowship at the upstate New York university, he began to make plans to return to the United States.

Ana Livia Cordero remained in Ghana with Rafael and Emiliano following Mayfield's departure in early February, but her position as a specialist at Ghana's Department of National Institute of Health and Medical Research did not protect her from the new military government's purge of Nkrumah loyalists and expatriates. According to a news report dated 6 June 1966, Dr. Cordero had been jailed on 3 June and held incommunicado during that time. Following her release Dr. Cordero protested her imprisonment stating that her “illegal arrest and immediate expulsion was a direct violation of her civil rights and an

15 This plan was ultimately unsuccessful. In April 1969, a number of Cornell's Black students armed themselves with rifles and occupied William Straight Hall during parents' weekend. Mayfield, along with Dr. Gloria Joseph, would play minor roles as intermediaries between the students and the administration. Mayfield only made veiled references to the events in his autobiography and did not speak publicly about the event. His presence is noted in one monograph. However, in a letter between Mayfield and gallery owner and artist Ivan Spence, Mayfield bragged that, “[y]ou probably saw three students emerging from a sit-in at Cornell. Two of the youths were my students last year…and the fellows had reason to arm themselves.” See: Donald Alexander Downs, *Cornell '69: Liberalism and the crisis of the American university* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Letter from Julian Mayfield to Ivan Spence, Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 7, Folder 13, 2.
interference with academic and scientific freedom.” Nevertheless, she was put on a plane and deported back to the United States. While Mayfield recalled with anger what had been done to her and their children, the couple exchanged increasingly vituperative letters during that time. He expressed frustration with her decision to immediately return to nationalist organizing work in Puerto Rico and she indicated her displeasure with his decision to remain in Spain while she and the couple's children struggled in Puerto Rico. It would be almost a year before he would see his children again.

Mayfield's decision to re-enter the United States after almost six years away prompted a great deal of soul-searching and anxiety. His recollections of the event reflected his discomfort living in a nation controlled by a hostile white government. For all of the inconveniences and difficulties posed by living in Ghana, he recalled fondly it had at least afforded him the rare privilege of “forget[ting] just what it was like to live in a world so directly controlled by whites.” Arriving on a Saturday, Mayfield noted that “no sooner had I stepped off the ship . . . and seen my first American policeman in seven years then it all came back to me. I was back in the war.”

Choosing to fight that war with words instead of guns, Mayfield's proposal to Cornell outlined an intense study of the intellectual history of black thought through black literature. Believing that black writing reflected a profound cultural and social transformation over the previous three quarters of a century, he argued these books were the key to understanding the contours of black intellectual history. This “current diversity of themes

16 “Puerto Rican Doctor Jailed and Expelled from Ghana,” 11 June 1966, SCH, JMP, Box 36, 1–2.
and attitudes,” Mayfield wrote, “reflect[ed] the fragmentation of the Negro leadership
groups which used to be monolithic in structure.” Limiting his focus to the twentieth
century, Mayfield proposed to expose students to contemporary black political, social, and
cultural thought through fiction and poetry that spanned the twentieth century. Listing
W.E.B. Du Bois, David Walker, Waring Cuney, Harold Cruse, Amiri Baraka, Countee
Cullen, Frank London Brown, Lorraine Hansberry, Langston Hughes, and Margaret Walker
on his syllabus, the seminar sought to offer answers to the query: “What does the Negro
Want?”

This first seminar, which began in September 1967, was entitled “Negro Goals as
Reflected in Negro Writing” and offered a lesson plan consistent with his objectives as laid
out in letters to O’Brien. In his first turn at teaching, correspondence with administrators
indicate that this new career path induced a degree of anxiety. Mayfield had received a
special waiver, due to his lack of a PhD, and the fellowship granted him a $10,000 USD
stipend for the nine-month assignment. In letters he exchanged with Cornell's program head,
Max Black, Mayfield outlined his pedagogical goals. Resistant to the idea that “the students
will not only be talked to and at,” he insisted that his seminar be organized so that “they will
be able to participate fully.” Black happily acquiesced to Mayfield's demands and the latter
was given a significant degree of control over his first teaching experience. Correspondence
from the immediate aftermath of his first semester teaching at Cornell indicates that his
seminar was a rousing success. Not only was Mayfield impressed with his students' work, but

19 Letter from Julian to Max Black, 4 April 1967, SCH, JMP, Box 26, Folder 11, 1.
they indicated their appreciation of his perspective and historical insights in their letters to him during the holiday break. That winter, he was invited to Fisk University for the third black writer's conference and asked to give the keynote address. The theme of the conference was “The Black Writer's Vision for America” and it was scheduled for 19 April 1968.

If his notes are any indication, Mayfield dramatically revised his address in the aftermath of Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination in Memphis two weeks prior.\textsuperscript{20} Even though he had long been critical of King's tactics, rejecting both the way in which the SCLC leader couched protest in the moral language of the Christianity and promoted non-violent passive resistance to white supremacy, King's murder affected Mayfield deeply. While he lamented the reverend's early death as another casualty in the war against white supremacists, he took solace in the ways in which men and women throughout the country mourned King's passing. The explosions of public protest and violence, he told the Fisk audience, heralded great changes in store for the nation. In this revised speech, titled “The Black Writer and the Revolution,” Mayfield expressed his belief that the question of whether revolution was possible in the United States “was never very far from the minds of any person in this auditorium.” King's assassination and the riots that had consumed hundreds of American cities in its aftermath convinced Mayfield that the conference and its attendees must find some way to address “the future of black people in America.”\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} Mayfield's archive contains a fragmentary, untitled draft that makes no mention of King and an outline for, “The Black Writer As Revolutionary,” which reflects substantive changes made in the wake of King's assassination. See: “The Black Writer As Revolutionary: Outline” Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 23, Folder 2, 2.

In this address, Julian Mayfield expressed the ideas and objectives that would define his writing, public pronouncements, and activism for the next four years. First and foremost, he centered the importance of black writers in the post-civil rights era. At a time when peaceful marching and morally righteous protest had given way to an explosion of violence, looting, and arson, Mayfield asserted the collective responsibility of Black writers in shaping the horizons of the black freedom struggle in an increasing violent and hostile environment. “[We] as writers we have a unique role to play in the struggle for Black liberation,” he argued. Perceiving the backlash to the evolution of the black freedom struggle from “Freedom Now” to “Black Power” as an existential threat, Mayfield declared that Black writers had to dedicate themselves first and foremost to the issue of survival. Lastly, he clarified that what he brought to the table were no truly “new” ideas, but “only old ideas that I want to discuss in what I hope is a new way.”22 With these objectives stated, Mayfield proceeded to elaborate his vision for the symbiotic relationship between the black writer and revolution.

In his characteristic freewheeling tone, Mayfield’s broader point was in keeping with addressing the divisive mood that characterized African American responses to King’s assassination. “The decisions and the actions we take in this next period,” he concluded, “may very well determine the direction of the black liberation struggle for the next generation,” and he urged attendees to consider what they had in common over what divided them.23 The disparate responses to King’s murder among black intellectuals and

22 Ibid., 2.
23 Ibid., 5.
political leaders, Mayfield warned, were in danger of further fracturing what was an already broken movement. Stokely Carmichael's speech given the day after King's assassination clearly influenced Mayfield's response. Carmichael told audiences that night that the death of King had fundamentally changed American political life. “White America made its biggest mistake when she killed Dr. King last night. When she killed Dr. King last night, she killed all reasonable hope. When she killed Dr. King last night, she killed the one man of our race, in this country, in the older generation who's a militant and a revolutionary, and the masses of black people would still listen to. Even though sometimes he did not agree with them, they would still listen to him.”

As a longtime critic of King's tactics, Mayfield interpreted his assassination as further evidence that “no matter how many books you published, no matter what professorial post you may hold . . . no matter how polished your accent, how neat your clothing, how straight your hair, how fair your skin . . . when the stuff hits the air conditioner . . . we all go.”

Linking the fate of all the men and the women in the room with King's, Mayfield concluded


25 Stokely Carmichael, bereft over King's death, proclaimed an end to the peaceful program and disruptive, non-violent action of the civil rights era. In contrast, Bayard Rustin reaffirmed his commitments to non-violence citing examples of the changes wrought in the wake of King's assassination. While he argued that, “Dr. King's death marked the end of one stage of the Negro struggle and the beginning of another,” he cited the full-page newspaper ad that Levitt and Sons (the real estate development firm responsible for the Levittown subdivisions with racially restrictive covenants) took out. The ad read, in part, “[a]s a tribute to Dr. King, this Company has adopted a new policy—effective immediately—eliminating segregation in any place it builds—whether in the U.S. or any other country in the world. We ask all our colleagues to adopt a similar policy without delay.” See: Joseph, Stokely, 258; Bayard Rustin, “Tears are Cheap; Action, Alas, So Dear,” Philadelphia Tribune, 20 April 1968, 7.

that, despite all of King's peaceful proclamations and moral rectitude, his rhetoric did not save him from the violence of white Americans. And, as Mayfield pointed out, the black men, women, and children who took to the streets in cities like Washington, Kansas, Los Angeles, and Detroit to loot, burn, and rage against the assassination of yet another leader were “hitting back in the only way they knew how, taking back what, in a sense, had been stolen from them.”

Smoke from burning buildings still shrouded cities beleaguered by riots when Mayfield stood behind the lectern at Fisk and argued that the black writer had to recognize that they were no different than black political leaders in that both were “lagging behind our people.” The deeper lesson that writers should take from the uprisings that followed King's assassination was that the people who risked their lives to set fires, loot merchandise from stores, and take to the streets did so for “no articulate political goals.” Those men and women represented “unharnessed power” which was “an indictment not only of the so-called intellectuals, but most of our leadership.”

This failure of black leaders and intellectuals to harness this power of the people “in order to achieve positive political, economic and social objectives” revealed a broader failing among the black intellectual and political elite. Being caught unaware by the outburst of grassroots anger and frustration indicated that the black writer had to “catch up to our people,” before they could hope to lead them.

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27 Ibid., 6.
28 Ibid., 6.
29 Ibid., 7.
This perspective of a revolutionary black proletariat reflected Mayfield's Marxian roots, but in his inversion of the Leninist formulation of the educated, revolutionary vanguard leading the proletariat to revolution was a scathing critique of his audience. In effect, the people had left the intellectuals and political leadership—the vanguard—behind.

“The black people themselves, the cats on the block, have joined the issue,” he warned, “they will never really go back home and wait for writers and scholars and politicians to resolve our intellectual differences.” The patience of the people, whom had waited through years of debate and very little in the way of change, was exhausted. “We writers,” Mayfield told his audience, “are going to have to become revolutionaries whether we completely accept the idea or not, if for no other reason than to keep up with our potential readers.”

1968 was the year when “the writer must either figuratively [or] literally take up the gun, for what is the good of living and writing when you are not free.”

The primary objective of this keynote was to convince the audience of black writers that they must address the fires of revolutionary consciousness that King’s assassination had fueled, an idea keeping with many of his contemporaries. However, in voicing his concerns about the survival of all African Americans and the threat of genocide, Mayfield broke with many of his peers. “For us to come together and talk about literatur in the spring of 1968 would be as absurd and as tragic as a group of Jewish writers gathered in 1937 to talk about the future of symbolism in Jewish poetry,” he said before pivoting to an argument that

30 Ibid., 13.
31 Mayfield, “Autobiographical manuscript,” 16.
“genocide against our race is a very real possibility, that it is actually contemplated at this very moment.”

This threat affected all African Americans, he argued, no matter their profession, their ideological belief in non-violence, their religiosity, or their location. He confidently stated that there were “26 detention or concentration camps waiting, unoccupied, ready to receive up to 50,000 black and white militants, and that the President in Washington already has the power . . . to declare a national emergency and detain that many people over night.”

Rhodes Johnson, writing in the *Nashville Tennessean* two days after the conference reported that “[n]ot everyone in the room applauded Mayfield” for these remarks, “but all paid rapt attention” as he spoke. This charge of the potential for genocide, however, was not new; its history maps some of the more marginal but durable strains of black radical thought in the postwar era.

**The King Alfred Plan**

The possibility of an American genocide remains, even today, a persistent idea in the fringes of political discourse in the United States. This concept was not Mayfield's innovation, but in promoting the idea in college lectures and his artistic production during the late 1960s and 1970s, he became an early and high-profile proponent. Mayfield himself first read about the concept in the 1967 novel, *The Man Who Cried I Am*, but the origins of


33 Ibid., 16.

the idea lay in the early 1950s and the passage of the Internal Security Act of 1950.\textsuperscript{35} Better known as the McCarran Act, Title II of this bill provided the Attorney General the power to “apprehend and by order detain . . . persons who there is reasonable ground to believe probably will commit or conspire with others to commit espionage or sabotage.”\textsuperscript{36} As early as 1951 some journalists argued that Title II had the potential to lead to concentration camps and genocide on American soil based not on race, but ideology.\textsuperscript{37} P.L. Prattis of the Pittsburgh Courier even went so far as to state, “[t]he G-men down in Washington have their eyes on 14,000 persons (as a starter) who'll be seized in the middle of the night (or any other time) if and when the President determines that our argument with Russia and the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{35} Another possible origin of these ideas was the Civil Rights Congress's 237-page pamphlet “We Charge Genocide,” which provided an exhaustive and detailed documentation of lynching, wrongful execution, racist prosecution of black defendants, and institutionalized anti-black racism as “domestic genocide” directed toward African Americans. “We Charge Genocide” also argued that U.S. anticommunism obscured human rights abuses against non-white Americans, linking institutionalized anti-black violence in the U.S. with anticommunist rhetoric against the “Red Menace” in China and Korea. Thus, at the same moment that anticommunist persecutions of men and women like Paul Robeson, Claudia Jones, William and Louise Patterson, and W.E.B. Du Bois was being submitted to the United Nations and called “genocide,” the potential for the use of Title II of the Internal Security Act provided a more efficient means to carry this violence out. Julian Mayfield, who was a CPUSA Party member at this time, published numerous articles about many of the crimes listed in the document—including the lynching of Willie McGhee and the Martinsville Seven—indicating that he was aware of the document, not to mention closely affiliated with many in the CRC, including Paul Robeson. See: Civil Rights Congress, “We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States against the Negro People,” (New York, 1951; reprint, New York: International Publishers, new ed., 1970), 7.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Internal Security Act of 1950 (McCarran Act) U.S. Statutes at Large, 81st Cong., II Sess., Chp. 1024, Title II Emergency Detention, Section 100, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{37} According to the Chicago Daily Tribune, “The Truman administration is busy preparing two concentration camps in Arizona and another in Oklahoma for purposes described as the housing of potential spies and saboteurs in the event of war,” reported the Chicago Daily Tribune in January 1952. In that article, the author suggests that Title II was inserted by Senators Lehman (D-NY), Humphrey (D-MN), and Kefauver (D-TN) in order to force Truman to veto the bill. The article, however, continues an analysis of the constitutionality of the section of the McCarran bill, harshly criticizing any potential for the subversion of constitutional rights. In addition, the connection between concentration camps and genocide bears a striking resemblance to the See: “Concentration Camps for America,” Chicago Daily Tribune (1923–1963), 04 January 1952, 14.
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Communists has become serious enough.”38 It is unclear where Prattis received this information, but he linked the number to testimony given by men and women before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Sixteen years later, as the number of black radical activists and civil rights leaders killed began to rise, John A. Williams seized on the fears of this potentiality as the central plot device for his modernist novel. Featuring a protagonist loosely based on Richard Wright, Williams took readers on a journey through the dying man's attempts to make sense of his life as a black, expatriate journalist and writer. During the course of the story the main character, Max Reddick, stumbles into a plot to conceal an explosive memo, known only as the “King Alfred Plan.”39 In the final pages of his novel, Reddick finally receives a copy of the document and is able to read it himself the horrors that his country’s government has in store for him and his people. After reading the memo and sending copies out to other friends, Reddick is murdered by a former friend who is working for the CIA.

Williams recounts the plan in detail, explaining how the nation will be divided up into ten geographical regions, which “Minority” (African American) organizations will be targeted, which “Minority” politicians will be removed from office, and a description of how millions of “Minority” people and white sympathizers would be initially rounded up in the eight hours immediately following the president's declaration of a “state of emergency.”40

40 The fictitious description ends with the “O” Committee Report with a chilling allusion to the extermination camps of the Third Reich, which Williams euphemistically describes as “Production.” “Survey shows that, during a six-year period, Production created 9,000,000 objects, or 1,500,000 each year. Production could not dispose of the containers, which proved a bottleneck. However, that was almost twenty years ago. We
Subsequently, Williams describes how millions more will be detained and sent to their deaths in the days and weeks after the declaration. The plot device bears some resemblance to accusations leveled at Title II of the McCarran Act, but the novel's release and propagation during the height of COINTELPRO attributed specific figures and plans, contributing to its apparent veracity.41

Research indicates that Julian Mayfield was one of the first black intellectuals to speak publicly about the threat of genocide against African Americans and subsequent claims, beginning in 1970, were ridiculed in newspapers.42 In December 1968, Mayfield appeared on a panel alongside editor and publisher Dan Watts, historian Richard B. Moore, suggest that vaporization techniques be employed to overt the Production problems inherent in King ALFRED.” See: John A. Williams, *The Man Who Cried I Am*, 312.

41 Rhetoric similar to that around the “King Alfred Plan” can be seen in the response to “Project 100,000.” This project was approved by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to recruit soldiers who were below the standard mental and medical standards then extant in the military. In practice, the plan increased the number of non-white men drafted, without reducing college deferments, which disproportionately affected white men. Implemented in late 1966, as Sec. McNamara escalated the Vietnam conflict, “Project 100,000”, Kimberly Phillips has argued, was soon folded into Johnson’s “Great Society.” In Phillips recent monograph, she linked discourse critical of “Project 100,000” to warnings by black radicals in SNCC and nationalist groups that, “the survival of blacks in America” was at stake in the aftermath of King’s assassination. Tracing the deep roots of anti-war activism as a catalyst for civil rights activism, Phillips notes how many activists considered “Project 100,000” an effective form of genocide against non-white Americans. See: Kimberley L. Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?: Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 144.

42 The first mention of the King Alfred Plan is in a *Chicago Tribune* article published on 9 October 1970. According to author William Kling, Clive De Patton of Des Moines, IA, testified before the House Intelligence Subcommittee that, “many blacks believe in the existence of a plan to exterminate them.” When representatives told the former Black Panther Party member that the scheme was entirely fictitious and a product of Williams' novel, De Patton insisted that it was true. “This plan is for use in case of a major uprising of the blacks in the entire United States—not in an isolated place like Chicago or New York,” De Patton was reported to have said. “The first thing the white would do is send the 'black leaders' into the ghetto to try and quiet the people. If this doesn't work, then someone presses a button and the plan goes into effect. See: “Ex-Panther's Tale Denied,” *The Sun* (1837–1992); Baltimore, MD, 9 October 1970, A7; William Kling, “Undercover Cop Tells of 'Bomb School': I Was Trained to Kill Policemen, He Says,” *Chicago Tribune*, 9 October 1970, 4.
author Claude Barnett, and moderator William Greaves on the latter’s television news
program, *Black Journal*. In response to a longer discussion about the legacy of King and his
shift to economic justice with the Poor People’s Campaign, Mayfield posed a question.
Arguing that structural transformations and industrial progress meant that African
Americans were “more and more an obsolete people . . . [and] they do not need our labor
anymore.” As black Americans were “more and more unemployed . . . the basic question is
what do you do with the people that you don't need anymore?” The implication was that, if
African American labor was no longer needed, extermination was a very real possibility.
None of the other panelists addressed Mayfield’s comments nor his question, but it was not
the last time he would mention it.

A similar line appeared in his movie *Uptight* explicitly connected black militancy with
a racial extermination plan. During a tense debate between black militants and peaceful civil
rights advocates, the latter decries the former’s plans for an armed uprising. Violence by
black militants would “bring the whole military machine down on our heads,” the
integrationist leader argues. “[They] will be the excuse for fascism in this country, [They] will
bring on the camps.” As he had in the *Black Journal* appearance, Mayfield’s characters gave
voice to his fears about the ways that increasing automation would result in the obsolescence
of black labor, precipitating a genocidal response from the United States government. The
spectacle of militant black radicals wielding guns in Sacramento, Cleveland, and elsewhere,

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43 Notably, Mayfield pointed out that, “The fact of the matter is they don't need the labor of most White
people but they—the message hasn't reach them yet.” See: *Black Journal*, Episode 7, 06:32:50.

44 Ibid., 06:32:51.

Mayfield argued, was the excuse that white Americans were looking for to begin rounding people up for “disposal.” In spite of these fears, Mayfield argued that the black revolutionary, as opposed to the militant, was aware of this possibility and preparing for its eventuality. Unlike John A. Williams, whose public appearances were limited, Julian Mayfield's pronouncements and allusions to this idea helped cement it in black radical cultural and political discourse.  

Early in 1969, Julian Mayfield joined civil rights lawyer William Kunstler, SNCC Chairman H. Rap Brown, and Students for a Democratic Society's Bernadine Dohm in connecting a system of unconstitutional preventative detention with the McCarran Act. Holding a press conference at the Diplomat Hotel in on the West side of New York, the group publicly charged that federal government was “moving toward a system of preventative detention designed to intimidate the poor, Negroes and dissidents seeking to change the society.” They cited President Nixon’s recent comments as evidence of Title II being being implemented by Attorney General John Mitchell. In January 1969, Nixon had proposed, “dangerous, hard-core recidivists could be held in pretrial detention when they have been charged with crimes and when their continued pretrial release presents a clear


danger to the community.”\textsuperscript{48} While black radical activists and their allies were not the only critics of these statements, their message was the most dire.

A negative reaction toward Nixon's declaration emerged from a broad coalition of liberal and radical men and women, but it was the groundswell of popular perception that prompted black journalists and, later, black leaders and politicians, to take action. In November 1969, \textit{New Pittsburgh Courier} reporter and columnist Ethel Payne reported that Attorney General John N. Mitchell had invited Coretta Scott King, attorney and SNCC veteran Timothy Jenkins, Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, Rep. John Conyers, Ralph David Abernathy, and SCLC leader Hosea Williams to a secret meeting in Washington to discuss—among other issues—popular perceptions of Title II of the McCarran Act.\textsuperscript{49} Little was revealed about this meeting, but subsequent comments by Hatcher and that National Urban League's Whitney Young indicated their growing concerns that the Nixon Administration's racially coded calls for “law and order” and drastic changes in the U.S. criminal code were a prelude to some sort of mass internment.\textsuperscript{50}

By 1971, this concern had reached a fever pitch and media coverage featured statements by self-professed spies who claimed to know details of the “King Alfred Plan.”\textsuperscript{51}


\textsuperscript{50} Cynthia Griggs Fleming, \textit{Yes We Did?: From King's Dream to Obama's Promise} (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 72–73.

That year, another controversy would erupt following the publication of The Choice by reporter Samuel Yette. In the introduction, Yette echoed Mayfield's comments from Black Journal, asserting that any discussion of African American citizenship “must begin with a single, overpowering socioeconomic condition in the society: black Americans are obsolete people.” Yette, the first black reporter hired by Newsweek Magazine and who worked at the organization's Washington desk, tracked the problems of riots and black militancy of the early 1970s to the response to citizenship demands of the previous decade. Considering Johnson's Great Society as a project designed to pacify to civil rights protesters, he linked rising black unemployment, white flight, and the first signs of de-industrialization to eventual African American economic obsolesce.

The titular choice of the book was to either face either what Yette called “modern slavery” of continued socioeconomic and political marginalization or to rebel and face internment and, ultimately, genocide. To buttress his argument, Yette cited statements by public officials and connected the U.S. refusal to ratify the Geneva Convention's genocide clause with plans to exterminate large numbers of African American “obsolete peoples.” Yette's refusal to back down from the assertions he made in the book resulted in his termination by Newsweek and he was routinely mocked and criticized in the press.


53 Another one of Yette's arguments in The Choice was that Nixon's declaration of the “War on Drugs” was a smokescreen to harass, repress, and marginalize African American communities. Though little attention was paid to this claim at the time, subsequent research has borne out Yette's argument. In a now famous 1994 interview with John Ehrlichman, Dan Baum of Harper's Magazine quoted the former policy chief for the White House as stating, "The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar Left and black people. You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the
aftermath of the publication of *The Choice*, however, these ideas firmly ensconced themselves American popular consciousness. It was not only music and film in which this idea appeared, poet and musician Gil Scott-Heron composed a poem and later a song entitled “King Alfred Plan,” which appeared on the album *Free Will*, released 1972. In it, the radical poet spoke frenetically about what was to come:

“Places are being prepared and readied night and day, night and day
The white boy’s plan is being readied night and day, night and day
Listen close to what rap say about traps like Allenwood P.A
Already legal in D.C. to preventatively detain you and me
How long you think it's going to be before even our dreams ain’t free? You think I exaggerate? Check out Allenwood P.A.
Night and day, night and day, the white boy’s scheming night and day
The Jews and Hitler come to mind. They thought the slavery far behind
But white paranoia is here to stay. Check it out. Night and day
What you think about the King Alfred Plan? You ain’t heard?
Where you been, man?”

For his part, Williams never claimed the plan was real, but he publicly affirmed the underlying logics of his fictional innovation. In an interview published in *Jet* magazine in October 1971, Williams asked, “[w]hat would any administration do in a situation when a large segment of the population was discontented and tearing down the neighborhood . . . threatening the order and the established regime?” The answer, for Williams, was mass evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.” Yette, who went on to teach at Howard remained committed to his arguments about the obsolescence of African Americans for the remainder of his life. He died in 2011. See: Sundiata Cha-Jua, “We need to move beyond ‘war on drugs,’” *News Gazette*, Champaign, IL, 10 April 2016, C3; Dan Baum, “Legalize It All: How to win the war on drugs,” *Harper’s Magazine*, April 2016, <https://harpers.org/archive/2016/04/legalize-it-all/> Accessed 1 April 2018.

internment and genocide, as laid out in the final pages of *The Man Who Cried I Am*. While the idea was dismissed among white journalists and ridiculed in the pages of major newspapers like *The Washington Post* and *New York Times*, public outcry reached a point in 1971 where the 92nd Congress reluctantly addressed the issue.

Following passage of The Non-Detention Act of 1971 in September 1971 by the House of Representatives, President Nixon signed the bill into law on 25 September 1971. The bill repealed Title II, the “Emergency Detention Act,” and stripped the United States Attorney General of the power to detain any American or non-American citizens for threats that to the national security of the United States.\(^{55}\) Julian Mayfield, though not mentioned in Yette's book, deserves credit for pushing these ideas into the mainstream and considering the extensional plight of African Americans at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s that prompted Congress to take action to allay these fears.\(^{56}\)

**A Radical in The Academy**

These existential concerns for African American survival were also explored in the lectures Mayfield gave during his employment at NYU and SUNY Cortland between 1969 and 1971. In a talk entitled “By Force and Violence,” Mayfield noted his frustration with white Americans as opposed to white English colonialists in Africa. “My English friend,” Mayfield wrote, “understands that all his privileges and prerogatives are sustained by an infra-structure of force and violence which to survive must keep down a black revolution in

\(^{55}\) The Non-Detention Act did not ban detention outright, but it specified that Congressional authorization for such detention is now required. Passed as Public Law 92-128, 85 Stat. 347 (1971), it was codified at 18 U.S.C. § 4001(a).

\(^{56}\) Not only was Mayfield not mentioned in Yette’s book, it appears that the two men did not correspond. Mayfield, however, made mention of *The Choice* in letters during the early 1970s indicating that he was, at least, aware of it.
Africa.”

Honest colonialists, he opined, were not concerned with being liked or loved, but only obeyed. Aware of this reality, the English colonist knew that “when the revolution comes they should either split the scene (get out) or use their guns . . . in their own self interest.” In contrast, white suburban liberals in the United States, ensconced in “comfortable suburbia . . . cannot begin to grasp the revolutionary conclusion arrived at daily by more young black men and women in the inner colonies just a few miles away.” Liberal white America, Mayfield wrote, was becoming “terribly aware of its whiteness, and ponders which way it will point its rifle in the inevitable race war.”

Unaware or unwilling to accept the forms of coercion and violence that had previously kept non-whites repressed, Mayfield concluded, white Americans misunderstood and misrepresented black radical demands.

Subsequent talks, including “The Quagmire of the Black American Writer” and “Everybody Loves the Africans of Rhodesia,” saw Mayfield's growing embrace of nationalisms that disregarded ideological tenets of “great powers” such as the Soviet Union or the United States. “The point for a genuine revolutionary movement,” he wrote after a lengthy discussion of Southern African politics, “is [revolutionaries] will have to learn what history should have taught them, and that is to sustain themselves. The ideological protestations of a Russia, China or a United States never have priority over the self-interest

It is likely that this “English friend” was Robert “Robin” Cecil Romer Maugham, an author and later member of the House of Lords. Maugham and Ivan Spence, a gallery owner, were friends with Mayfield in 1966–1967 while all three men lived on Ibiza. Mayfield and Spence exchanged numerous letters between 1969 and 1971 with references to “Robin.” See: Julian Mayfield, “By Force and Violence,” SCH, JMP, Box 13, Folder 10, 1; Letters between Julian Mayfield and Ivan Spence, SCH, JMP, Box 7, Folder 13 (various).

Ibid., 2.
of any of those nation states.”  

He also sought to communicate the lessons about what constituted practical revolutionary action and emphasized the need for sovereignty and self-sufficiency to audiences at his lectures.

In a syllabus entitled “Black Techniques of Survival,” which Mayfield taught at SUNY Cortland in 1970, Mayfield laid out his belief that survival required African Americans to understand the historical actions of white Americans and their underlying motivations. “White Americans have deliberately and systematically attempted to destroy Black Americans as a group, physically, culturally, socially, economically and psychologically since 1865,” the syllabus began. However, more significant was “the failure of Blacks to grasp the genocidal character of White racism has retarded if not defeated the struggle for Black freedom.”  

Presaging many of the arguments that Yette made in The Choice, Mayfield pointedly critiqued the options historically available to black peoples: “permanent slave status” and resistance leading to “probable physical extermination.”  

With this historical interpretation as his basis, Mayfield concluded that “a thorough study of the techniques of survival and the mistakes of the past becomes inevitable.”

Reiterating his emphasis on student participation that he had written about at Cornell, the class was highly structured and emphasized an openness that did not limit students to those pursuing graduate degrees nor those not widely read in black literature. “A

59 Julian Mayfield, “Everybody Loves the Africans of Rhodesia,” SCH, JMP, Box 21, Folder 6, 5.

60 Julian Mayfield, “Black Techniques of Survival,” Emory University, John O. Killens Papers, Box 70, 2 (emphasis in original).

61 Ibid., 5.

62 Ibid., 6.
student's attitude toward discipline and often independent study is more important,” he wrote, and argued for an interdisciplinary approach to topics he would assign to students to conduct their own research on, including “self-help organizations,” “Populist Movements,” and “Third World nationalism.” It is clear that, between the Fisk conference in April 1968 and the writing of this syllabus in mid-1971, Julian Mayfield's concern for the survival of black peoples had not diminished. If anything, the threat posed by Director Hoover's FBI and the intra-group violence it inspired among black power groups made the situation even more dire. Mayfield remained committed to communicating these ideas to as many people as possible by whatever means he had at his disposal, reiterating the arguments he had made at the Fisk writers' conference.

As the slow penetration of this idea indicates, writer's conferences, such as the one at Fisk in 1968, were an ineffective way to put forth a radical idea or warn the black public of oncoming genocide. In an interview with music and arts critic Hollie I. West published in 1975, Mayfield noted that his pursuit of a film career in the late 1960s was an obvious move. “[Y]ou speak to more people in the film than you can in the novel—unless you're an awfully successful writer.” Furthermore, “people don't read as much as they used to. Although there are more literate people around, they just don't [read].” Speaking at Fisk, Mayfield had argued that the role of the black writer was to “articulate all the hopes and the fears and the rage burning in the hearts of our people.” But, he soon realized that that was not enough. “I believe,” Mayfield told the audience, “our responsibilities go even further than that, for we

63 Ibid., 11.
are, in a meaningful sense, more privileged than the majority of our people, with a greater mobility and a greater access to all of the knowledge of the past.\textsuperscript{66}

The Fisk writer’s conference provided Mayfield with a chance to discuss the potential for revolution and offer his ideas of how black writers should respond to the present conflagrations in cities like Detroit, Newark, and Washington. Ultimately, what proved more influential was a chance encounter with his old acting teacher, Frank Silvera. Having recently joined Jules Dassin’s new project, Silvera explained to his former student that Dassin was looking for black writers. Having recently lost lead actor James Earl Jones, the director saw Mayfield’s imposing frame and charismatic presence and immediately offered him the role. As Mayfield recounted of their meeting, “[he] talked me into reading for the role . . . and I talked him into signing me on as a writer.”\textsuperscript{66} Following his meeting with Dassin in April 1968, Mayfield wrote an apologetic note to Max Black at Cornell expressing his regret that this new opportunity would severely restrict his ability to perform the duties of the fellowship. Black, for his part, responded positively. He wrote to Mayfield that he was “thrilled by this wonderful opportunity” and released him from his obligations at Cornell.\textsuperscript{67} Shorn of his commitments, Mayfield returned to New York City and threw himself into the task of rewriting Dassin’s script with co-star Ruby Dee.

The Black Militant Goes to Hollywood


\textsuperscript{66} Julian Mayfield, “Uptight notes—Blk Film Institute,” Undated (c. 1979), SCH, JMP, Box 18, Folder 2, 1.

\textsuperscript{67} Letter from Max Black to Julian Mayfield, 20 May 1968, SCH, JMP, Box 26, Folder 1, 1.
During his appearance on Black Journal when Julian Mayfield asked, “Do you continue to work within the system . . . that . . . has neglected you and oppressed you and repressed you for 300 years? Or do you attempt to change the system? And by change, I mean, eliminate it, overthrow it,” Richard B. Moore, a distinguished historian of the Afro-Caribbean, was the first to respond. Moore disagreed with the premise of the question and set himself up as an ideal foil for the younger and more radical men on the stage. Chiding Mayfield for looking at oppression from a “Euro-American viewpoint,” he emphasized, “it isn’t a question of what we do with them, it's a question of what we do with ourselves.” The problems faced by Black peoples throughout the hemisphere required them to work, in Moore's words, “within the framework of the system and . . . to work on its complete change, its basic change.” A smiling Mayfield cheerfully challenged Moore's prescription, arguing that not only did the Afro-Caribbean scholar contradict himself, but that his argument hinged on a unity of goals among African-descended peoples. As an example of this lack of consensus, Mayfield motioned to his fellow panelists to “look at the unity that is demonstrated around this table here.”

The enormous divisions between different black polities in the United States, marked by class, ideology, gender, and cultural difference mirrored divisions within black intellectual communities. Furthermore, African Americans faced seemingly insurmountable odds at addressing and challenging the myriad forms that white power took in the United States. Beyond the federal government, Mayfield told the panel, there were fifty state governments and thousands of city governments which remained politically inaccessible to black people.

Realistically speaking, he told the panelists, “we don't have enough power to do all of these things at once and . . . it seems to me that there is such a basic contradiction that we ought to address ourselves to it.” Communicating this basic contradiction lay at the heart of Julian Mayfield's contributions to the film Uptight. The film's story, which followed the drunken, callow Tank (played by Mayfield) and his betrayal of a former comrade, became the vehicle that he used to examine the arguments he had made during his appearance on Black Journal.69

In the first draft of the script, Mayfield saw a space to examine the contradiction between working within the system and outside it by realistically portraying the men and women involved. As he explained to reporter Kay Bourne of the Bay State Banner, “we wanted to write a picture which showed a section of the black community as it is . . . we wanted to show militants, not as screaming and shouting, but to present a serious argument for revolution in this country.”70 At the same time, he portrayed the non-violent Civil Rights Movements as having stalled in the wake of King's assassination. The leader of the non-violent movement, Kyle (Frank Silvera), had not only failed to developed new tactics, but had lost touch with black communities he claimed to represent.

Mayfield's experience with this contradiction was not limited to the film's script. Working on a major Hollywood film directed by a white man and funded by a white studio, making the film forced him once again to grapple with how that contradiction between working within the system and trying to change it was addressed by black radical artists in their own lives and careers. Working with whites invariably demanded the black artist

69 Ibid., 06:35:33.
compromise, Mayfield told the *New York Times* in 1969, “with the reality he knows before the play or picture is produced.” This was because “the black frame of reference is often so totally different from the white.”71 Though limited by the constraints of the original story, an increasingly nervous studio, efforts to disrupt the production by the FBI, and racial tensions on location in Cleveland, the fact that the film was finished was a minor miracle.

*Uptight* was a reimagining of the 1935 John Ford classic *The Informer*, itself based on a book by Liam O'Flaherty published in 1925 about the Irish Revolution (1919–1923).72 O'Flaherty's novel and both subsequent films grappled with the travails of the eponymous “Gypo” Nolan, a former member of the IRA who was down on his luck. At the beginning of the novel, readers learned that Nolan had recently been expelled from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) for refusing to execute a captured British paramilitary (a “Black and Tan”). Unable to financially provide for his girlfriend, Katie, and angry at her choice to prostitute herself, Nolan's life was in disarray until a chance encounter with a former comrade, Frankie. Now a fugitive with a price on his head, Frankie solicited aid from his former comrade, but Nolan turned him in for the reward.

With the money, he planned to purchase a berth on a ship to give Katie a better life in the United States. Once he had received the reward, however, the enormity of his deed dawned on him and he bought a bottle of whiskey to drown his sorrows. His suspicious actions and newfound wealth attracted the attention of his former IRA comrades who captured him, tried him in a kangaroo court, and sentenced him to death. Escaping captivity,


72 A British production, also called *The Informer*, was released in 1928, but is not regarded as highly as the John Ford version.
Nolan returned to Katie's apartment to apologize before the IRA soldiers found him and shot him. Mortally wounded, Nolan staggered to a nearby church where Frankie's mother was mourning her dead son and apologized, receiving absolution before dying.\(^{73}\)

The success of Liam O'Flahery's original novel and the successive films were both important selling points to Paramount executives who agreed to Dassin's pitch with minimal negotiating. Dassin's project appeared to be an ideal way to capitalize on the fascination with black militancy while using a proven plot to minimize risk. Both critics and studio executives had reservations that Dassin, who had not made a film in the United States since his blacklisting seventeen years prior and questioned whether he could rise to the occasion, but his pitch convinced them.\(^{74}\) Paramount gave Dassin complete creative control over the project. The script that Dassin wrote, entitled *The Betrayal*, reflected his interest in the racial conflicts in the United States and took calls for revolution from militants in the black freedom struggle seriously. In his adaptation, Dassin exchanged Dublin for Harlem, Irish Revolutionaries for black militants, and Black and Tan paramilitaries for white American police officers, but the primary narrative arc of betrayal, regret, and absolution in the context of a revolutionary movement remained intact.

Dassin evinced little anxiety about portraying American society after nearly two decades abroad, but director of noir crime dramas as *Riffifi* (1955) indicated in interviews that

\(^{73}\) Liam O'Flaherty, *The Informer* (New York: Mariner Books, 1980)

\(^{74}\) According to Dassin, in 1948 Darryl F. Zanuck told him that he would soon be blacklisted, but that he still would be able to make a film for Fox Pictures. Dassin was able to shoot the film, *Night and the City*, but was not allowed to edit or oversee the score. Following this, Dassin fled to France, where he went on to direct eight films, including *Riffifi* (1954), *He Who Must Die* (1957), *Never on Sunday* (1960), and *Topkapi* (1964). *Uptight* went on to be the final film he made in the United States as he returned to shooting in Europe soon after. See: Dan Georgakas, *Cineaste*, Spring 2007, 72
he was wary of his limitations when it came to racial issues. “I don’t know how capable I am,” he told reporter Scott Vernon, “or indeed any white man is of understanding the black man or putting himself in the black’s position . . . I’ve tried to poke my nose as close to the windowpane as possible because, after all, I am on the outside looking in—as are so many whites.”

It was this sense of being “on the outside” that prompted Dassin to reach out to black writers to improve the realism of the script. Dassin first invited Ossie Davis to join him on the project. Davis, then busy adapting Chester Himes' *Cotton Comes to Harlem* for MGM demurred and recommended his wife, Ruby Dee. She agreed and began revising Dassin's initial draft. Though she originally joined the project as a writer, she was later cast as Laurie, the protagonist's girlfriend. Dee's early revisions focused primarily on characterization and rewriting Dassin's dialogue in order to convey “an authentic sound to the language and to the feel of the events” in the picture.

At the forefront of Julian Mayfield's mind when he came on board the project was making the kind of film that would speak to the rage and frustration of the black masses he had referenced in the Fisk speech. If lack of “articulate political goals” among those rioting suggested the need for guidance, Mayfield saw in *Uptight* the opportunity to highlight the weaknesses of the movements available for black peoples—though his script would ultimately offer no solutions. The audience Mayfield had in mind represented the

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76 Dassin, who had been raised in Harlem, later told a reporter at the Cleveland-based *Call and Post*, “I try had to understand the Negro problem, which is the white problem. I feel and care and think I understand. However, no white man can really say he knows what it is to be black.” See: “*Uptight’ Premiered in Cleveland Tuesday,”” 8 February 1969, 3B.

“unharnessed power” he spoke of in his Fisk keynote that could, with the right influences, be induced toward larger revolutionary objectives.\textsuperscript{78} With this lofty goal in mind, Mayfield set to work to “catch up” to the militant mood sweeping the nation and direct it through a careful analysis of the contradictions facing black activists, emphasizing their mutual enemy in the white power structure and the flaws in liberal integrationism and masculine black militancy alike. He offered suggestions to Dassin that he believed would increase the ability of audiences to relate and identify with the characters on screen, hoping to avoid the kind of prescriptive action which had often made socialist realism fall flat.

Dee and Mayfield fulfilled Dassin's hope that they would bring a level of verisimilitude to his script and, in response, he took the changes they suggested to his project seriously. Mayfield's whose contract was finalized on 25 April and he turned around a rewrite of the script by 5 May.\textsuperscript{79} Subsequent revised scripts were dated 13 May and 15 May with changes in dialogue and action continuing throughout filming. Mayfield's first impressions of the script was that it was “well conceived,” but he was concerned about the language that the characters, especially the Black militants, were using. The existing dialogue, he told Dassin, made it difficult to understand the motivations of the characters and, more importantly, “who these people are.”\textsuperscript{80} Among the changes to the final draft of the script was the creation of a tense encounter between two black activist groups, an interracial group modeled after SNCC and CORE, and the Committee, a militant group that was a thinly

\textsuperscript{78} Mayfield, “The Black Writer and Revolution,” 5, 13.

\textsuperscript{79} Letter from Lily Veidt to Jules Dassin, 25 April 1968, SCH, JMP, Box 18, Folder 2, 1.

\textsuperscript{80} Julian Mayfield, \textit{The Betrayal}, undated (c. May 1968), SCH, JMP, Box 18, Folder 1, handwritten comments on inside cover page of script draft.
veiled version of the Black Panther Party. Another significant change was the film’s finale. Rather than die from the wounds inflicted by his former comrades, Tank chose to throw himself off the high stairway at the steel plant where he had once worked rather face execution. The film also made use of one of the themes that Mayfield had examined in *The Grand Parade*, reminding audiences once again of the marginalization of the organized Left in black political movements.

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81 Interviews with the film's writers indicate that there was a great deal of disagreement about this ending, with Dee and Mayfield intending for Tank to die solely from suicide, while Dassin intended him to die after being shot by fellow militant Rick, after his comrade Larry hesitates. See: Connie Harper, “‘Up Tight’ Gets Glamorous Hollywood Send Off,” *Call and Post*, 17 December 1968, C1; Lindsay Patterson, “It's Gonna Blow Whitey's Mind,” *New York Times*, 25 August 1968, D13 (clippings and photocopies of articles present in Mayfield's papers at the Schomburg)
The changes that Mayfield and Dee made, though substantive, did not radically alter the film's overall plot, but they shifted the focus of the film from a character study of an individual to a character study of a social movement. Renamed Tank, the protagonist remained a pitiable man who was expelled from his revolutionary organization for lacking the moral rectitude the group demanded of its revolutionaries. A veteran of the trade unions conflicts, the burly, hulking Tank was nevertheless ill-equipped for this new kind of activism. Lacking physical, moral, and intellectual discipline, Tank's response to King's assassination
was to drown his sorrows in alcohol and reaffirm his faith in non-violence. It is this condition that Johnny Wells (Max Julien) finds Tank in the opening scenes of the film. Disgusted, Johnny refuses to let Tank accompany him on the planned heist, and leaves without him. The unnamed group of militants had planned to steal a shipment of guns from a warehouse to be used in a future uprising. Just as they appear to have successfully carried out the heist, a guard surprised the militants and Johnny shot him.

Though Johnny and his team successfully escaped with the guns, evidence left behind provided enough information for the police to identify Johnny and the police initiated a manhunt. After discovering that there is a reward for Johnny's capture, Tank was approached on the street by his former comrade, who has holed up in a vacant, burned out building. Johnny explained Tank that he was planning to leave town, but not without visiting his sick mother (Juanita Moore). Tank implored him not to do so, and when Wells refused, the former decided to go to the Committee to let them know what was happening. It is here that the writers of Uptight made their most substantive alterations to O'Flaherty's narrative.

In *The Informer*, Nolan ponders his decision alone before turning Frankie in for the reward. In *Uptight*, Tank interrupts a confrontation between the interracial civil rights group and the militant Committee both so that the latter will intercede with Johnny's rash decision, but also in hopes that his information will put him back in their good graces. That conversation, a creation of Mayfield and Dee, was perhaps one of the most significant representations of black radical politics to appear in a Hollywood film to that point. Dassin had been the one to originally create the part of the leader of the civil rights faction, Kyle (Frank Silvera), but it was Mayfield who explored the conflicts between him and the militants through incisive dialogue, elevating the film from a study of betrayal into a nuanced
exploration of the contours and horizons of political discourse among black activists at the end of the 1960s.\textsuperscript{82}

Rather than a series of caricatures or a conflict between a “good” form of activism and a “bad” form, the scene examines how recent historical events were shifting the tenor and tone of black activism. Set in an unused bowling alley, the scene opens on the Committee, who were waiting to meet to discuss potential collaboration with an unnamed civil rights group. Kyle the non-violent group's leader, arrives at the meeting hoping to broker a deal with B.G. (Raymond St. Jacques) and Corbin (Dick Anthony Williams) for their participation in an upcoming non-violent march downtown. Even before he arrives, though, his goal is militated by his choice to bring along Teddy (Henry Baseleon), a young white man sporting horn-rimmed glasses and a tweed jacket. The men and women of the Committee immediately reject Teddy's presence and, after asking him to leave, the young man indignantly accused his former comrades of abandoning him. “You remember me, Corbin,” Teddy exclaims to the bearded, taciturn man. “We were together in Selma. They threw us in the same jail. I remember you, when they killed those kids in Mississippi.”

Corbin's calm, measured response made it clear that whatever he and Teddy had shared had now ended. “The times, man. The times. Things have changed.”\textsuperscript{83}

Teddy's character offered a voice for Mayfield's interpretation of white liberal activists and what he portrayed reflects his own personal frustration with whites in the late 1960s.

\textsuperscript{82} The handwritten commentary on the film scripts is in Mayfield's handwriting and available correspondence in his archive is between him and Dassin. Due to the lack of textual evidence of Dee's contributions, Mayfield's influence is most prominent in this analysis. However, it is possible that in Dee's papers or some other archive will shed more light on Dee's specific contributions to the film beyond what is already known.

1960s. Teddy emphasized for audiences both the rejection and sense of entitlement whites were experiencing in the movement in 1968. “I have every right to be here,” Teddy declared, but the stone-faced members of the Committee simply ignored him. Offering a historical perspective on the black freedom struggle, B.G.'s rejection of Teddy implicitly referenced King's assassination. “Selma, lunch counters, Birmingham. Yesterday. A phase we went through together,” B.G. intones to Kyle, refusing to address Teddy directly. “Now we don’t walk together any more. It’s policy now. No whites.”

Teddy's rejection by the new black militancy not only highlighted the responses that many white activists had to shift toward black separatism, it also illustrated the personal impact that the end of interracial organizing had on the movement. His presence and rejection echoed the experience of many white activists in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who had been frustrated by the December 1966 vote that had declared it an all-black organization.\(^\text{84}\) Despite this initial negative portrayal, Teddy’s final scene redeems him. On his way home from the meeting, a dejected Teddy overhears police officers on their way to apprehend Johnny and attempts to warn the Committee, but the woman who answers the phone berated him rather than listening to what he had to say.

The shift toward black separatism among black freedom activists echoed SNCC's decision and the subsequent Black Power position paper which emphasized that white activists should confine their work to white communities.\(^\text{85}\) In response to Teddy's claim that


\(^{85}\) The most well-known representation of this argument comes from the SNCC-affiliated Vine City Project in Atlanta. In 1966, members of the Vine City Project wrote a document entitled “Black Power,” in reference to Stokely Carmichael's recent statements in Mississippi. The document contained, among other conclusions, that white activists were harming the movement in the wake of the rising tide of black
the black militants “can't do it alone,” Corbin shook his head and told Teddy, “we got to do it alone . . . [w]e got to develop our own or die . . . Go help the white brother. He's in trouble. Change him. That's your job.” Teddy's expulsion prompted a meek protest by Kyle, but, after the white man's departure, he nonetheless stayed to negotiate. Imploring the group to attend the march he was planning, citing the need for solidarity among African Americans of all political persuasions, Kyle's olive branch was interrupted with jeers and dismissals by the assembled militants. “Aw, Jesus, here we go crawling to Washington,” complained Larry (John Wesley), and the other men and women nodded along in agreement. The members of the Committee continued to bait Kyle, goading him to violence, but in their discord the failed direction of movement activism crystalized in a disagreement over tactics, long-term strategy, and a fundamental lack of unity.

Kyle voiced his opinion on the futility of violence as a tactic, analyzing the militant strategy and finding it lacking, “you've got no revolution. A revolution is a plan, not a gun.” In response, B.G. asserted that the non-violent program, “is dead. Killed by white violence April fourth 1968 in Memphis.” The only compromise the two factions could agree on was to stay out of each other’s way. The militants agreed to leave the civil rights march alone and Kyle agreed to protect their identities and refrain exposing them to police. In writing this scene, Mayfield, Dassin, and Dee did not seek to moralize this confrontation. Each offered arguments consistent with their real-life inspirations and their dialogue was grounded in consciousness. Activists suggested that white members of SNCC would better serve the organization by organizing in white communities and leaving black communities to black members. See: “Black Power: Position Paper for the SNCC Vine City Project,” <http://www.crmvet.org/docs/6604_sncc_atlanta_race.pdf> Accessed 29 May 2018.
current events and intellectual discourse. However, their inability to agree doomed them both irrelevance, repression, and persecution.

The embrace of violence for its own sake and an emphasis on an accompanying masculine revolutionary posturing, Mayfield's changes to the film indicated, were a bloody dead end. Without a commitment to armed self-defense the non-violent movement was doomed to ineffectual marches, lobbying, and ultimately an inadequate response to the problems facing black people. For the militants, their embrace of violence and belief in armed rebellion as the only solution to these problems presaged violent retribution from the state and possibly from white citizens' militias. Lacking unity and the mass participation in politics that characterized the Old Left, Mayfield saw in this meeting of the strongest factions of the Black freedom struggle the basic contradiction he had outlined at Fisk and on Black Journal. Working within the system was inadequate, but seeking its overthrow was suicide. The refusal of either group to look beyond their narrow ideological perspective would ultimately, the film concludes, lead to the decline of both groups and the potential for retribution on a genocidal scale, as Kyle attempts to warn B.G. that his undirected militancy would, "bring on the camps." 86

Another way in which Mayfield and Dee highlighted the tense relations between the two groups was by Tank arrival to the scene of the confrontation between Kyle and the Committee. Having encountered Johnny in an abandoned house down the street, Tank burst into the meeting to share the information he had gathered. Dismissed initially, Kyle insists that Tank be given a chance to speak. When they find out about Johnny's determination to

86 Julian Mayfield, Jules Dassin, Ruby Dee, Betrayal, second draft screenplay, 51.
visit his mother, the Committee cuts the meeting short in order to stop him, but Tank's information was not enough to put him back in their good graces. Expelled from the meeting, Tank wandered the streets in the rain nursing his rejection.

In many ways, Tank's character reflects the mold that Mayfield cast with Lonnie Banks in *The Grand Parade*. A former steel-worker, Tank was a veteran of labor organizing and proud of his time as a worker who defied the bosses and helped out his fellow men. He reveled in the hard work he had done, despite the fact that it had aged him and left him unfit to continue in his previous capacity. These credentials were enough for his comrades among the younger generation of black militants to initially accept him, but his alcoholism and lack of adherence to the new ideologies of intellectual commitment and physical asceticism rendered him unfit in the eyes of the Committee. Thus, in spite of Tank's practical experience with organizing and physical altercations, his expulsion hinged on his failure to embrace their ideology, not their tactics.

What is unspoken in the film is that his history of violence and association with the Left also renders Tanks unfit for a place in the interracial, non-violent Civil Rights Movement. A former labor organizer would make them vulnerable to charges of red-baiting. Representing hundreds of thousands of working-class men who were fed up with the system, but whom did not belong to any organized group, Tank reflected Mayfield's earlier condemnations of black movements which did not recognize the importance of the black working class in making their mass movements. Caught in the middle, working-class men like Tank were unwelcome in either group, though both claimed to speak for black workers like him.
After his expulsion from the meeting between Kyle and the Committee, a bereft Tank wandered along Cleveland's brightly lit street until he spied his girlfriend, Laurie, standing in a doorway near other prostitutes. Witnessing her greet a man and then go upstairs into a hotel was the final insult. Stepping off the sidewalk into a gutter strewn with trash and rainwater, Tank's meandering took him to the police station where the film implied, though did not show, his betrayal of Johnny for the reward money.87

Perhaps the most poignant scene of the absence of mass movement tactics was the death of Johnny, shot by the police on the balcony of his mother's apartment building. Despite Teddy's attempt to warn the Committee after overhearing police, the police arrived first. Demanding that Johnny exit the apartment, neighbors in the high-rise tenement begin to jeer and taunt the police, pelting them with bottles, cans, and other garbage. An example of the “unharnessed power” of the people, the angry crowd was scattered when the police fired a shot into the air. Johnny attempted to make his escape in the confusion, with members of the Committee shouting directions to the panicked crowd: “if we stay on the balcony, they won't be able to shoot him!” But, they are not able to take control of the situation and Johnny dies, shot in the back by a police officer's bullet. The implicit message of this chaotic moment was that local residents, already distrustful of the white police, were primed for action. All they needed was leadership. However, neither Kyle nor B.G. were willing or able to provide guidance. Thus, neither movement accurately reflected those

87 Tank's motivation for this betrayal is made clear earlier in the film when he confronts Laurie, played by Ruby Dee, at her dilapidated house where her children are sleeping. During a conversation about money, a welfare agent arrives for an inspection and, seeing Tank attempt to exit the house, accuses Laurie of welfare fraud and threatens to cut off her benefits. Thus, not only is Tank's masculinity undermined by his inability to keep a job or maintain the discipline to participate in militant revolutionary activism, but his character's mere presence also threatens to undermine the livelihood of the woman he loves.
whom Mayfield called, “the cats on the block,” and neither would ultimately succeed without their support.

The remainder of the film chronicled Tank's attempt to deal with his guilt over his deed and his death after his betrayal was discovered. It also ends in a distinctly different fashion than Ford's 1935 production of *The Informer* had. After spending the night buying drinks in bars and flaunting his wealth, Tank drunkenly attended Johnny's wake. Like Nolan in *The Informer*, his guilty demeanor and the way he places large amounts of money into a collection plate for Johnny's mother aroused the suspicions of the Committee, who confronted him on the roof. After letting him leave, they begin to investigate, learning from a police informant that Tank was the one who told the police where to find Johnny. The militants caught Tank again and took him back to the bowling alley where they beat him until he confessed. Sentenced to death, Tank escaped and returned to Laurie's where he confessed to his crime. Laurie does not offer absolution, but condemnation at his deed and bloodied his face with her nails before she stated the obvious reality: that he was a dead man. Leaving Laurie, Tank made his way to the steel mill to which he had given the best years of his life, pursued by the militants assigned to execute him. Scaling a huge, crane-like structure, he waved to the men, inviting them to shoot him. When Larry hesitates, Rick takes the gun from him and fires. Wounded by gunfire, Tank pulls himself over the edge of the railing falling to his death atop the mountain of iron ore ready to be transformed into steel.

The clarity of Tank's narrative arc—from rejection to despondence, betrayal, guilt, and self-destruction as absolution—stood in marked contrast to the writers' resistance to the resolution of the conflicts that they had introduced in the film. Echoing again his speech at Fisk, *Uptight* emphasized Mayfield's arguments that the non-violent movement's effort to
work within the white power structure to recognize the citizenship and the basic humanity of African Americans would never result in economic or social advancement for the masses of African Americans. Additionally, the militant characters lack of a revolutionary program would lead only to meaningless violence and death. The message of the film was cynical, bordering on hopeless. Though it offered criticism and nuance, it did not demonstrate anything resembling a solution. “Black Power,” a bystander told a reporter in the film as a crowd gathered after the murder of Johnny Wells by police, “[t]hat's what it gets you. Dead.”

**Uptight in Cleveland**

The story of the film's production presents another layer of the contradiction between working within the system and attempting to overthrow it as Mayfield worked with a white-owned studio, a white director, and a white crew on a story that seriously examined black nationalist militarism. Dassin had originally planned to shoot the film on location in Harlem, but settled on Cleveland as an example of a, “more typically American” city sometime in early 1968. Not only was Cleveland a prime destination for Southern blacks migrating north, but the city's racial composition had changed dramatically in the previous two decades as working-class whites relocated outside of the downtown neighborhoods and west of the Cuyahoga River. As a result of this demographic shift, Cleveland now had a black mayor, Carl B. Stokes, with a mandate from the city's liberal and black constituencies. In early 1968, Stokes announced the “Cleveland Now!” program, an inner-city economic

88 Julian Mayfield, Jules Dassin, Ruby Dee, Betrayal, second draft screenplay, 70.

development plan which political scientists have called the, “most ambitious program of urban reconstruction in the history of the country.”

Not only did Cleveland have the kind of liberal-minded politicians whom activists like Bayard Rustin had long called for, but the city was also home to a number of black nationalist groups and Stokes had gone out of his way to forge political alliances with them. In the early 1960s, the only black separatist nationalist group in Cleveland was the Nation of Islam, but this all changed after the 1966 Hough Uprising. Two years after widespread violence and looting, which resulted in the presence of the National Guard, Cleveland had

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91 The Hough Uprising, also known as the Hough Riots, was a five-day confrontation between local residents and Cleveland's nearly all-white police and fire departments. Following two days of violence, the Ohio National Guard was called in to stop the property damage. The immediate cause of the riots was a series of racist confrontations between the white owners of the Seventy-Niner Café, on the corner of Hough Avenue and East 79th Street, in which signs were reportedly posted declaring, “No Water for Niggers.” Following this incident, which took place on or about July 18, the cafe was robbed, and a crowd of approximately 300 people gathered outside the cafe throwing rocks and threatening the owners, who responded by exiting the bar armed with a high-caliber rifle. When calls from the police went unanswered, the owners of the bar, the Feigenbaum brothers, called the fire department, which responded and notified the police of a large crowd of rioters. Over the next five days, roving groups of youths, adults, and senior citizens battled police, fire officials, and subsequently national guard troops. On 23 July, violence and property damage were reported to have stopped, but Nation Guard units did not withdraw from the area until 31 July. Though historical accounts indicate that the violence was spontaneous and fueled by poverty and poor living conditions, a grand jury called in August issued a 17-page report which found, “the outbreak of lawlessness and disorder was both organized, precipitated, and exploited by a relatively small group of trained and disciplined professionals of this business. They were aided and abetted willingly or otherwise by misguided people of all ages and colors, many of whom are avowed believers in violence and extremism, and some of whom are either members of, or officers in the Communist Party.” In other words, the disturbances were the result of black nationalists aided by Communists. In total, nearly $2 million USD of property damage was reported, as well as dozens of injuries and four civilian deaths. See: Leonard N. Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 42–45; Daniel Kerr, *Derelict Paradise: Homelessness and Urban Development in Cleveland, Ohio* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 180–187; Daniel Kerr, “Who Burned Cleveland, Ohio? The Forgotten Fires of the 1970s”, In Greg Bankoff; Uwe Lübken; and Jordan Sand, *Flammable Cities: Urban Conflagration and the Making of the Modern World* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 330–332; “Guardsmen Leaving Cleveland,” *New York Times* 31 July 1966, 53; “First Troops Leave Area in Cleveland,” *New York Times*, 27 July 1966, 27; “Grand Jury Called in Cleveland Riots,” *New York Times*, 26 July 1966, 24; David Stradling and Richard Stradling, *Where the River Burned: Carl Stokes and the Struggle to Save Cleveland*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 79.
seen the formation of several nationalist and militant groups, including the Republic of New Libya, regarded by the FBI as having a, “great potential for violence.”\textsuperscript{92} In spite of Stokes' interest in the conditions of his city and his administration’s investment in anti-poverty programs, Hough remained a seething cauldron of distrust and resentment.

The news that \textit{Uptight} would begin filming on 27 May 1968 was celebrated by Mayor Stokes' administration, but the tensions in Hough had not dissipated in the intervening two years, a fact soon reflected on the set. Accounts published after filming ended abruptly in July indicate that relations between filmmakers and the locals were initially positive, with many Hough residents flocking to the on-location shoots and being cast as extras. According to Dassin, local poet Norman Jordan organized local black nationalist groups to aid with crowd control and join in some of the exterior crowd sequences.\textsuperscript{93} In contrast to the content of the film, studio policies mandated police officers on set to act as security for insurance purposes and, combined with discriminatory hiring practices in Hollywood, the set was starkly segregated. A white crew guarded by white police officers working on a film with a black cast, hundreds of local black extras, and radical themes of black militancy dashed whatever hopes that Dassin had had about the shoot going smoothly.

On 4 June, the simmering tensions escalated when, according to contemporary accounts, a black police officer and a young black resident had an altercation about the young man’s presence on the set. Hough residents surrounded the police officer after he physically removed the young man from the set and demanded an apology. Hearing of the

\textsuperscript{92} Leonard N. Moore, \textit{Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power}, 79.

conflict, black nationalist groups massed and began parading down Wade Park Avenue waving banners, protesting the film. To the crew’s chagrin, they were joined by many of the extras. Though no arrests were made, Dassin met with Stokes the next day in order to try to resolve the matter. The damage had been done, however, and white crew members and many white police officers refused to work on the set. In response, black actors denounced the white crew members for, “subconsciously trying to sabotage the production” and provoking tensions.

Dismissed as controversy designed to promote the film, recent research has revealed that it was not only the white crew members and Cleveland police officers who were upset by the production’s themes. Behind the scenes, the FBI had agents on site who attempted disrupt the filming of what it considered to be a film whose sole intention was to, “incite racial strife.” Formerly confidential FBI memos uncovered in 2004 indicate that the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the Cleveland FBI Office had received requests to investigate the film in late May of 1968. A memo subsequently reported that an informant had contacted the FBI and reported the film's plot and the SAC concluded, “[t]he obvious conclusion one draws from the ending [of the film] . . . is that the racial situation in the United States is unresolvable and will result in continued strife.” Following the incident with the young man and the police officer, a number of crew members and other whites associated with the

94 “Producer Sees Mayor after Film Interruption,” Cleveland Press, 5 June 1968, C9.
96 Sieving, Soul Searching, 139.
97 SAC to Director of FBI, 22 May 1968, Uptight Motion Picture Files, #157-9534-1.
film reportedly quit, citing the film’s advocacy of violence and “hatred against white people” and memos suggest that the Bureau had encouraged them to resign. 98

Paramount employees who were interviewed by FBI agents cited concerns over Dassin’s blacklisting and exile in Europe, Dec's membership in the CPUSA, and Julian Mayfield's association with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which apparently also factored into crew walkouts. Director Hoover also approved a plan to pressure Paramount into halting production by supplying damaging information about Dassin to executive, a policy consistent with COINTELPRO practices at the time.99 Though no concrete evidence indicates that either of Cleveland's white-owned newspapers—the Plains Dealer and the Cleveland Press—cooperated with the FBI, production shut down suddenly in mid-July and relocated to the Paramount lot in Culver City, CA. For the actors and crew, the change of scenery happened at a fortuitous time, but for the residents of Cleveland, the summer of 1968 would prove violent and destructive.

Shortly after the crew left, a fierce gunfight between Cleveland police officers and members of the Republic of New Libya erupted in nearby Glenville, a few blocks from Hough on 23 July. Four days of of rebellion and rioting followed.100 When the National

98 Sieving, Soul Searching, 139.

99 Ibid., 140.

100 The incident, known as the “Glenville Shootout,” began during a confrontation between members of the Republic of New Libya and the Cleveland Police Department. It is unclear who fired first, but the resulting gun battle lasted nearly an hour and resulted in seven deaths. Four days of property damage, violence, and assaults followed until the National Guard arrived and enforced a mandatory curfew. Local black nationalist Fred “Ahmed” Evans, a prominent member of the Republic of New Libya was ultimately convicted of the deaths of four police officers—Leroy C. Jones, Louis E. Galonka, Willard J. Wolff, and James E. Chapman—and sentenced to death. Following the Federal moratorium on capital punishment (Furman v. Georgia, 1972), Evans’s sentence was commuted to life in prison where he died of cancer in 1978. See: Louis H. Masotti and Jerome R. Corsi, Shoot-Out in Cleveland: Black Militants and the Police, A Report to the
Guard left on 27 July, three black citizens and four white police officers had been killed. Mayor Stokes took the unprecedented step of pulling all police from near six square miles of the city, turning policing duties over to local groups, before relenting and sending in the National Guard.\textsuperscript{101} In Los Angeles, neither Mayfield nor Dassin spoke publicly of the move, though the director alluded to the trouble on set stating vaguely, “the pressure was too much up there.”\textsuperscript{102}

The remainder of the film was shot on the Paramount lot, including the climactic confrontation between Johnny Wells and the Cleveland police department. Shooting wrapped on 8 August 1968, though editing would continue through October. Though Mayfield made no mention of problems on set during filming publicly or privately, correspondence indicated that he appreciated the move to Los Angeles and expressed fondness for the city and Hollywood work in general. Though the FBI’s efforts to undermine the production of \textit{Uptight} were ultimately unsuccessful the film, despite its notoriety, the film did not have the reception that Dassin, Dee, and Mayfield had hoped it would.

**Bad Press for “A Filmic Revolution”**

Premiering on 18 December 1968, \textit{Uptight} immediately divided critics and audiences with its raw portrait of black working-class militancy, conflicts between black social movements, and an open-ended reflection on the future of the black freedom struggle.

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\textsuperscript{101} Estelle Zannes, \textit{Checkmate in Cleveland: The Rhetoric of Confrontation During the Stokes Years} (Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1972), xii.
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\textsuperscript{102} Dassin quoted in Alex Madsen, “The Race Race!! or Too Late Blues,” \textit{Take One}, May–June 1968, 16–17.
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Despite attracting the attention of the FBI, contributing to black nationalist activity in Cleveland, and earning praise from both Black Arts Movement pioneer Larry Neal and author and poet Nikki Giovanni, the film languished at the box office. By June of 1969 the film had all but disappeared from movie theaters. Contemporary newspapers indicate that the film was shown on television sporadically through the 1970s, but it was never re-released in theaters and largely forgotten until it was released on DVD and Blu-Ray in 2012. What accounts for this lapse in historical memory? Why did a controversial movie on a contemporary topic disappear so quickly from popular consciousness? Three interrelated factors contribute to the movie's disappearance from view: a racially divided critical response, ambivalent audience reactions, and a lack of promotion and support by Paramount.

Advance publicity, based on the troubled filming on-location in Cleveland and subsequent move to LA, reflected national anxieties after a summer of violence and property destruction and many critics predicted that *Uptight* would bring in large audiences based on this fact alone. Following its release, the critical response was split along racial lines. White reviewers found much to criticize and black critics urged audiences to see this "highly relevant film. Lindsay Patterson's ambivalent review was indicative of this trend. The *New York Times* film writer criticized Dassin's choice to remake an existing story instead of "starting from scratch with young black writers or existing black materials." Noting that

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103 Though the film was never officially released on VHS, bootleg versions of the film circulated in New York City during the 1980s and 1990s. The film was officially released on DVD and Blu-Ray for the first time in 2012 by a small film publishing firm, Olive Films. However, the film's soundtrack, composed and recorded by Booker T and the MGs, had sold well and went through at least one re-issue. See: Blu-Ray and Vinyl Record in possession of author; Email communication with Michael A. Gonzales, 3 May 2018.
Americans “like nothing better than to exclude on the false issues of race, creed or religion,” Patterson damned the film with faint praise, calling it “a hopeful step toward a broader vision.” Clifford Terry dismissed the film out of hand: “the acting . . . [was] as stilted as the script,” and his praise was limited to Raymond St. Jacques's stoic fury as Committee leader B.G. The Wall Street Journal's John J. O'Connor offered a response that most accurately reflects the film’s greater impact. In a review that focused not on the film itself, but on the interest and conflict generated by its making, O'Connor wrote that Uptight was “far, quite far, from being 1968's best movie, but it stands a good chance of being the year's most fascinating phenomenon in American film-making.” Other critics, however, did not even give the film even this much consideration. New York Times film critic Renata Adler savaged the film, stating, “[it] is never for one instant moving, never lives up even to its initial documentary footage of the voice and funeral of Martin Luther King.” Uptight’s story was neither “historically or forseeably real,” filled with “personal dramas unrelated to politics.” Adler’s review, which infuriated both Mayfield and Dassin, illuminated again the insoluble dilemma facing black writers and artists who had no choice but to reflect the times in which they lived. Fascinated by black militancy, white Americans and especially white critics remained unwilling or unable to understand the deeply personal nature of black political action.

In contrast, black critics lauded the focus on black themes and the lack of sensationalism or pandering in the film’s delivery. Hazel Garland told *New Pittsburgh Courier* readers, “if you don’t see another movie this year, don’t miss 'Uptight', the powerful drama produced by Jules Dassin.”  Activist and theorist Larry Neal, whose nineteen page review entitled “Why Save America?”, decisively declared, “[Uptight] will probably thrust itself upon the public sensibility in a manner unprecedented in the history of American film.” Poet Nikki Giovanni’s review, appropriately titled “And What About Laurie,” called *Uptight* “the strongest possibility of a Black movie I have ever seen.” Reviews in the *Amsterdam News*, the *Call and Post*, and the *Chicago Defender* offered similar statements of praise, noting the nuanced, realistic portrayals of black militants and the ways in which the film captured the political shifts that Black Power politics had effected in black communities and social movements.

Critical opinions were mixed, split down racial lines, but early audience reactions did not bode well for the film’s potential for success. At the premier, held at the Greenwich Village Loew's Sheridan theater on 18 December, the audience of students signaled their disapproval of the film’s plot early. Critic Bernard L. Drew, writing for *The Hartford Times*


109 This piece, now located in Neal's archive the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, is also present in the FBI file on *Uptight*, surreptitiously photocopied, likely by an informant. See: Larry Neal, “Why Save America?”, SCH, LNP, Box 7, Folder 28, 17; Also included in “Motion Picture Entitled 'Uptight,'” 1 August 1968, Motion Picture Files, #157-1471-17, FBI (emphasis in original).

110 Laurie, played by co-writer Ruby Dee, offered viewers a rare portrait of a black woman on film who was neither seductress nor loyal wife. Instead, Laurie’s independence and determination to survive in spite of Tank illuminated the “triple oppression” of poor black women in the United States, and the ways in which her social class, gender, and race rendered her vulnerable to different institutional forms of oppression. Nikki Giovanni, “And What About Laurie?”, *Black Dialogue* 4 (Spring 1969): 14.
was present for this showing and, even as he praised the film as a, “fine, intelligent, and exciting film produced with savvy,” he could not help but note how a young, black audience had much to say about the film—and little of it was positive.  

Dassin, Mayfield, and H. Rap Brown were in the audience prepared to host a panel following the film. Joined by Ossie Davis, standing in for Ruby Dee, and Ruth Jett, a longtime Harlem Theater activist, whatever hopes the group had a convivial discussion fell by the wayside as the audience began to jeer and hiss at the screen.  

According to Drew, the crowd began to boo whenever Tank came on screen and they cheered loudly when he met his ignominious death.  

After the film ended, the audience was not shy about confronting the filmmakers and their associates on stage about their feelings toward the film. The panel responded defensively, seeking to redirect the hostile line of questions, but the students were adamant in voicing their negative interpretation of the film. One student, speaking of the scene where Johnny Wells was gunned down by police, asked Brown if he thought it good for “the black masses to see themselves standing on the balconies of their homes . . . for once having the dignity of protecting their interests while they rain down garbage on the police, but who flee at the first shot?” Brown's response, that he had “seen one shot make 5,000 people flee” buttressed his argument that “this is not a picture for the revolutionaries, but the masses,

111 Bernard L. Drew, “Our Critic Reviews the Movie . . . and Then the Audience,” The Hartford Times, Hartford, CT, 29 December 1968, G1, G3.

and this is how they act.” Dassin came in for a great deal of criticism by the audience—being a white man making a film about black militants—but Julian Mayfield was their primary target.

When he answered a question about his character, Tank, the student angrily interrupted him with one asking, “is the black man so weak and stupid to do all of the things you acted and wrote him doing?” Mayfield's attempt to explain Tank's flaws—his drunkenness, his psychological state, his failure at forging meaningful relationships—but the answer fell flat and the student dismissed the film as “just another gangster story.” Another student inquired why the film only showed black men killing other black men as opposed to whites. Still another echoed one of the conclusions from Daniel Moynihan's 1965 report, The Negro Family, as he demanded to know why the filmmakers “still have not shown the black man as a masculine, phallic figure. It's still strong women who motivate and run everything.” In response to this critique, the students applauded. Heckled and challenged by this direct line of questioning, the men and woman on the stage ended the panel early and left.

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113 Drew, “Our Critic Reviews the Movie . . . and Then the Audience,” G3.

114 The student was reference the Moynihan Report's conclusion about the supposed disintegration of the African American family as a result of poverty. S. Craig Watkins, writing in 1998, argued that Moynihan, “concluded that the structure of family life in the black community constituted a 'tangle of pathology ... capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world,' and that 'at the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time.' Also, the report argued that the matriarchal structure of black culture weakened the ability of black men to function as authority figures. That particular notion of black familial life has become a widespread, if not dominant, paradigm for comprehending the social and economic disintegration of late 20th-century black urban life.” See: S. Craig Watkins, Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 218–219.
Though one audience does not provide enough information to conclusively demonstrate the reason the film failed to resonate with audiences, the precipitous decline in box office receipts suggests that the New York audience was not exceptional. In January of 1969, Julian Mayfield spoke to a Detroit News reporter about the film, recalling his Cornell students' response to the film's finale. Recalling how the black militant holding the gun was unable to shoot Tank, Mayfield expressed his surprise that “some of the students thought that after he shoots me, he should have shot his companion because he had been too weak to carry out his task.”\textsuperscript{115} Christopher Sieving suggests that the film's failure to resonate with audiences was “related to the fact that its formation failed to comply with the rapidly developing standards of the 'black aesthetic'” and therefore unable to “meet the [black] nationalists' standards for essentially black art.”\textsuperscript{116} With a white director and being bankrolled by a white studio, the film did not appear meet Larry Neal's definition for inclusion into the Black Arts Movement, yet both Neal and SNCC Chairman H. Rap Brown lauded the film accuracy in the portrayal of black militancy.\textsuperscript{117} Despite almost a year having passed since Mayfield’s declaration that black writers needed to “catch up” with the masses, it seemed that they still had not managed to do so.


\textsuperscript{116} Sieving, Soul Searching, 158–159.

\textsuperscript{117} In his manifesto on the subject, “The Black Arts Movement,” Neal argues that, “[a] main tenet of Black Power is the necessity for Black people to define the world in their own terms. The Black artist has made the same point in the context of aesthetics. The two movements postulate that there are in fact and in spirit two Americas—one black, one white.” However, in an unpublished chronicle of Uptight, Neal praised the film, its writers, and its actors. See: Larry Neal, “The Black Arts Movement,” Drama Review 12 (Summer 1968): 30; Larry Neal, “Why Save America?,” 2.
Mayfield's interactions with students following the film's release points to another important division that contributed to the film’s lack of success. Viewers, Mayfield argued, were divided along generational lines. Younger audience members saw in Frank Silvera's earnest civil rights leader Kyle a sympathetic view of a “bourgeois” movement, but also found the militants as unrealistic caricatures. In contrast, older viewers regarded the filmmakers’ failure to sufficiently condemn the black militants as inflammatory, with the implication that it tacitly supporting black rebellions in places like Detroit, Cleveland, and Newark. In short, the film's portrait of black militants was not radical enough for young people, but unacceptably radical for their parents' generation.

Perhaps the most important element that contributed to the film's short run at the box office was Paramount's apparent desire to “to kick [Uptight] under a rug.” Compared with other films released in 1968, Paramount did little to promote the film, perhaps hoping that the controversy over its production would stand in for radio, television, and print advertising. The studio did make an effort to show the film in large urban markets, making it the first movie shown at the newly constructed Roxbury Cinema in Boston's black majority neighborhood. However, when compared with the kind of promotion and distribution received by Paramount's biggest hits of that year—The Odd Couple, Rosemary's Baby, and Romeo and Juliet—the marketing for Uptight fell short.

Part of the problem was the limited release, which prompted film critic Jesse Walker to question what had happened to it: “As far as I can find out [it] isn't playing anywhere . . .

118 Sieving, Soul Searching, 149.
119 Letter from Jules Dassin to Julian Mayfield, 24 April 1969, SCH, JMP, Box 18, Folder 2, 1.
Was it too uptight? However, when the film did receive wider distribution, it was paired with films such as *Skidoo* (1968) and the equally incongruous *Barbarella* (1968). Whether it was generational politics, FBI interference, or the studio’s desire to kick the film “under the rug,” *Uptight’s* lack of financial success not only had a negative impact on the careers of the writers, but reshaped subsequent Hollywood productions. Paramount’s financial loss from *Uptight* stalled existing black dramatic projects at the studio and throughout Hollywood, exacerbating tensions among up-and-coming black filmmakers and white studios.

In the same way that many reviewers had foregrounded the film’s troubled production, *Uptight’s* impact on black film history is less about its script and its narrative and more about its production. Following the film’s poor showing at the box office, the majority of films that followed which had majority black casts veered away from serious dramas and instead focused on humor, sexual titillation, and violence shorn of politics, save for vulgar anti-racism and black revenge. *Uptight’s* most significant contribution was the direction that Hollywood took following its failure. Studios, wary of another expensive flop, moved away

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121 Sieving, *Soul Searching*, 151.

122 In contrast to *Uptight*, another black-themed film helmed by a formerly blacklisted director, Herbert Biberman’s *Slaves*, was financially successful during the same era. The film starred Dionne Warwick an enslaved protagonist who engages in a sexual and emotional relationship with the man who purchased her, played by Stephen Boyd. Ossie Davis had a supporting role. *Slaves*, according to contemporary critics, was more akin to an “art film” (aka pornographic) than a serious drama. Despite these issues, the film was profitable and popular, which contributed toward studio decisions to shelve other “political” films in favor of the more exploitative and racy films that were to come. See: Sieving, *Soul Searching*, 151–152.

123 One exception to this trend was Ivan Dixon’s *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*, based on a novel by Sam Greenlee, which was released in 1973. However, due to FBI pressure, the film was removed from theaters and “lost” by its distributor, United Artists. Rediscovered in 2004, the film was released on DVD. See: Karen Bates, “Profile: Importance of the Movie *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* on the release of a 30th anniversary DVD” *All Things Considered*. Washington, D.C.: NPR (March 2, 2004).
from a complex, character-driven stories and towards the kind of plot-driven caricatures consistent with Cedric Robinson and other intellectuals later criticisms of Blaxploitation as a genre. While some have characterized the film as the first Blaxploitation film, Uptight's failure to fit neatly into that category contributed to the widening dichotomy of films with black stories and black themes. The contradiction facing black artists that Mayfield identified had become more durable.

Examined along with the historical context of its production, Julian Mayfield also embodied the contradictions he had pointed out during the panel discussion in Black Journal. Working within the system (Hollywood) while trying to overthrow it (with Uptight) he demonstrated the essence of the conundrum he had posed at Fisk. Revealing in many ways the truism of Audre Lorde's reflection that “the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house,” Mayfield nonetheless remained steadfast in his positive opinion of his work—as did many of his contemporaries.124 In an exchange between Mayfield and Dassin in the summer of 1969, Dassin expressed his belief that the three writers “didn't do the job we should have done.” Mayfield, however, resisted the urge to admit defeat and responded defiantly, “if you insist on being depressed about our flick, let's say to hell with it and go on to something else.”125 Though Dassin would not make another movie in the United States, Julian Mayfield spent the next six years working diligently to realize a series of film projects. Despite its failure at the box office, the film was a personal success for Julian Mayfield. Earning a salary of approximately $1000 USD a week while shooting in Cleveland

125 Sieving, Soul Searching, 149.
and Los Angeles, he personally made an additional $40,000 USD, or approximately $261,000 USD in 2016 dollars, from the deal he had struck with Dassin. All told, he earned enough to purchase a piece of land outside of Ithaca, New York in the nearby town of Spencer.

Dubbing his new haven “Chaka Farm” he also founded a production company, Chaka Productions, and began aggressively pursuing other film projects. In 1969, he began an untitled Marcus Garvey biopic with William Greaves and purchased the film rights to Walk Hard, Talk Loud by Ed Lacy, the story of an anti-racist, Leftist boxer.126 Dividing his time between Chaka Farm, Cornell, NYU, and SUNY Cortland, Mayfield also submitted several hundred pages of a proposed autobiography in mid-1969, much of which survives in his archive. This financial windfall, however, did not last. A dispute over money with William Greaves put an end to the Garvey project and he was unable to find a producer who would take on Walk Hard, Talk Loud. In response to these financial pressures, and a preoccupation with the violent deaths of radical black activists such as Fred Hampton and the imprisonment of his colleague H. Rap Brown, Mayfield began once again to seek escape from the “narrow national orbit” of the United States.

The Black Aesthetic

From 1967 until his departure for Guyana in 1971, Julian Mayfield's writing probed the broader trends reshaping black writing, revolutionary activism, and art in the wake of

126 Ed Lacy was the pen name of Leonard “Len” Zinberg, a New York writer who was active in Leftist and Jewish causes during the 1930s and 1940s. Zinberg published over two dozen novels, including Room to Swing which introduced what Ed Lynskey called, “the first credible African-American PI” character in fiction. Walk Hard, Talk Loud was his debut novel, published in 1940, which introduced Andy Whitman, a scrappy Black boxer on the cusp of turning pro. A gangster that ran the boxing racket, opposed Andy while a kind-hearted Communist activist named Ruth saved him in the end. Highlighting both discrimination, racism, and the exploitation of Black athletes to make money for white gangsters, Walk Hard, Talk Loud was critically lauded for its detailed portrayal of racial politics in pre-WWII boxing. See: Ed Lynskey, “Ed Lacy: New York City Crime Author,” Mystery File, No. 45, August 2004, 1.
Stokely Carmichael’s call to Black Power. Eschewing ideological debate for discussions of practical steps that African Americans could take to catalyze revolution in the United States, Mayfield remained convinced of the need for solidarity as he criticized the ideological battles that divided the movement. In *Uptight*, he found the ideal platform to dissect the distinctions he had made to the audience in Nashville and illuminated the contradictions, conflicts, and limitations that were present in post-Civil Rights Act black liberation movements. In the classroom, he challenged students to understand the historical forces that set the nation on its present path. For Mayfield, teaching was another aspect of his longstanding effort to educate the broader public of the ways that thought and action influenced the articulation of black radical activism.

In these two contexts, the academy and Hollywood, Mayfield’s intellectual projects discerned common themes and dispelled misinformation and rumor. Easily the most radical leading black man to star in a major Hollywood motion picture to that point, Julian Mayfield’s experience making *Uptight* illuminated the difficulties presenting his vision of authentic black militancy, its appeal and its limitations, to the world. Hollywood in 1968 remained a bastion of white supremacy, the success of such films as *Look Who’s Coming to Dinner* and *In the Heat of the Night* notwithstanding. That *Uptight* was made at all is a rare accomplishment, a reflection of a moment in which Hollywood studios and black writers shared the belief in the profitability of portraying black radicalism on screen. Its negative reviews and unprofitability tell only part of the story of its construction while hinting at a broader impact.

Despite a long silence regarding the film, a new generation has rediscovered its gritty portrait of black militancy, the beginnings of urban decay, and the film that writer Michael A.
Gonzales calls “[t]he 1st Blaxploitation Movie.” In 2008, the 84-year-old Ruby Dee
introduced a showing of the film at the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s theater. “Paramount
did not want to release the film,” she told audiences, echoing Dassin’s later comments about
the studio's attempt to bury the film after its release, but, Dee reported, the director's
passionate argument convinced the studio.127 Critic J. Hoberman, after viewing the Uptight in
2009, praised the film for its “ferocious performances; a vivid, almost allegorical use of
location; and a sense of bottled rage that explodes in the movie’s apocalyptic final half-
hour . . . Up Tight effectively capped [Dassin’s] career, recapitulating the themes and style of
his strongest Hollywood films with a scarcely modulated brute force.”128

In 1971, Mayfield noted in the introduction to the volume of short stories he edited,
Ten Times Black, that, while the conditions had changed, the institutional force of anti-black
racism remained disturbingly intact. “Let us be clear about one thing,” he wrote, “[the black
writer] is not excluded today because he is Black, but because now the stuff of his work is
Black.”129 Paramount had taken a chance on a radical depiction of black frustration and
militancy and that chance had not paid off to the studio’s satisfaction. Subsequent films, like
Superfly (1972), Shaft (1971), and Blacula (1972), did not explore the “full range” of black
experience and did not, in the opinion of many writers in the Black Arts Movement, embody
the Black Aesthetic. While the films were “black” in terms of the composition of their casts

127 Ruby Dee cited in Michael A. Gonzales, “UP TIGHT: 1st Blaxploitation Movie was a Baaad Mutha…”,
Ebony, 14 January 2012 <http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/up-tight-1st-blaxploitation-movie-
was-a-baad-mutha> Accessed 14 June 2018.


and the musical scores that accompanied them, they did not examine the themes that Mayfield, Neal, and Giovanni did in their own writing.

In a provocatively titled essay for Addison Gayle's edited volume *The Black Aesthetic*, Julian Mayfield offered his own thoughts on the subject. “[A]t the risk of sounding superstitious, I know deep down in my gut what [the black aesthetic] means,” but, he professed, “it is easier to define in the negative. I know quite definitively what the Black Aesthetic is not.” After dismissing “a way of talking, a secret language invented by black people to confound the whites,” musical ability, and sexual prowess, Mayfield concluded, “it is our racial memory, and the unshakeable knowledge of who we are, where we have been, and where we are going.” The Black Aesthetic “for those trying to create it today, is necessarily the business of making revolution, for we have tried everything else.”

This essay, entitled “You Touch My Black Aesthetic and I’ll Touch Yours,” offered insight into the frustrations that motivated Julian Mayfield’s art in 1970, but, despite these difficulties, he remained fully committed to “making revolution,” despite the challenges inherent in the process. Now undeniably middle-aged, he could no longer rely on the energy his youth, but neither was he old enough for his words to resonate with the appropriate gravitas. However, as circumstances would have it, an old friend from Ghana reached out and offered him a new opportunity. In August of 1971, Tom Feelings penned an open letter to Mayfield that was published in *Black World* (formerly *Negro Digest*). Among his considerations of black consciousness, Feelings took black nationalism to task. “Even the

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sincere, dedicated talk about Black nationhood in America still unconsciously functions under American terms,” he wrote, “for even in the search for different values . . . we are weighed down by the awesome fact that we are trying to operate and develop those new concepts in what is essentially a 'white country.'”

The solution to the unbearable whiteness of the United States, Feelings explained to Mayfield and Black World's readers, was the “colored” nation of Guyana, which had an Indo-Guyanese majority, significant African-descended and Amerindian minorities, and a African-descended Prime Minister. Aware of the strain that Mayfield's financial problems and teaching commitments had placed upon him, Feelings extended an invitation for him to come to Guyana where “if you choose, you could find the kind of work you would dig.” Longing for the kind of community and belonging he had last experienced in Ghana, Mayfield entrusted the sale of Chaka Farm to a friend, severed his association with SUNY Cortland, placed much of his furniture and belongings in storage, and took a one-way flight across the Caribbean Sea to the northern coast of South America. As he told Maya Angelou, though he felt he could make a difference in the tiny Caribbean nation and believed it offered him a fresh start, his most important reason for emigration was that he hoped to enjoy the, “satisfaction of not having to put up with the bullshit of White Power 24 [hours] a day.”

132 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Maya Angelou, 9 June 1973, SCH, JMP, Box 4, Folder 3, 2.

I am always thinking of Guyana. I have a feeling which has always been with me, that it is going to be the centre of the Black World and it is going to be the most effective link between the Continent of Africa and the BLACK DIASPORA.
—Nana Nketsia IV

National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people…will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been.
—Frantz Fanon, 1961

The arguments that Julian Mayfield advanced in his writing had long reflected the politics of the geographic space he inhabited; the South American nation of Guyana was no exception. In a draft script for the unmade film Christophe, written while he worked at the Guyanese Ministry of Information and Culture, Mayfield's characters considered the limited political options available to post-colonial leaders at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In an exchange between the titular King, Henri Christophe I, and his confidant, Paulin, the two men considered the challenge of leadership in defiance of colonial empire. “If you force a nation to work it calls you a Dictator or Tyrant,” Paulin observed, “[but] if you don't it calls you soft.” As the autocratic leader of the State of Haiti state for twelve years (1808-1820), Christophe undertook massive infrastructure projects, following the path carved by his predecessors, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Touissaint L'Ouverture, in conscripting formerly enslaved peoples to raise and process sugarcane for export. Haiti's nation-building

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1 Letter from Nana Nketsia IV to Julian Mayfield, 21 April 1974, SCH, JMP, Box 6, Folder 8, 1.

2 Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 161.

3 Julian Mayfield, *King Christophe* second draft, SCH, JMP, Box 18, Folder 2, 120.

4 Following the assassination of former general and then-emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines in 1806, two of the most influential men in his administration, Alexandre Pétion and Henri Christophe, vied for power. In
The project was enforced with such brutality that in October 1820 the people rose up en masse to overthrow him—putting an end to the Haitian monarchy forever. Written as a celebration of, “one of the world's great revolutionaries . . . a leader of the only successful slave revolt in the Western Hemisphere,” Christophe reveals Mayfield's ambivalence about autocracy, masculinity, and the application of power tailored to resonate with black audiences of the 1970s.

In much the same way that Uptight had offered a nuanced portrait of the ideological horizons and the intellectual divisions within the black liberation movement in the United States, Mayfield intended Christophe to address political, cultural, and economic contradictions present in contemporary post-colonial nations. Shaped by Mayfield's close working relationship with Prime Minister Linden Forbes Burnham, who had lead Guyana from colony to independent nation in 1966, the Christophe project reflected how Mayfield's


According to historical accounts, Christophe had recently suffered a stroke and a number of his officers, who had chafed under his discipline, sought to overthrow him. They were joined by tens of thousands of Haitian peasants, who marched on the Citadel at Cap Haitien. Rather than face a military mutiny and the anger of his subjects, Christophe shot himself. Reportedly, he did so with a silver bullet fired from his own pistol. See: John W. Vandercook, Black Majesty: The Life of Christophe, King of Haiti (New York: Editions for the Armed Services, 1944); Derek Walcott, The Haitian Trilogy (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).

Julian Mayfield, Christophe film treatment, SCH, JMP, Box 18, Folder 9, iv.
understanding of Haiti’s post-revolutionary history influenced his perceptions of Guyana’s own nation-building project. Facing political, social, and economic pressures from both the United States and the United Kingdom, Burnham’s problems echoed those faced by his Haitian predecessor, though the steps the Prime Minister would take would be far less violent on the whole.7

As a piece of political art, Christophe presented the struggles of independent Haiti in starkly nationalist terms, as one nation standing against a hostile, white world founded on colonialism and the subjugation of black bodies. In his support for the Guyanese Cooperative Republic and in his script for Christophe, Julian Mayfield emphasized the primacy of nationalist struggles over transnational ones, declaring in 1973, “the Pan-Africanist ideal does not exist anywhere in the world today.”8 Even as his work highlighted the powerful effect that Pan-Africanism had on black nation-building efforts during the age of Black Power, Mayfield’s resistance to sentimentality foregrounded the nation-state in his calls for black liberation.

Integrating an analysis of Christophe, the political and social history of Guyana under Burnham, Mayfield’s contributions to the Guyanese cooperative republic, and the relationships between politics and art in the black diaspora, this chapter demonstrates how the intersection of these ideas was generative to black intellectual thought and political activism in the 1970s. In a forthcoming article, historian Russell Rickford argues that a study

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7 However, though Burnham would not institute forced labor or legally bind peasants to sugar plantations, he would, in the late 1970s, encourage political violence against his opponents in the opposition and is suspected to have ordered the assassination of scholar and political activist Walter Rodney by car bomb in 1980.

of Guyana's small African American expatriate community reveals “lesser-known currents of transnationalism [which] illustrate black America's romance with the modern nation-state.”

In particular, Mayfield's writing in Guyana, which featured the Christophe script, a biography of Burnham, and numerous publications in support of the government's program of “cooperative socialism,” highlights the way the nation-state was foregrounded in discussions of “African Unity” and historical events were repurposed to support the modern post-colonial nation-state through art.

Mayfield's output in Guyana offers historians the means to analyze another moment in which African Americans embraced the leader of a developing nations as a counter to U.S. hegemony. In doing so, these Afros forced a confrontation between the needs of the nation-state and the ideals of pan-Africanism. This confrontation was apparent in the pages of journals and newspapers, but also on the streets of Georgetown. Mayfield's activism and his writings illustrate the ways that these ideas shaped—and were in turn shaped by—the particular geography, history, and socio-economic conditions of Afro-Diasporic polities in the nation of Guyana.

As the Christophe project reveals, it was not only Guyana that was on Mayfield's mind during the early 1970s. In fact, Haiti figured prominently in his thinking and he was not alone. Research into the effort to develop Christophe reveals that it was not the only film project on the Haitian Revolution underway at that time. As of June 1972, five simultaneous efforts on the Haitian Revolution were referenced by Mayfield, Marshall, and their contemporaries. Debates between the developers of these projects, which spilled from the

radical journal *The Black Scholar* into the pages of the *New York Times*, points to the ways that linkages between an Afro expatriate in Guyana and award-winning Hollywood actors influenced the discourse of identity and representation in film.

The story of *Christophe* also fills in a crucial gap in the historical narrative of the inability of black and white filmmakers to produce a film on the Haitian Revolution. Contextualizing Mayfield’s art and politics along with his intellectual and political biography expands historical horizons of the intersection of black liberation projects and the Pan-African imaginary in the era of Black Power. Furthermore, his archive serves as an unexplored site of black knowledge production, allowing for a reconstruction of the collision of black nationalism, pan-Africanism, and resistance to U.S. imperialism in independent Guyana.

When Mayfield departed for Guyana in November 1971 it was out of frustration and, “the general sense of powerlessness [in the United States].”10 Visiting Guyana in September of that year, he found a nation and a leader that offered programmatic solutions to the liberatory puzzles that defied his work in the United States. Guyana also promised to alleviate some of Mayfield’s personal economic woes and, unlike his flight to West Africa, he arrived in South America with plans to reside in the country indefinitely.11 His decision was aided by the political rhetoric and policies of Guyana’s People’s National Congress (PNC) as

10 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Preston King, 11 September 1971, SCH, JMP, Box 6, Folder 2, 1.

11 Unfortunately, after taking a loss on the sale of Chaka Farm and the low salaries paid by the Guyanese government, Mayfield’s economic problems continued to mount during the 1970s. After returning from West Germany in 1978, Mayfield filed for bankruptcy. In his statement to the bankruptcy court, Mayfield cited losses from the film production of *The Long Night* (1975) with Woodie King Jr. as the primary reason for his inability to pay his creditors. See: Julian Mayfield, “Explanation of Bankruptcy,” 8 May 1978, SCH, JMP, Box 3, Folder 2, 1.
articulated by Forbes Burnham and the ways in which the party explicitly addressed three overlapping issues with black nationalist movements in the United States: the land question, educating the next generation of black Americans, and the importance of national sovereignty. Mayfield was not the only one to see in the Caribbean nation-state a solution to the problems facing nationalistic African Americans, according to his friend Tom Feelings, Burnham recognized and sought remediation for all three. However, while pan-African idealism encouraged support from elsewhere in the African Diaspora, the explicit nationalism of Burnham and the PNC provoked conflicts between African American radicals and their Guyanese hosts.

**Towards a Guyanese Pan-Africanism**

In an open letter letter to Julian Mayfield, published in the August 1971 issue of *Black World* (formerly *Negro Digest*), Tom Feelings considered the status of the liberation movement in the United States and offered Guyana as an antidote to its ills. He implored Mayfield to visit and join a nation with clear goals for the future. “You already know some of the frustrations built into working for new Black nations,” Feelings wrote in reference to Mayfield's time in Ghana, “but this time you can choose to deal with it in your own way.” Promising Mayfield an influential position based on his experience in the U.S. and Ghana, Feelings was also quick to criticize those who spoke negatively of leaders like Burnham without any firsthand experience. “[O]ur brothers in the universities, of the scholarly left, who expound on the romantic theory of the Third World,” Feelings wrote, “had best come down here and peep at some of our future world problems . . . the theory might sound nice,
but the practical terms are, at the least, *difficult.*"12 Feelings' emphasis on practical knowledge over theory was well in keeping with Mayfield's own preference for tactics and strategy over ideology. With experience in living and working in the midst of a nation-building project helmed by a powerful and outspoken black man Mayfield, Feelings believed, would feel at home in Georgetown.

An artist by training, Tom Feelings had emigrated to Guyana the previous year with his wife, Muriel, and young son, Zamani.13 Foregoing material comforts for a place in building the future of Pan-African, Third World Unity, he saw no hope for him and his family in the United States. “[W]e have seen what America has to offer,” he wrote to Mayfield, “and can walk away from it.” Urging Mayfield to come, “see for yourself” what was going on in Guyana, Hoyt W. Fuller's decision to publish Feelings' letter in late 1971 also reflected the magazine's transformation from the staid *Negro Digest* to a more internationalist-oriented *Black World*.14 African American interest in spaces where meaningful

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13 Tom Feelings was born 19 May 1933 in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn and by all accounts was artistic from an early age. He attended the George Westinghouse Vocational High School in downtown Brooklyn, majoring in art. Following his graduation, he received numerous scholarships and published his first comic art as early as 1953. He visited Ghana in 1964, where he befriended Julian Mayfield, leaving sometime after the coup in 1966. Between the mid-1960s and his death in 2003, Feelings focused mainly on children's books, illustrating the writing of others as well as producing his own prints. The friendships he made while in Ghana, especially with Jan Carew and Sidney King (later Eusi Kwayana), encouraged his interest in Guyana and he emigrated in late 1969, residing there until 1975. Feelings' papers are currently being processed at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem. See: Tom Feelings, *Black Pilgrimage* (Lothrop: Lee & Shepard Co., 1972).

national sovereignty was a consequence of the continuing tide of independence among colonies in Africa and Latin America, but it also reflected an increase in state repression against radical movements, both in the United States and elsewhere in the hemisphere. But why Guyana?

The tiny, South American country, scarcely larger than the state of Kansas, was mostly dense, equatorial jungle. There was only a narrow strip of land along the Caribbean Sea available for farming and settlement. The decision of men like Julian Mayfield, Paul Adams, Herman Ferguson, and Tom Feelings to chose expatriate life Guyana not only highlighted a certain romanticism with the nation-state present in black radical movements in the age of Black Power, but illuminates the political contours of black nationalist politics and how that nationalism was shaped by an internationalist impulse in ways that often contradicted discourses of pan-Africanism. More significantly, the choice to settle in Guyana, as opposed to Julius Nyrere's Tanzania or Sekou Touré's Guinea, reveal how questions of land, geography, and language were central to African American radicals' internationalist aspirations.

Historian Daryl Michael Scott has argued that African American nationalism in the United States had become confused with, “ethnoracial solidarities” beginning in the 1920s,

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making it seemingly unique among nationalist movements worldwide.\textsuperscript{16} By conflating solidarity among African Americans with nationalism, “[b]lack nationalism became decoupled from the core concept of sovereignty or even self-government.”\textsuperscript{17} In deploying this argument that black nationalism had become \textit{sui generis}, however, Scott minimizes the international contours of that intellectual tradition and the ways in which nationalists sought out sovereignty and self-government beyond the borders of the United States.\textsuperscript{18} In a private letter to Mayfield from April 1971 Tom Feelings lamented the ways in which black nationalists in the United States failed to reckon with the central problem facing nationalist projects there, the question of land. “Black people in America,” Feelings wrote, “are unsure if the land in America belongs to them, or even if they want to die there burning it down.”\textsuperscript{19}

Feelings’ statement captured the historic ambivalence toward black nationalism in the United States even as he highlighted the historical evolution that nationalist politics among African Americans. The inability to truly control land in the United States meant that domestic black nationalist schemes were doomed to failure, leading to the “confusion” that Feelings alluded to in his letter. Feelings’ embrace of Guyana demonstrates that Afro expatriates interest in the availability of land within a sovereign nation dedicated to Pan-


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{18} This is not an oversight on Scott’s part, but a result of his narrow definition of nationalism which limits expressions of nationalism to the borders of the United States. However, the nationalist impulse among African Americans has long transcended the boundaries of United States political power, both rhetorically and functionally, as figures like Edward Blyden, Martin Delaney, and Marcus Garvey demonstrate.

\textsuperscript{19} Letter from Tom Feelings to Julian Mayfield, 22 April 1971, SCH, JMP, Box 5, Folder 1, 4. This letter was the basis of Feelings’ open letter published in \textit{Black World} that August. Mayfield joked with Preston King in another letter that it was the result of Feelings, “being a lazy writer, and having promised H. Fuller of \textit{Black World} an article, Tom turned it into an open letter to yours truly.” See: Letter from Julian Mayfield to Preston King, 11 September 1971, SCH, JMP, Box 6, Folder 2, 1.
Africanism and autarky suggest that it would be a mistake to consider this nationalist impulse geographically limited to the United States. This conflation of nationalism with racial solidarity left many African Americans frustrated, providing an audience for a discourse that emphasized control over land as being fundamental to having control over culture and politics.

The slogan, “It's Nation Time!”, which appeared in speeches and articles by thinkers and activists as diverse as Jesse Jackson, Stokely Carmichael, Ann F. Cook, and the economist Robert S. Browne, roots the origins of this post-Civil Rights Movement nationalist impulse in both civil rights leaders and Black Power activists. First articulated in a 1970 book of prose and poetry by Amiri Baraka, who later performed the poem on album entitled “It's Nation Time,” the phrase entered widespread usage, punctuating political speeches and calls for political action during the first half of the decade.20 Riding this wave of popular sentiment, Guyana's small Afro expatriate community and the nation's promise of meaningful political power lent credence to the argument that this phrase was not always hollow nor symbolic, as critics contended while the decade wore on.

20 In May 1970, the Reverend Jesse Jackson linked the presence of black elected officials to the preservation of black citizens' civil rights, a result of activism and organizing of the previous decade. “It was the decision to seize power in Gary [Indiana] and Cleveland [Ohio] that made it possible for a [Richard G.] Hatcher and a [Carl] Stokes to avoid major calamities in the black community and in fact give those communities hope at a time when despair may have inundated them. I often note that Mayor Stokes was able to prevent a massacre of black militant youth after Ahmed Evans was accused of the sniper slaying of a white policeman by stepping in an exercising his authority to gain a fair trial for Evans.” For Jackson, black politicians meant Black Power, “we march to seize power,” he wrote, punctuating the editorial with the phrase, “IT'S NATION TIME.” See: Jesse Jackson, “Jesse: Why We Must March. 'Country Preacher' on the case “March Against Repression, For It's Nation Time,” Chicago Daily Defender (1966–1973), 23 May 1970, 1 (emphasis in original).
Rather, Guyana's appeal was based precisely on the potential for black political power beyond the borders of the United States. Feelings, Mayfield, and other Afros in Guyana recognized that the sparsely populated nation had the political and geographical characteristics which made it ideal for a sovereign, nationalist project. Unlike Tanzania, another important site for black radicals seeking sanctuary, or Guinea, Guyana's unique ethno-racial makeup, its colonial history, and the circumstances of its independence offered Anglophone radicals an appealing “land base” from which they hoped to effect change on a national, and international, scale.  

The Guyanese Cooperative Republic

Guyana's appeal to black radicals, nationalists, and dissidents has been linked to the rhetoric of its firebrand prime minister, Linden Forbes Burnham, but Burnham's embrace of Third World radicalism and pan-Africanism obscured the ways in which Guyana's geography, its history, and its linguistic and ethnic heritage shaped its post-colonial articulations of sovereignty, the true source of its appeal to black dissidents. Unlike most Caribbean nations, Guyana's African-descended population was a minority with Indian-descended peoples making up the majority of the population. In its transition from British

21 Following the formation of Tanzania from the nations of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964, the new president, Julius Nyerere, invited African-descended peoples from around the world to join his pan-African project. Among those who spent time in the nation were SNCC veterans, such as Judy Richardson, Charles Cobb Jr., Robert P. Moses, and Courtland Cox, and Black Panthers, such as Felix “Pete” O'Neal. Seth Markle has argued that, “Tanzania played a significant role in shaping the anti-imperialist/pan Africanist politics of Black Power militants on a profound level” in his dissertation on African American cultural and political exchanges with Tanzania. However, as a largely Swahili-speaking nation on the shores of the Indian Ocean, Tanzania proved linguistically, culturally, and geographically challenging for many African Americans who chose to be expatriates or sought sanctuary. The geographical proximity of Guyana and its anglophone history proved appealing to many. See: Seth Markle, “We Are Not Tourists’ The Black Power Movement and the Making of ‘Socialist’ Tanzania, 1960–1974” (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2011).
sugar colony to “cooperative republic,” the racialism of modern Guyana was the basis of Mayfield's assertion that “the racial factor in Guyana was more basic than any apparent ideological differences.”\(^{22}\) It was also at the root of the political conflicts he faced while he worked in Georgetown and one of the primary features that attracted him to the nation.

The source of this quote, according to an article published in *The Black Scholar* during a debate with Afro-Guyanese intellectual and activist Eusi Kwayana, reflected Mayfield's belief that the most significant political issue dividing Guyana was anti-black racism and the black separatist response.\(^{23}\) Unlike Forbes Burnham and much of the opposition arrayed against him, which essentially sought to unite the Guyanese people across racial and ethnic divisions, Mayfield saw Guyana's social divisions through an African American lens, shaping his response to domestic and international issues. In comparison to Ghana, where linguistic, ethnic, and class divisions had been the primary challenges facing the nation-building project, Guyana's apparently straightforward racial divisions offered Mayfield and Feelings a troublingly familiar terrain. A letter to his friend, political scientist Preston King, alluded to these racial complexities and he listed racial tensions as one source of unease with his

\(^{22}\) Julian Mayfield, “Political Refugees and the Politics of Guyana,” *The Black Scholar* 35.

planned move, but nevertheless concluded, “personally it is right for me now.”

Alien yet familiar, Guyana shared much in common with other former sugar colonies in the Caribbean and in Africa. However, the colony’s labor history contributed to a racialism whose effects were felt most profoundly during the era of decolonization and independence.

The history of Guyana from the sixteenth century to the early nineteenth century resembled that of other British, French, and Dutch colonial territories in the Caribbean, but, following the Demerara Rebellion of 1823, the colony’s history took a novel turn compared to its neighbors. Originally inhabited by Arawak-speaking peoples, it was the Dutch Empire that first seized the coastal region of what was then known as Demerara in the seventeenth century and began importing Africans in order to provide slave labor for sugar plantations. During the late eighteenth century, the region changed hands several times before being recognized as the British colony of Demerara-Essequibo in 1815. The intrinsic brutality of slave economies meant that revolts were a not uncommon occurrence in Caribbean colonial spaces, but the Demerara Rebellion of 1823 provoked a response that far outstripped the small size of the colony.

As historians Emilia Violeta da Costa and Randy M. Browne have

24 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Preston King, 11 September 1971, SCH, JMP, Box 6, Folder 2, 1.


26 Another notable slave uprising was began in Berbice in 1763 and led by an Akan-speaking slave named Cuffy (also spelled: “Cuffy,” “Kofi,” and “Koffi”). While the initial rebellion was effectively leaderless, Cuffy soon organized rebels into an army allowing them to hold several plantations around Berbice for nearly a year as Dutch slave-owners fled to the North of the colony. Neighboring French and British colonies sent troops and eventually put the down the rebellion. After Guyana was declared a “cooperative republic” in 1970, Cuffy was recognized as a national hero and the date of the initial rebellion at the Magdalenenberg Plantation, 23 February, became a holiday commemorating the beginning of the Berbice slave rebellion. See: Marjoleine Kars, “Dodging Rebellion: Politics and Gender in the Berbice Slave
shown, the more than 10,000 enslaved men and women who violently attempted to seize their freedom in August 1823 proved to be a significant factor in the British Empire's decision to formalize the process of abolishing chattel slavery in all of its colonial holdings. Unlike France, whose National Assembly formally abolished slavery in 1794, the path to abolition in British holdings involved almost six years of “apprenticeship” beginning in 1833, during which enslaved peoples were formally manumitted, slave-owners were compensated, and the formerly enslaved were coerced into becoming wage laborers.

Though slavery was officially abolished in 1838 in the British Empire, the importation of indentured laborers from both China and India created the conditions for the independence movement that would arise in the wake of the Second World War. This arrival of indentured laborers, beginning in 1838, resulted from a labor shortage brought on by the abolition of slavery. Due to the availability of arable land, formerly enslaved peoples were able to eke out a subsistence existence. Coupled with the relatively small population, this contributed to an acute labor shortage as the deadline to full abolition loomed.


28 Diana Paton's account of this process historicizes the ways in which the narrative of “apprenticeship” obscures the role that violence and coercion played in the transition from slave labor to wage labor in colonial Jamaica. See: Diana Paton, *No Bond But the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780–1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

29 The first Indian indentured laborers, known as “Gladstone's Coolies,” arrived in Demerara-Essequibo in 1838, the same year that slavery was formally abolished, and dramatically changed the labor and social context of the colony. See: Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 4–6.
Welcomed by British and Portuguese planters, the influx of indentured laborers lowered wages, stoking tensions between extant African communities and the Indian and Chinese newcomers. Harsh regulations on the movements of Indian laborers relegated them to the plantations upon which they worked, far from population centers. Coupled with repressive labor practices, this geographic marginalization laid the foundation of a distinct Indo-Guyanese identity despite endogenous religious and social differences. By 1946, British Guiana's population was approximately 375,700, of which 143,000 (38.2%) were of African origin and 163,000 (43.5%) were of East Indian origin. Thus, unlike Jamaica, Barbados, or Hispaniola, British Guiana's African-descended population were an ethnic minority by the early twentieth century. In turn, rivalries among these communities, especially over

30 By the time this labor trade ended eight decades later, nearly 342,000 indentured laborers had been transported to British Guiana, largely from the region around Kolkatta (Calcutta) in the state of Bengal. According to Meleisa Ono-George, some 30,000 Chinese laborers also emigrated beginning in the 1850s, but had different kinds of contracts than those from the Indian subcontinent. See: Meleisa Ono-George, “‘Coolies’, Containment, and Resistance: The Indentured System in British Guiana” Manuscript in possession of author; Rhoda Reddock, “Freedom Denied: Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago, 1845–1917,” Economic and Political Weekly, (1985): 79–87.

31 According to Ono-George, Indian laborers were contractually obliged to live within two miles of the plantation upon which they worked, a fact which she argues contributed to the insular nature of Indo-Guyanese communities. In addition, there were ethnic conflicts within communities Indian indentured laborers as the majority (83%) of Indian indentured laborers were Hindu, but a sizable minority (17%) were Muslim. Caste and gender conflicts were also common, as many more men than women arrived in British Guiana, leading to reports of rape, forced marriage, and strong resistance to interracial relationships. Unlike the importation of African slaves, indentured laborers, while not free and often impressed into service, were allowed to maintain their languages and cultures, forced to settle with others from their communities of origin. Thus, while Guyana's African minority experienced the kind of cultural loss that characterized African enslavement elsewhere in the Americas, the Indo-Guyanese majority maintained a more cohesive cultural and social fabric. See: Walter Rodney, A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881–1905, 191–192.

32 British Guiana in 1946 was also approximately 10% Amerindians and 2% Chinese immigrants. The remaining 8% were Portuguese and British, who controlled much of the sugar trade.

33 Perhaps the only Caribbean nation whose demographics approach the unique breakdown that Guyana has is Trinidad, which saw a similar influx of Indian indentured laborers in the 1840s, as desperate sugar planters turned to indentured labor as slavery was formally abolished. However, Trinidad only imported about half the number of Indian laborers that Guiana did and they were never a majority in the island nation. See: Rodney, A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881–1905, 16–17.
settlement and access to arable land, made organizing resistance to colonial rule difficult for the first generation of independence activists in the early twentieth century. However, in the aftermath of World War II, leaders in the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese communities tentatively put aside their differences and collaborated on the shared goal of ending British rule.

As in the majority of the empire's colonial holdings, British Guiana was conscripted into the war effort following Britain's declaration of war on Germany in 1939, a fact that directly contributed to the post-war independence movement. Economic hardships and propaganda emphasized how the war against the Axis Powers was a "War for Democracy," and, following the war's ending, a new generation of young nationalists sought to broker a tentative peace between the ethnic groups in order to challenge the dominant white minority. Among those who rose to prominence following the war were the Indo-Guyanese politician Cheddi Jagan (b. 1918) and Afro-Guyanese labor leader Linden Forbes Burnham (b. 1923), both of whom would go on to become significant figures in the nation's transition from colony to independent state. Educated in Guyana, both men traveled abroad for advanced degrees and, upon their return to British Guiana in the late 1940s, led a political

34 Despite an initial economic downturn due to reductions in Atlantic shipping, major infrastructure projects were undertaken by British and American companies developed the rich bauxite deposits in the country which were then tapped to serve the U.S. aluminum industry. British Guiana also became a major transshipment point for soldiers and war materials destined for North Africa. Following the signing of a treaty with the United States, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began construction of Atkinson Field, a major air base South of the capital of Georgetown, which would later be used for reconnaissance flights and anti-submarine warfare in the Atlantic Theater. Though only a handful of Guianese men served combat roles in the British armed forces, the war's impact on the colony's economy and social conditions shared many similarities other colonial polities in Africa and Asia. At the war's end, nearly all of the industry was foreign owned, the commodities the nation did produce were subject to the fluctuations of a world market or easily made too expensive by items shipped in from abroad. See: Rodney, A History of the Guyanese Working People, 122.
unification of the colony's non-white ethnic groups under the mantle of the People's Progressive Party (PPP).\(^{35}\) That party's platform promised to put aside the divisive racialism fostered by the sugar industry and colonial government in order to concentrate on winning independence from colonial rule.

Formed on 1 January 1950, Cheddi Jagan was chosen as the PPP's leader and Burnham its chairman, a deliberate power-sharing agreement designed to ensure that no single ethnic group had full control of the party.\(^{36}\) For a time, the scheme worked. By welding together the political activism of the nation's two largest ethnic groups, the PPP's surging popularity forced the British to reluctantly agree to begin the process of independence. A national election was organized in 1953 and the PPP won an important victory, but celebrations were short-lived. Despite the fact that British Guiana was one of the most isolated and neglected regions of the British Empire, reports of Soviet interest in the region, provided by U.S. intelligence agencies, prompted British Prime Minister MacMillian to send British troops to the colony and suspend the newly approved constitution. Another election was proposed for 1957, but during the interim the relationship between Burnham and Jagan soured. Jagan, along with his American-born wife Janet Rosenberg Jagan,

\(^{35}\) Jagan was born in the rural village of Port Mourant in Berbice and Burnham was born in Kitty, a suburb of the colony's capital, Georgetown. Both men attended Queen's College in Georgetown and, like Makonnen and James before them, left the colony to pursue advanced degrees. Jagan went to the United States and sought a four-year degree in dentistry and Burnham pursued Economics in the U.K. Both men were politically active, Jagan at Howard University and later Northwestern in the United States and Burnham at the London School of Economics. There Burnham joined the small cadre of Anglophone colonial students, including Barbados's Errol Barrow and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, in protesting British imperialism and the slow pace of decolonization. See: Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People*, 144–146.

expressed a more strident anti-capitalist, socialist stance in the face of the U.S. overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and the ongoing insurrection against the Cuban government of Fulgencio Batista. Publicly, Burnham articulated a more moderate approach, supporting British and U.S. anti-communist efforts in the Caribbean and refraining from overt support for the Cuban revolutionaries. For the State Department and the Foreign Ministry, Burnham appeared to embody Prime Minister Winston Churchill's self-satisfied assertion that, when it came to British Guiana, their “anti-Colonialism will be more than balanced out by their anti-Communism.”

The subsequent split in the PPP—Burnham broke off to form the People's National Congress (PNC)—left Jagan in charge of the PPP, a fact that President Kennedy perceived as an imminent threat to U.S. interests in the Caribbean basin. Believing that Jagan was working closely with the Soviet Union and threatened by the possibility of another Caribbean nation forging close ties with Moscow, the CIA pushed the United Kingdom to work closely with conservative National Democratic Party (NDP), led by business magnate Peter D'Aguiar, and Burnham's PNC. After a series of elections in 1961, 1963, 1964, and 1966, the PPP was pushed into the minority and, by 1966, Burnham's PNC held a firm

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38 Diplomatic historian Stephen Rabe has documented this history in more detail, examining how the Kennedy and Johnson administrations used the CIA to ensure that Jagan lost the election (despite winning a majority) and “our man in Georgetown” (aka Forbes Burnham) was Prime Minister when Guyana declared independence in 1966. See: Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).
majority of seats in parliament.\footnote{Following the 1961 election and a narrow victory for the PPP, the PNC was awarded more seats, resulting in widespread interracial violence between Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese groups. Jagan, however, became Premier. See: John Bland, “Leftist Parties Easily Sweep to Control of British Guiana Legislature in Election: Freedom Demand Expected 80 Per Cent Vote,” The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959–1973); Washington, D.C. 23 August; Bois, 1961, B5.} On 26 May 1966, the British government approved the formation of the independent state of Guyana and declared Burnham the Prime Minister, a move which marginalized the already weakened PPP and prompted the Jagans to retreat into exile. The honeymoon with Burnham, however, was short-lived. Within a year of independence, Burnham began to make overtures to the Soviet Bloc for aid and, after elections in 1968, established formal relations with Cuba and Eastern Bloc nations while articulating a Third World position in international affairs.\footnote{Accusations of voter fraud were rampant during this election, with Jagan and D’Aguilar claiming irregularities, intimidation, and miscounting. See: Rabe, U.S. Intervention in British Guiana, 65.}

Following the contested 1968 electoral victory, Burnham crafted a new constitution, implemented in 1970, that declared Guyana a “cooperative republic” with two primary goals: the elimination of the “colonial mentality” and the promotion of “self-help economic development program[s] based on a national system of cooperative ventures.”\footnote{Maidenberg, H.J. “Guyana Proclaimed a Republic; Ties with British Crown Broken Special to The New York Times” New York Times, New York, NY, Feb 1970, 3.} Arguments in favor of Guyanese self-sufficiency, agricultural and industrial modernization became a mainstay of party-funded newspapers and pamphlets. Burnham also proclaimed his support for Black Power Movements in the United States and elsewhere. At the same time, the PNC began the suppression of opposition parties leading to a de facto one-party state.\footnote{Between 1970 and Burnham’s death in 1985, the PNC successively increased its majority in the Guyanese Parliament, a result of rigged elections. During the 1970s and 1980s, the PPP providing limited support for Burnham’s policies. In response to this stalemate, Guyanese intellectual and activist Walter Rodney organized the Working People’s Alliance in 1974. The party was intended to counter to the status quo and...
saw industrial and agricultural development as key facets of his envisioned national self-sufficiency project, but he recognized the necessity of an ideological framework. As Guyanese-born artist Bernadette Persaud recalled, “Burnham had his eye on scholars and intellectuals,” which she intimated he used as a means to legitimize his administration and his nation-building project.43

Burnham of Guyana

Despite the fact that Burnham's electoral victory was the result of intervention by the CIA and British Intelligence, his proclamation of the Guyanese Cooperative Republic and his embrace of Black Power inspired support from men and women from throughout the African Diaspora. Mayfield, who confessed that he knew little of the nation prior to his visit in 1971, quickly emerged as one of its most vocal advocates. Uneasy with ongoing racial violence and with misgivings about how Burnham would achieve his stated goals, Mayfield nevertheless threw himself into the tasks assigned to him by the Minister of Information and Culture upon his appointment in December 1971. In his unpublished biography on Forbes Burnham, Mayfield noted with frustration that “[n]ation-builders cannot manufacture history of the kind that will prepare their people for the disciplined march towards a new society.”44 However, as his work in Guyana demonstrated, he was nonetheless up to the challenge.

was the result of an alliance between the Working People's Vanguard Party, the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA), the Indian Political Revolutionary Associates and Ratoon (an Indo-Guyanese working-class party). Despite becoming an official political party in 1979, the party did not run in the 1980 election, following the June assassination of Rodney. See: Nohlen, D (2005) Elections in the Americas: A data handbook, Volume I (New York; Oxford University Press, 2005), 363.


44 Mayfield, Burnham of Guyana draft manuscript, 42. According to correspondence, Mayfield began the book in early 1972, shortly after his arrival in the country. The book was supposed to be published by Paula.
In spite of his decision to work closely as a member of the Ministry of Information and Culture's staff, he remained convinced that “Forbes Burnham has an uphill fight on his hands if he seriously intends to get Guyana moving.”

Burnham's offer of sanctuary for black radicals emerged at the same moment when governments throughout North America and the Caribbean began to disrupt Black Power Movements, persecuting and sometimes murdering activists who challenged state power. In offering these men and women asylum, however, Burnham would sow the seeds of his fall from grace from the minds of Afro-Diasporic radicals.

Though he believed that Burnham had demonstrated a certain sincerity as the leader of a revolutionary nation-state by supporting Cuba's intervention in Angola, providing financial support for revolutionary groups which opposed white minority governments in South Africa and South Rhodesia, and in his membership in the non-aligned movement, two other factors had a great influence his decision to relocate to Guyana in November 1971.

The first was the memory Ghana, which would inform his observations and actions during

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Giddings at Howard University Press the following year, but disagreements between Mayfield and his editor over the focus of the book led to multiple delays and rewrites and the book was never published.

45 Mayfield, Burnham of Guyana, 43.

46 The Black Power uprisings in Trinidad and Tobago the previous year, which had been the response to the police killing of an unarmed protestor, resulted in the proclamation of a state of emergency by then-Prime Minister Eric Williams. Subsequent strikes and mutinies lead Williams to propose a new “Public Order Act” that would drastically curtail civil liberties, but the bill was never passed. In Jamaica, the 1968 disturbances known as the “Rodney Riots” (after Guyanese-born scholar-activist Walter Rodney) were the result of nearly two decades of suppression of black nationalist movements, which the government of Hugh Shearer (and his predecessor Alexander Bustamante) saw as inherently subversive. Rodney would later be expelled from Jamaica for his role in the uprisings. Other challenges to established governments occurred in Bermuda, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Curaçao as young Afro-Caribbeans rejected policies in response to calls for black liberation elsewhere in the hemisphere and the world. See: Black Power in the Caribbean. Edited by Kate Quinn (Gainesville, FL; University Press of Florida, 2014).
his time in Georgetown. The other was the budding relationship with a young Guyanese woman whom he had met during his September visit.

In a letter to Joan Cambridge from September, shortly after his return to the United States, Mayfield declared, “[y]ou are the greatest distraction, I think if I hadn't had things to do back here [in the United States], I wouldn't have left Georgetown.” Expressing his desire to purchase land in Guyana, he inquired as to the feasibility of this plan, inviting Cambridge to write back.47 Cambridge did not reply to Mayfield until late October, a fact that made Mayfield anxious about his plans to relocate. “Your letter saved my life,” he wrote her as he expressed his delight that she had not left the country. “I have been very changed since I returned here,” the letter continued, pledging his love to Cambridge and articulating his desire to learn from her about Guyana and to work with her upon his arrival.48 Having been assured of a position in the Ministry of Information and Culture, Mayfield encouraged her to stay in Guyana and continue her previous work with the ministry, outlining projects he was already devising prior to his arrival. “[I]f one was going to revamp radio, he would need a pool of information about Guyanese culture . . . this would require bringing in a group of experts. The evaluation of this material would be up to people like yourself,” he wrote Cambridge.49

Ghana also informed his expectations and plans for Guyana and his correspondence echoed his concerns about the dialectics of Afro-Diasporic relationships. As he had in

47 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Joan Cambridge, 24 September 1971, SCH, JMP, Box 1, Folder 4, 1.
48 Ibid., 2.
49 Ibid., 1.
“Ghanaian Sketches,” Mayfield noted that in Guyana it was not just “the attitude of Great American Chauvinism” which threatened the relationship between the Guyanese citizens and Afro expatriates, but a deep resentment, “because [Afros] are seen as a threat . . . unlike the Whites, these Blacks from the industrialized nations have usually come to stay.”\(^50\) In spite of his own status as an expatriate worker who planned to settle permanently, he cautioned that, “the hiring of expatriates is both delicate and dangerous.”\(^51\) Laudatory of Burnham's domestic political instincts, he expressed reservations about the Prime Minister's choice of political appointments.

Recalling his experience with corrupt ministers in Nkrumah's government, he reasoned these were the growing pains of newly-independent nations. “Small nations saddled with a parliamentary system left over from the colonial regime begin their independence with a severe handicap,” he wrote, connecting the parliamentary politics imposed by the United Kingdom to the subsequent political turmoil of the mid-1960s between the political parties headed by Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham.\(^52\) Despite these concerns, Mayfield saw in Burnham a dedicated, hard-working leader who was unafraid of “getting his hands dirty,” a fact which even inspired him to consider purchasing a piece of land and even try his hand at farming.\(^53\)

\(^{50}\) Mayfield, *Burnham of Guyana*, 64.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 63.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 79.

\(^{53}\) Mayfield's use of this phrase was deliberate, as he argued that Burnham was, at heart, a farmer. In *Burnham of Guyana* he described how the Prime Minister worked his own farm, where he grew cassava, potatoes, and beans. Burnham also favored horseback riding and fishing over more hedonistic pursuits, though he was known to drink rum on the campaign trail. This, Mayfield argued, also influenced Burnham's politics. Unlike Kwame Nkrumah, who “was a sucker for almost any proposed publishing project,” Burnham “did
Julian Mayfield may have doubted Guyana's ability to achieve the goals Burnham had set for the nation, but writings indicate that he had little doubt about the Prime Minister's sincerity. The Burnham government had, in 1970, pledged “to feed, clothe and house the nation by 1976,” and Mayfield wrote of this effort that, “it is expected that nearly 100,000 new jobs will be opened up, especially in construction” as a result of this effort.\(^5\) Mayfield regularly challenged many of the government's vocal critics—in particular Burnham's former PNC ally and Mayfield’s acquaintance in Ghana, Eusi Kwayana—rebutting their arguments publicly.

Kwayana not only criticized Burnham for taking credit for his ideas, asserting that “the Cooperative Republic, an idea born with ASCRIA, has been coopted and sabotaged by the PNC,” but declared that the Prime Minister's pan-Africanist sloganeering was little more than hollow rhetoric.\(^5\) Beyond Guyana's borders, Burnham's investment in the Ministry's propaganda effort bore fruit. By 1971, the state was regularly heralded by Caribbean and African radicals as both a haven for pan-African thought and a nation on the cusp of a radical transformation. Though he was successful at promoting Guyana as a sanctuary for not possess a keen news sense. His thing is construction and farming. Go to him with a plan to form a cooperative in either of these areas, or even to set up your own farm, and you have got his support.” See: Ibid., 102–103.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 96.

\(^{55}\) ASCRIA was acronym for the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa, a grassroots movement founded by Kwayana in the early 1960s. In its first incarnation, as the separatist African Society for Racial Equality (ASRE), the organization promoted the partition of Guyana into three sections: an African section, an Indian section, and one section that was mixed. The failure of this scheme to gain traction among the populace inspired Kwayana to found ASCRIA, which served as a cultural front for the PNC. See: Eusi Kwayana, “Burnhamism, Jaganism, and the People of Guyana” The Black Scholar 4, no. 8/9 (May–June 1973): 42–43.
Afro expatriates, he soon had political trouble with many of the Afro expatriates who sought sanctuary there. Rhetoric and reality, as Mayfield would note, did not always align in Guyana.

Appointed to a position in the Ministry of Information and Culture, Mayfield soon began to identify and offer solutions to the multitude of problems that he saw present in Guyana. Impressed by Burnham's commitment to self-reliance and self-sufficiency as well as his explicit concern for the attitudes and perspectives of Guyanese citizens, Mayfield embraced his position as a writer in the Publications Division and his archive is replete with informed analyses of the state of political, social, and racial discourse within the country.

Touting autarky and self-reliance in the “cooperative republic,” Burnham sought sovereignty in political, cultural, and economic affairs. For his part, Mayfield was hopeful that Guyana would offer both the belonging he sought, the radical socioeconomic changes that Burnham promised, and a space for Afro-Diasporic solidarity to grow and flourish.56

While he began his time researching public attitudes and perceptions of Guyana abroad, he believed only the state apparatus offered a means to effect change on both national and international levels. Already experienced in rhetorical nation-building and the application of print and radio media to influence the public, Mayfield accepted the political limitations that Burnham imposed and argued in favor of the steps the Prime Minister took to marginalize the opposition which challenged his plans. In particular, Mayfield saw in Burnham's rhetoric and his political activities a serious concern for addressing the problems of post-colonial rule he had witnessed firsthand in Ghana. Burnham's cooperative socialism, Mayfield argued, provided a template for the ways in which the nation could become a self-

sufficient, which would, in turn, lead to the kind of sovereignty as yet unrealized.

Recognizing the contradictions of Burnham's Guyanese nationalism and Pan-Africanism, Mayfield reasoned that, of the two, the former had more potential for success.

**The Nation and the Pan-African Ideal**

In an article published in *The Black Scholar* in July–August 1973, Julian Mayfield dismissed the “pan-African ideal” as an idea whose time had passed, as hollow and non-existent as the ideals of integration that had dominated the United States in the 1960s. The “pan-African Ideal, allowed dissidents and African American expatriates to believe that, “because I am a black man, the moment I set foot on soil anywhere in the world controlled by black men, I am as free as any citizen to come and go as I want, and to propagate whatever I wish.” The letter, a response to an earlier missive by Eusi Kwayana, considered the inherent limitations faced by political refugees who sought sanctuary within sovereign nations. Mayfield implored readers to recognize that national sovereignty required careful parsing of local political situations, much as he had urged a previous generation of travelers that Afro-Diasporic travel demanded cultural and social sensitivity. Political refugees, he asserted, “any country in the world live there at the sufferance of whatever government is in power. In reality, they have no rights, although governments vary in the degree of privileges they allow aliens.”\(^{57}\) In prioritizing national sovereignty within a nation-state which attracted expatriates specifically because of its embrace of the “pan-African ideal,” Julian Mayfield captured one of the most abiding contradictions of Burnham's nation-building project in Guyana, one that would later contribute to his decision to leave in 1974.

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Mayfield's response to Kwayana reflected the ongoing debate over nationalism within the contours of pan-Africanism, in which the nationalist projects of Africa, Asia, and Latin America saw in transnational, pan-African activism a threat to their own sovereignty and capital accumulation schemes. Much as he had seen Ghana's sovereignty as key to a “United States of Africa,” Mayfield believed that Guyanese sovereignty and national development superseded the transnational freedom dreams of “the Pan-African Ideal.”

Having by then spent two years in Guyana, Mayfield's work with the Ministry of Information and Culture informed this conclusion, and defined his objectives in that position, both as an employee of the government, but also as an expatriate worker with firsthand experience of a previous nation-building project. First and foremost, he argued, the people of Guyana needed to be united in support of their own national project before pan-Africanism could be realized in practice. Foregrounding national coherence as a core component of black liberation, Mayfield's comments reflected Feelings' dismissal of the armchair critics of the “scholarly left.”

This emphasis on Guyana's domestic politics, public opinion, and support for the Burnham government was vital to the mission that Burnham had laid out in his 1970 proclamation of the Guyanese Cooperative Republic. However, it was not a new idea. During the negotiations on the formation of a West Indian Federation in 1958, Burnham explained to fellow delegates in Port of Spain, Trinidad, that “the largeness, or power or importance of a nation is not calculated merely by acreage or square miles,” but, more importantly, “there are the human resources which are so important in reckoning the

importance of the nation.” Critics of Burnham have argued that his populist rhetoric obscured his overriding desire to establish his own political legitimacy. In a 1989 essay, PNC member and professor of political science Festus Brotherson, Jr. characterized Burnham's policies as a Machiavellian pursuit of legitimacy. “The country's foreign policy was not crafted over the years to serve the objective national interest,” Brotherson wrote, “rather, the overriding objective . . . was to do abroad what it had failed to do at home: i.e., to establish legitimacy.” Simply put, Brotherson characterized Guyana's foreign policy under Burnham as “determin[ing] the national interest,” as opposed to the national interest guiding foreign policy. Subsequent interpretations of Guyanese political history have not substantively challenged this critique, as scholars have been almost uniformly critical of Burnham's obsession with foreign policy and the elections held organized to legitimize his rule.

The substantial resources that Burnham invested in the Ministry of Information and Culture lends credence to this position. This ministry was well-funded and staffed, indicating Burnham's commitment to convincing Guyana's 700,000 citizens that their labor and difficult economic position in service of the nation's cooperative republic was ultimately necessary. Embracing print and radio as the means to convince the population of its role in Guyana's nation-building project, men and women like Julian Mayfield and Joan Cambridge


61 Julian Mayfield, “Guyana Public Relations Abroad,” SCH, JMP, Box 34, Folder 21, 2.
came to play significant roles in articulating Burnham's vision for a modern Guyana. Julian Mayfield's archive provides an overview of what that vision was, as numerous notes and drafts of speeches with his annotations offer his own take on the Prime Minister's language and arguments. As a Communications Specialist and later Special Advisor to the Prime Minister in the Ministry of Information and Culture, Julian Mayfield took his job—and his proximity to power—seriously.

Within three months of his arrival, Mayfield had defined what he saw as the most significant stumbling blocks to the full realization of the “cooperative socialism” that Burnham was attempting to build in Guyana: the attitudes of the people. In a confidential memo dated February 1972 that Mayfield presented to both the Minister of Information, Elvin McDavid, and the Prime Minister, he wrote that the common image of the nation abroad was “backward, no future, corruption, no money, [and] no jobs.” The proximate causes of these negative images were a lack of accurate information, sensationalized news reports, and, “particularly among Guyanese, [a] loss of sentiment.”

As long as Guyana's citizens remained convinced that the United States and the United Kingdom were superior to their own nation, Mayfield believed, the construction of a modern, self-sufficient, and sovereign nation-state would remain beyond their grasp. There existed only one solution: to impress upon people the importance of their task and the possibility of its successful completion. To address this, Mayfield proposed a radical reorganization of the primary focus of the Ministry of Information and Culture in order to “to improve Guyanese pride in Guyana.” In doing so, he took on a familiar role, aggressively utilizing modern media to support and argue in favor of the policies and continued power of
the regime in service of building a nation that would serve the interests of black peoples worldwide.\textsuperscript{62}

Beginning in 1972, with this proposal to reorganize the Ministry of Information and Culture, and ending in December of 1974 when he returned to the United States for medical leave, Julian Mayfield devoted his daytime hours in Georgetown to researching, parsing, promoting, and perfecting the messages emanating from the Ministry of Information and Culture. Having met Joan Cambridge on his first visit in September 1971, the couple were married in a small ceremony in the summer of 1972.\textsuperscript{63} Together, they took the lead in promoting the celebration of African heritage in the Caribbean (CARIFESTA ’72), organized a response to the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar-es-Salaam in 1974, and promoted Burnham's unique brand of agricultural and industrial autarky in a number of formats.\textsuperscript{64} Mayfield also remembered all too well how Kwame Nkrumah had been undermined not by an invading force, but from within his own government and he was


\textsuperscript{63} Though Cordero and Mayfield had agreed on a divorce in 1966 when Mayfield was in Ibiza and Mayfield had apparently signed and notarized the papers there, when he decided to marry Cambridge he learned that he was still technically married to Cordero. After an exchange of letters, the couple agreed to divorce and documents in Mayfield’s archive that this was carried out in Georgetown in late June 1972. Aside from a few letters in which Mayfield makes mention of his interest in Cambridge to friends, his archive does not contain much material about their relationship or their courtship. In a 1972 letter related to their divorce, Mayfield announces his intention to marry Cambridge to Cordero, but it is unclear exactly when their wedding took place. I have contacted Ms. Cambridge several times, but have not yet had the chance to speak with her as she continues to live, work, and travel in the interior of Guyana. See: “Mayfield vs. Mayfield,” 28 June 1972, SCH, JMP, Box 1, Folder 3, 1; I am indebted to Sandy Placido for providing documents from Dr. Cordero’s archive, including letters from 4 September 1966 and 12 April 1972, Papers of Ana Livia Cordero, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

\textsuperscript{64} Mayfield’s article has multiple proposals by him and Cambridge for projects as diverse as a documentary film on CARIFESTA ’72 (an art and culture festival held in Georgetown), lesson plans for public schools, and the quarterly journal, \textit{New Nation International}, which Mayfield modeled after \textit{The African Review}, founded in Accra in 1965. See: Julian Mayfield Papers, Box 32, Box 33.
determined that Burnham's ability to carry out his plan for self-sufficiency would not suffer the same fate.

Navigating the politics of race and class Guyana, the relationship between foreign capital and domestic production, and familiar problems facing a post-colonial nation, Mayfield's archive indicates a sincere commitment to both Burnham and the tenets of “Burnhamism.” Within a year, Mayfield was promoted to a senior advisor and began to work closely with Burnham in crafting and editing speeches, public pronouncements of ideology, and formal press releases. At the same time, he regularly contributed articles and statements to government-controlled newspapers, celebrating his outsider's perspective and offering his own radical interpretation of world events as well as analyses of the impact of such economic and political issues on Guyana. The result of this work is a rich archive of material which offers insight into the machinations of the Guyanese government's programs and the ways in which Mayfield and Burnham intended its policies to be received by citizens of the nation and of the broader African Diaspora.

Dismantling “Booker's Guyana”

Having recognized the ways in which public sentiment and foreign influence worked in opposition to Burnham's objectives for the realization of self-sufficiency of the cooperative republic, Mayfield's writing indicates the ways in which he attempted to undermine this influence and its effect on the public. For a country as small and vulnerable to foreign market fluctuations and policies as Guyana, the fact that Burnham emphasized the connection between foreign policy and domestic conditions was based in no small part on the fact that such policies were often impossible to disentangle from one another. Domestic agricultural production, for example, languished due in part to the cheap cost of imported
food. Domestic manufacturing faced similar hurdles. The fact that foreign companies owned much of the most fertile agricultural land, potential industrial sites, and import-export business meant that domestic policies could not be disentangled from the whims of foreign firms and governments. As Mayfield wrote in his biographical treatment of Forbes Burnham, *Burnham of Guyana*, the fact that there existed a division between “foreign” policy and “domestic” policy, while a handy critique for political scientists’ perspective, did not accurately convey that conditions facing Guyana.

As a small nation where most arable land had, until recently, been used to produce sugarcane for processing and export, Mayfield wrote extensively about Burnham's obsession with making the nation agriculturally and industrially self-sufficient. In a 1972 speech about the budget, edited by Mayfield, Burnham emphasized the ways in which reducing the Guyanese dependence on imported food was fundamentally related to their sovereignty. “There is no need . . . for us to continue to import peanuts after the 31st of December 1972, nor carrots, nor tin fruits, nor jams or jellies,” the Prime Minister intoned before his ministers. In addition to these items, Burnham argued that the nation imported $1.8 million USD of Irish potatoes and nearly as much English peas, but could, with the proper agricultural investments in drainage and land, produce those items domestically.

The major stumbling block to these plans, however, was that Guyana's arable, coastal land was largely split between the British-owned firms of Booker Sugar Estates Limited, Jessels Holdings, and Tate and Lyle, the former of which was a majority holders of

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importing, shipping, and retail concerns. Despite the nationalization of 15 of the 18 extant sugar plantations in 1970, foreign firms retained their control over imported foodstuffs that were cheaper to purchase than to produce domestic alternatives. Foreign policy with Britain, Ireland, the United States, and other major exporting nations was thus inseparable from domestic agricultural, industrial, and social policy. This fact Mayfield emphasized in speeches and talks he wrote or edited for Burnham and reiterated in *Burnham of Guyana*.

In addition to speeches and newspaper columns, Mayfield worked closely with Elvin McDavid, the Minister of Information and Culture, in curating Burnham's speeches and discourse into ideological documents that laid out the tenets of “Burnhamism.” Often echoing Mayfield's previous disagreements with orthodox communists in the United States and in Africa (See Chapter 3), extracts titled “The Ideology of our Party” emphasized the ways that the “cooperative socialism” of Guyana was profoundly misunderstood in part

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66 Booker Sugar Estates Limited was founded in 1834 as Booker Brothers & Co. by George, Josias, and Richard Booker. In 1815, shortly after the Demerara colony was claimed by the British, Josias Booker took a job managing a cotton plantation and, seeing potential in sugar cultivation, invited his brothers to invest in a sugar plantation in the colony. In 1834 the brothers purchased their first ship in order to transport their product across the Atlantic. Through a series of advantageous purchases and marriages, the Booker family controlled most of the sugar plantations in Guyana and, by the end of the nineteenth century, the company, now named Booker, McConnell Ltd, controlled large estate holdings in Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, Nigeria, Canada, India, and British East Africa. By the mid-twentieth century, Booker and its subsidiaries controlled 75% of the sugar industry in Guyana, in addition to cattle ranching, wholesale shipping, and retail sale of consumer goods. Their influence in the colony was so great that the term “Booker's Guiana” was often used to highlight their power. Following the formation of the Guyanese Cooperative Republic in 1970, most of Booker's holdings in Guyana were nationalized, though by 1971, Burnham quietly re-hired many former estate managers in order to run the plantations more efficiently. In 1968, Booker, McConnell Ltd began sponsoring a literary prize, now known as the Man Booker Prize, which awards winners a sum of £50,000 each year. See: Natalie Hopkinson, “The Booker Prize's Bad History” *New York Times*, 17 October 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/17/opinion/man-booker-bad-history.html> Accessed 2 May 2018.

67 Following the appropriation of its massive sugar holdings, Booker retained its presence in mundane aspects of Guyanese society. Mayfield's archive contains numerous invoices from retailers, storage facilities, and other businesses identifying them as Booker subsidiaries. See: Julian Mayfield Papers, SCH, JMP, Box 32, for examples, including documents from "Bookers Stores Limited" and “Bookers Storage.”
because it came from African-descended peoples. The authors of these documents argued that Burnham's vision was criticized in Western media because it did not fit the European "compartments," favoring policies that addressed the specific material needs of Guyana.\textsuperscript{68}

As Mayfield noted in a document he edited, when Europeans and North Americans believe that a given politics is communist, "they put you into the Communist compartment, assuming that you are a number of monkeys and that your greatest ability lies in mimicry and copying . . . [that] you believe in everything that is happening in the Soviet Union."\textsuperscript{69} The problem, Mayfield wrote, was that "socialism has got so many meanings" that it did not fit into the classification schemes that social scientists and politicians had constructed and, thus, it was profoundly misunderstood.

Curating the ideological tenets of "Burnhamism," however, was not what solidified Julian Mayfield's respect of the Prime Minister. Rather, it was the ways that Burnham eschewed ideological discourse in favor of plain speaking about tactics, strategy, and policy. He wrote at length about Burnham's dogged campaigning during parliamentary elections and how he would take a retinue of ministers and journalists through dozens of sleepy villages that dotted the coast of Demerara and Berbice, stopping to sip rum and inquire about local

\textsuperscript{68} It is unclear to what extent Mayfield contributed to these documents. While drafts exist with marginalia written in his handwriting, the cadence of the documents reflects Burnham's speech patterns more so than Mayfield's. In some cases, multiple copies of these documents exist in Mayfield's archive with annotations and edits indicating that he revised them. In other cases, handwritten notes by Mayfield are affixed to the typed documents indicating how they are to be printed and distributed. My research suggests that Mayfield's role in these documents was that of an editor and researcher, working alongside Joan Cambridge and other staff at the Ministry of Information and Culture to prepare them for distribution to PNC Party conferences and government meetings. While he might not have composed them, he clearly contributed to their construction in substantive ways.

\textsuperscript{69} Julian Mayfield, "The Ideology of Our Party: The Leader Extract Part III," Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 33, Folder 8, 9.
issues. Commenting on Burnham’s stamina, as well as his ability to remember the names and problems of the people he encountered on this campaign trail, Mayfield was also struck by “his ability to organize the most complex ideas and present them to his constituents in simple terms which are not condescending.”

Likening Burnham to both Nkrumah and Castro, Mayfield saw in Burnham’s frenetic politicking a genuine concern for the welfare of Guyanese peoples.

Along with this sincere concern, Mayfield noted a disquieting paternalism in the Prime Minister’s interactions with citizens of Guyana. During one campaign trip in January of 1973, Mayfield recalled that Burnham and his entourage stopped in a sleepy village on the East Coast of Demerara. In a crowded rum shop, Burnham spied a young man attempting to sneak out without being noticed. “Why the hell aren't you at Kuru Kuru,” the Prime Minister asked the young man, “[w]hat are you doing here in a rumshop at this time of day?” The young man complained that “that fork propuh hard to turn,” in Guyanese creole, which Mayfield translated as, “it is hard to plow the earth up there.” Burnham responded with a rude comment and exited the shop.

In the following pages, Mayfield notes that not only did Burnham know the young man, but the government had a file on him, demonstrating both a level of personal involvement that the leader had with his citizens and an uncomfortable level of paternalism. The man, Jack, had been a petty criminal whose activities had landed him in Buxton jail. Seeking his freedom, he wrote numerous letters to the Prime Minister, and “literally wrote

70 Mayfield, Burnham of Guyana, 39.

71 Ibid., 98–99.
his way out of jail,” plagiarizing poetry, verse, and songs in the process.\textsuperscript{72} Despite Burnham’s ability to “spot a rogue a mile away,” the Prime Minister intervened with Jack’s case, promising to release him if he went into farming.

According to Mayfield, Burnham secured twenty acres, known locally as Kuru Kuru, and sent Jack to farm black eyed peas and cassava. That Jack was now sitting in a rumshop, complaining about the difficulties of tilling the soil, angered Burnham. “Jack is like thousands of other young men and women who come out of the public schools yearly,” Mayfield wrote, “they are insulted to be offered anything but clerical work,” despite the lack of jobs in that area. “Somebody must produce,” Mayfield concluded, “and in agricultural Guyana, this means farming and related industry.”\textsuperscript{73}

Jack’s story highlighted the thematic focus of Julian Mayfield’s work for the Ministry of Information and Culture. In pointing out the structural issues of post-colonial Guyana—poverty, lack of industry, and unemployment—Mayfield’s writing combined a Marxian analysis of the conditions and a Gramscian critique of the ways in which predominant cultural forces undermined the nation's modernization process. \textit{Burnham of Guyana} contains several anecdotes like Jack’s in which the Prime Minister personally intervened in a young person’s life to give them an opportunity, only to be rejected when that person refused to perform the necessary labor to turn that opportunity into a means of sustaining themselves.

In declaring Guyana a “cooperative republic” in 1970, Burnham had emphasized the elimination of the “colonial mentality” as a top priority. For Mayfield, this rejection of

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 99.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 101–102.
farming and agricultural work by young people who favored bourgeois pursuits was evidence that the nation had far to go. Mayfield cited the prevalence of foreign media as part of the problem, going so far as to argue against the introduction of broadcast television to the country due to the negative effects such visual displays of wealth and colonial power would have on the mentalities of the people of Guyana.74 Despite this concern for the “colonial mentality,” revolution was not an abstract concept for Mayfield. Instead, it was a series of practical actions undertaken by a population which involved labor, shared sacrifice, and unity of goals. Much like his arguments in Ghana, he emphasized in press releases and newspaper articles that he wrote and edited, “you must get involved in the revolution on a practical level.”75

Practical Revolution

As he had in Ghana, one of Mayfield’s practical contributions to nation-building often forced him to serve as a liaison between the black radicals who sought refuge in then nation and the government. In January 1972, he wrote a letter to Prime Minister Burnham...

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74 The undated memo, addressed to Minister Elvin McDavid argued that, “[t]elevision for Guyana would be dangerous because (1) a small, relatively poor nation embarked on a genuine socialist revolution, cannot afford to experiment with capitalist matches over which it cannot hope to retain control; (2) Guyana is a non-white nation and the images which the PNC and the Government set before its people must reflect the racial composition of the population, and not the white images of the colonial era; (3) Under no circumstances can Guyana now or in the near future hope to produce enough of its own indigenous programs to satisfy the never-ending demands of TV; (4) It would be politically foolhardy for the PNC government to introduce TV at this time because when it followed the inevitable capitalist course as it has in every other small nation in the West and in Africa, it could be pointed to as a glaring example of PNC failure. . . . (5) All countries outside the Communist bloc. . . despite brave starts, have eventually succumbed to the temptation to fill their empty TV hours with cheap, canned programmes from the United States. The message carried in all of these programs militate against the message of the PNC government. . . . TV—with its double-barreled audio-visual impact—is much more effective than radio can ever be.” Memo to Elvin McDavid “RE: Television for Guyana” Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 32, Folder 20, 2–3.

75 Julian Mayfield, “Women’s Work Not Appreciated Says Elvin McDavid,” Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 32, 1.

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pleading for a stay on the extradition of Mr. David Hill, who had arrived in Guyana via
Trinidad the previous month. According to the letter, Hill had been “a leader in organising
an effective boycott against white businesses in the black community” in his native
Cleveland, Ohio. Mayfield connected Hill's boycott effort to his own struggle in Monroe,
claiming, “I am perfectly acquainted with the Cleveland situation because they grew out of
our 1961 struggle in Monroe . . . the political organization of which Mr. Hill is a leader is a
result of that struggle.” Due to Mayfield's intercession, Hill was allowed to stay in the
country and later became a close ally with the PNC.76 It is unclear if Mayfield was aware of
Hill during the filming of Uptight in Cleveland or if he was aware of the cult-like nature of
the “House of Israel,” the organization that Hill had founded in Cleveland and re-founded in
Guyana, but he welcomed any ally of the PNC to Guyana.

Following the difficult 1973 parliamentary elections, Mayfield began to grow
uncomfortable with the prevailing political climate, especially the growing political divisions
among the Afro expatriates. Again, deportations played a crucial role in these divisions,
especially following the expulsion of African American radicals, Mamadou Lumumba and
Shango Umoja.77 Tchaiko Kwayana, whose husband was Eusi Kwayana, had worked with

76 According to contemporary newspaper accounts, Hill, along with Jim Raplin and Reverend Ernest Hilliard
(also known as local radio personality “Prophet” Frank Thomas) founded the “House of Israel” in
Cleveland sometime in the mid-1960s. Espousing a militant black separatist ideology, Hill dubbed himself
“Rabbi” Hill and soon attracted a number of followers. During the late 1960s, Rabbi Hill initiated a boycott
against local white-owned businesses urging locals to “buy black.” In 1968, Hilliard was found murdered
and Hill and Raplin were found to have fled the country. According to Mayfield’s letter to Burnham, Hill
stopped over in Trinidad, running out on a hotel bill, before arriving in Georgetown in late 1971. In 1972,
he was convicted of blackmail in absentia in relation to his boycott of white businesses in Cleveland, but
by then he had already been allowed to settle in Guyana. See: “Raplin Faces 20-Year Sentence for
Blackmail,” Call & Post, City edition, Cleveland, OH, 13 May 1972, 1A; Alvin Ward, “Rabbi Hill Still
Missing From Trial,” Call & Post, City edition; Cleveland, OH, 20 November 1971, 1A.

77 Mamadou Lumumba was born Kenneth M. Freeman in 11 October 1938. A graduate of the University of
San Francisco in 1960, Lumumba took his name based on his resemblance to Congolese Prime Minister
Donald Warden in Oakland to form the Afro-American Association (AAA) in 1960. That organization had since become part of the Pan-African Secretariat, a transnational organization dedicated to the exchange of men and women and ideas throughout the Diaspora. In 1973, the Pan-African Secretariat sent Lumumba and Umoja to Guyana to aid ASCRIA's local mission and teach at the Golden Grove Government Secondary School in Demerara. Though the men found sanctuary in Guyana, their connection with ASCRIA turned them into pawns in Eusi Kwayana and Burnham's escalating political rivalry. For reasons that are disputed by those involved, Umoja and Lumumba were deported from Guyana in March of 1973 and the subsequent controversy divided the Afro expatriates, highlighting the difficulties of squaring nationalism with Pan-Africanism.

According to Eusi Kwayana, Mamadou Lumumba and Shango Umoja's deportations occurred, “after they had written in the Sunday Graphic a lengthy assault on the USA,” and their, “public utterances . . . exposed the oppression of the black peoples and the Indians of North America.”

Kwayana also attributed their deportation to their close association with ASCRIA, which had published accusations of corruption within the highest ranks of the PNC. In the following issue of The Black Scholar, Julian Mayfield disputed Kwayana's claim.


In his account, Umoja and Lumumba were visited by the Guyanese police and asked to register at the local police department as resident aliens. Mayfield wrote that the two men resisted the police physically this routine request, and, “[f]rom that point on their deportation became as inexorable as Greek tragedy, with no one to mourn for them in this country except the cynical opposition groups, which despise Africans.” Mayfield noted in this essay that, “[t]he person most responsible for the deportations was Eusi Kwayana. He encouraged them to proselytize his particular analysis of Guyanese politics vis-a-vis United States imperialism.” Eusi Kwayana, Mayfield wrote, was also “the only one who might have prevented the deportations by simply picking up the telephone and speaking to Forbes Burnham, his intimate political associate for more than 20 years.”

Mayfield cited Guyana's national sovereignty as the central factor in the deportation of Umoja and Lumumba, noting that their story “should have an important lesson for many readers of The Black Scholar who are contemplating living abroad.” Non-citizens and guests of the government, he argued, “live there at the sufferance of whatever government is in power.” Noting that he, too, had been approached by the police and asked to accompany them to the local station to be registered as a resident alien, Mayfield also criticized the two men for their “Great American Chauvinism [which] seems instinctively to pop out of them. They are hardly off the airplane before they are telling the 'natives' how the country could be improved.” Without any apparent sense of irony, Mayfield instructed political refugees to “settle down quietly, go to work and hope the authorities forget that you exist.”

80 Ibid., 35.
In private correspondence following the deportations of Lumumba and Umoja, moreover, Mayfield’s letters highlight the increasing paranoia and division among Afro expatriates. Following this incident, Julian Mayfield wrote to the Prime Minister on behalf of himself and another Afro, Paul Adams, requesting permission to carry a “concealed revolver or automatic pistol.” Citing recent “in-group executions . . . especially on the West Coast of the U.S.,” Mayfield expressed that neither he nor Adams “would . . . think it unusual if a tourist dropped into Guyana with instructions to knock one or both of us (or you) off, and catch the first plane out.” He recounted other incidents to friends in letters, in which he intimated that Eusi Kwayana intended to bring Black Power militants like the ones he had portrayed in *Uptight* to Guyana to aid him in unseating Burnham from power.

Max Stanford (later Muhammad Ahmad) was one such militant who Mayfield and Adams had objected to being allowed into the country; Mayfield noted that Stanford was close to Lumumba and Umoja. It was their refusal to intercede on Stanford's behalf, Mayfield believed, which led to deteriorating relations between Kwayana’s ASCRIA faction and the Afro expatriates aligned with Burnham’s ruling PNC. In a strange twist of fate, the man whom Mayfield helped settle in Guyana in 1972, David Hill, went on to become a paramilitary who perpetuated violence against anti-PNC activists in 1979, though Mayfield expressed his regret when he learned of this incident.82

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81 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Forbes Burnham, Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 7, Folder 6, 1–2.

82 According to Kwayana, after settling in Guyana, Hill re-founded the “House of Israel” and adopted the name “Rabbi Washington.” He soon became affiliated with the PNC. Rabbi Washington attracted a following of Guyanese men and women who considered him a prophet, declaring in the *New York Times*, “it is safe to say that I am the first and last word.” The “House of Israel” subsequently evolved into a paramilitary wing of the PNC and violently broke up a WPA rally in Georgetown on 22 August 1979. Eusi Kwayana, who witnessed the violent response, reported that, “[a] squad of uniformed policemen, including Rabbi Washington’s men dressed in police uniform and carrying no regulation numbers, attacked the
By late 1974, Mayfield was frustrated that his political rhetoric did little to ameliorate the ongoing political and racial violence in Guyana. That year, the sociologist Walter Rodney and Eusi Kwayana joined with other opposition groups to form the Working People's Alliance (WPA), which sought to challenge the stalemate between the PPP and the PNC. The formation of the WPA and, in particular, the presence of Rodney, further split the Afro expatriate community as those associated with Rodney and Kwayana became targets for violence and deportation by the PNC. What had begun with enthusiasm and promise ended with fears of violent retribution and permanent divisions among African American radical groups.

Ultimately, Guyana never did become the kind of haven for African American radicals in the same way that Ghana had been in the 1960s. However, this was not for lack of trying. According to Russell Rickford, the African Americans who chose to visit and settle in Guyana in the early 1970s were not simply searching for sanctuary from political and economic turmoil in the United States. They were, he argues, “engaged in a search for
fulfillment—a quest for immersive blackness, self-government, and true social belonging.”

What many encountered, however, was a nation in the midst of a transformation and assertive of its sovereignty in which shifting battle lines and factional disputes left them out of their depth.

For Julian Mayfield, this longing for belonging and desire to escape the narrow confines of the United States led him once again to a space far from the center of U.S. empire where the effects of white supremacy and hegemony were diminished, though still present. But, belonging was only the first step in the broader project that African American expatriates like Mayfield and Feelings undertook in Guyana. Mayfield's fiction also reflected his work for the Ministry of Information and Culture, and, while his output was reduced due to the demands of his position, he nevertheless took the task of improving perceptions of Guyana as the starting point on improving the historical perspective among all African-descended peoples. The eagerness with which Mayfield embraced William Marshall's Christophe project was indicative of how his own search for a fully realized black history which celebrated power and significant political goals of African-descended peoples was an integral component of his work.

“The Black King Must Be Black”

84 Ibid., 2.
85 William Marshall was born in 1924. In 1949 and 1950, Marshall played the role of Hlabeni, a friend of Mayfield's character Absalom Kumalo in Last in the Stars. The men traveled together as the production toured the United States. In 1968, while Mayfield was filming Uptight in Los Angeles, he and Mayfield exchanged letters and Marshall invited him to several events, but it is unknown if Mayfield attended them. While Marshall's letters to Mayfield indicate that he had been working on King Christophe for some time, his turn as the star of the 1972 blaxploitation film Blacula provided him with the financial means to fund the development of the Christophe project, though he would need outside investors to fund the production of the film. See: Letter from William Marshall to Julian Mayfield, 7 August 1968, SCH, JMP, Box 4, Folder 12, 1; Tom Shales, “A Screaming Success,” The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959–1973), 27 July 1972, B15.
In the Summer of 1972, Marshall contacted Julian Mayfield with a proposal for the film that would be *Christophe*. Mayfield immediately jumped at the opportunity, both as a means to work on a major Hollywood production again, but also as a way to utilize Christophe's story to show audiences the historical context and dire circumstances facing post-colonial leaders. Marshall, for his part, reached out to Mayfield because, not only did he lack a writer, but that he was not the only one attempting to make a movie on the Haitian Revolution. He had hoped to keep his project secret until he had both the money and the personnel to realize it, but an appearance by Anthony Quinn on *The Dick Cavett Show* forced his hand. On 12 May 1972, the Mexican American actor and director appeared on Dick Cavett's eponymous talk show for a wide-ranging interview. During their conversation, he announced his intention to adapt the 1928 John W. Vandercook novel *Black Majesty* to the silver screen. Noting that that he had secured the permission of the Haitian government of

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86 Ironically, Marshall had made his film debut in a movie set in Haiti, *Lydia Bailey*, in 1952. Playing the Haitian Revolutionary “King Dick,” a composite of Dessalines and Christophe, he stole the show as a supporting character. Filmed in Calabasas, CA, Mayfield recalled with amusement that the character was significant as “King Dick” was allowed to be shown hitting a white man over the head with a stick and suffering no consequences for his deed. See: Julian Mayfield, “Autobiography,” 94.

87 Despite numerous references in contemporary newspapers as to Quinn's appearance on *The Dick Cavett Show*, the show's official online archive makes no mention of this appearance by Quinn. Daphne Productions, Inc., which owns the rights to *The Dick Cavett Show*, reports that the 12 May 1972 show, broadcast on ABC at 10:30pm EST, featured John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and Shirley MacLaine. According to the site, Quinn made seven total appearances on programs hosted by Dick Cavett. The site lists his appearances as: 16 May 1969, 12 October 1971, 10 October 1972, 4 April 1973, 18 July 1991, 17 August 1991, and 22 July 1995. It is unclear the reason for this absence and it is unlikely that contemporary newspapers would have all made the same mistake in their published schedules of television. Requests to Daphne Productions have gone unanswered and no footage or transcripts of this episode have been located. While it is possible that this exchange has been quietly removed due to the controversy it generated, it more likely that its exclusion is a clerical oversight. See: Daphne Productions, Inc. *The Dick Cavett Show* <http://dickcavettshow.com/index.php/component/zoo/category/the-dick-cavett-show-abc-late-night-december-1969-january-1976/5> Accessed 1 June 2018. For contemporary media, see: “TV Hour By Hour” *Chicago Tribune*, 12 May 1972, A15.

88 Vandercook's novel, though written by a white man, has been cited by generations of black historians, including John H. Clarke and CLR James, for its sympathetic portrayal of Christophe.
Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier to shoot on location, Quinn also announced his intention to play the titular role of Henri Christophe in blackface.\footnote{It is unclear the extent to which President Jean-Claude Duvalier was involved in either Quinn or Marshall's efforts to film a movie in Haiti.}

Cavett congratulated Quinn on this project, but Quinn’s remarks send shockwaves through black Hollywood. Among the first to respond was actor and director William Marshall. Though he expressed his pleasure at seeing Quinn's interest in telling the story of the Haitian Revolution and did not question Quinn's ability to “develop a striking interpretation of Christophe,” Marshall urged Quinn privately to “select a Black actor to play Christophe.” He argued that this was not only because of the need for better roles for Black actors, but because the historical figure of Henri Christophe and the circumstances of his rise to power, from slave to king, demanded it. “The Black King Must Be Black,” Marshall concluded, emphasizing Christophe’s African identity as a key facet of his character's motivations and intrinsic to his representation on screen.\footnote{William Marshall and Tony Quinn, “An Exchange Between William Marshall and Anthony Quinn: The Black King Must Be Black,” The Black Scholar 3, no. 10 (Summer 1972): 50.}

Between the Summer of 1972 and the Fall of 1973, this debate over whether black performers should be the only ones to play black characters in a film about Haiti animated public and private exchanges as actors, writers, and others considered the role of identity and representation in Hollywood. Though African Americans such as Frederick Douglass had publicly criticized blackface minstrelsy as early as the 1840s and his intellectual successors disparaged early film representations of African Americans, Quinn’s public declaration at that he would play Henri Christophe in blackface at the height of the Black Arts Movement
revitalized this conversation, pushing this debate over identity and representation into the public eye. In challenging Quinn, his critics revealed that three other projects on the Haitian Revolution were already in various stages of development.

In addition to Quinn's project and the Marshall-Mayfield effort, soap opera actress Ellen Holly claimed to be developing her own script with Yaphet Kotto attached. In addition, according to Holly, Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte were also hard at work on their own project. A fifth project was reputed to be in development by Marshall and Mayfield's fellow co-star from Lost in the Stars, Brock Peters, but no further information about that project has been located. What prompted this unusual outpouring of support for four potential films on the Haitian Revolution at this moment? And, considering that none of these films ever made it to production, what is the significance of these unmade films on Haiti's revolution?

In his 1979 review of This Gilded African, Wenda Parkinson's biography of Touissant L'Ouverture, journalist Paul Foot quipped that Hollywood had “made a film about Spartacus, the leader of the Roman slave revolt, because Spartacus was beaten.” In contrast, “Touissant L'Ouverture was victorious, so they haven't made a film about him.” More recently, the African American actor and director Danny Glover lamented that his biopic on Touissant L'Ouverture continued to languish in “development hell,” due to the absence of perceived profitability. In a 2008 interview with Rebecca Frasquet, Glover complained

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91 In letter to Julian Mayfield from 1974, Marshall told Mayfield of yet another project being developed by Brock Peters, but provides no other information. In the same letter, Marshall announced that he was in talks with Universal Pictures to distribute the film if it was ever made. Letter from William Marshall to Julian Mayfield, 5 January 1974, Box 6, 1.

bitterly of repeated rejections in both North America and Europe. “Producers say 'It's a nice project, a great project . . . where are the white heroes?'” Because a film on Haiti was necessarily “a black film,” Glover told Frasquet, producers refused to commit funds, arguing, “it's not going to do good in Europe, it's not going to do good in Japan.”

Blackness, Glover concluded, especially revolutionary blackness, was not a profitable model for Hollywood. The short piece went on to note the history of a production on the Haitian Revolution, with Glover referencing previous unmade projects, including those of Quinn, Belafonte, and Poitier. Notably, Glover made reference to Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, who, along with Paul Robeson, spent most of the 1930s attempting to convince the Communist Party's culture and film board to finance his own project. While some of this history has begun to be told, Mayfield and Marshall's project remains absent from Glover's list and, significantly, from other historical analysis on efforts to film a movie about the Haitian Revolution.

This absence can be seen most clearly in the 2014 article, “Sergei Eisenstein and the Haitian Revolution: ‘The Confrontation Between Black and White Explodes Into Red,’” by Charles Forsdick and Christian Høgsbjerg. According to the authors, Eisenstein wrote several drafts and proposals to encourage the Soviet government to fund the project between 1929 and 1937. Paul Robeson's commanding performance in The Emperor Jones and his good standing within the Communist Party made him the director's first choice to play Henri Christophe. However, Soviet bureaucracy, communist party politics, and financial

93 Rebecca Frasquet, “‘Where are the white heroes?’; Danny Glover film hurt for financing,” The Province, Vancouver, B.C., 27 July 2008, C15.
limitations thwarted Eisenstein’s vision, leading one scholar to call it “one of the great
unmade movies of the twentieth century.”

While Forsdick and Høgsbjerg's article is focused on Eisenstein's effort, they also
make note of Glover's production. Absent entirely are the five film projects that emerged
between 1972 and 1975 by African American writers, actors, and directors. As Forsdick and
Høgsbjerg conclude, “for all the differences between the capitalist West and the ‘new
civilization’ of Stalinist Russia, between the rich owners of the film studios in Hollywood
and the bureaucratic controllers of the Soviet film industry, there were clearly some films
that those in power always thought were best left unmade.” By 1972, however, the cultural
force of the Black Arts Movement and its politics of cultural nationalism led many to believe
that overcoming this hurdle was possible and politically necessary.

Mayfield and Marshall's exchanges during the length the project reflected the sense
of potential that Mayfield had previously seen in Uptight and in his untitled Marcus Garvey
project. However, more than simply a historically relevant event, Haiti emerges from these
letters as a cypher, a blank slate for Mayfield and Marshall to impose their vision of what a
film about a slave revolt shot in the 1970s would mean for African Americans and African-
descended people worldwide. As the slave revolt which set the tone for uprisings throughout
the Caribbean for nearly a century, the story of Haiti's revolution against the French Empire
had long been a potent symbol of rebellion among Afro-Diasporic writers.


Confrontation Between Black and White Explodes Into Red,’” History Workshop Journal 78 (Autumn 2014):
161.
The significance of Haiti as the subject of Marshall and Mayfield's project, as well as the timing of their attempt, were the result of several factors. First, Marshall's surprise box office hit *Blacula* had paid off handsomely and the actor had enough capital to fund the development of his own project. Second, anger at negative portrayals of African Americans on film generated interest among wealthy African Americans to fund films which resisted portraying African Americans in exploitative and demeaning ways. Third, according to Mayfield, the Summer of 1973 was “the time for any serious Black interested in movies to make his play.”96 In a letter to Tom Feelings, Mayfield reported that writers were on strike in May of that year and this had caused “a big logjam as far as productions are concerned.”97 Mayfield told Feelings that he had contacted John H. Clarke and Alice Childress to tell them that “now was the time to prepare for the end of the strike when many projects would get off the ground that hadn't a chance before.”98

Perhaps the most significant reason were the political convolutions that Haiti was undergoing at the beginning of the 1970s. The death of François “Papa Doc” Duvalier and the accession of his son, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, in 1971 focused worldwide attention on the island’s politics, with many hoping for a loosening of the dictator’s harsh

96 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Tom Feelings, 5 June 1973, Box 32, 1.


98 Letter from Julian Mayfield to Tom Feelings, 5 June 1973, Box 32, 1.
grip on Haiti's population.⁹⁹ The younger Duvalier's hands-off approach to the early years of his role convinced some that artistic and cultural exchanges had the potential to flourish in the new political climate. The drive toward articulation of the Black Aesthetic also prompted some to reconsider their Haitian and Caribbean roots, making what was once rejected in favor of appearing patriotic and nationalistic appealing as a statement of belonging. Additionally, the negative response toward “Blaxploitation” films such as, prompted some black actors and writers to propose projects with themes of power and success without reliance on gangsters, pimps, and sexual appetites attributed to African American culture.

Together, these historical events and conditions encouraged both African American and Mexican American filmmakers to attempt a large-scale Hollywood film about the Haitian Revolution. Outside funding was vital, as Hollywood studios remained wary of celebrating the violent overthrow of French colonialism on the island of Hispaniola. As Paul Robeson bluntly told a reporter from Film Weekly in 1933, “Hollywood can only visualize the plantation type of Negro—the Negro of 'Poor Old Joe' and 'Swanee Ribber.'”¹⁰⁰ Four decades later, Hollywood remained mired in extremes with the most bankable black projects produced by studios being either stories of integration and peaceful co-existence or stereotypical, exaggerated, hyper-sexual narratives of gangsters, drug dealers, sex workers, and pimps.

Despite the significant increase in roles for black actors since 1973, the story of Haiti's revolution remains unmade, a fact that troubled contemporary actors like Danny

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Glover. The efforts of Marshall/Mayfield, Holly, and Quinn reflect the possibility and potential during a key era in Black intellectual and political history. The debates over Quinn's effort also sparked discussion and discourse on the nature of identity and representation, a conversation that spilled over from African American newspapers to national newspapers like the *New York Times*.

“Black History Does Not Need Tony Quinn”

In their exchange, published in the Summer 1972 issue of *The Black Scholar*, Marshall and Quinn deployed many arguments that would be familiar to readers familiar with twenty-first century debates over the “whitewashing” of non-white characters. Marshall's initial letter was civil but insistent, arguing black characters must be played by black actors. Quinn's response attempted to establish his credentials as an ally to African Americans to bolster the controversial plan. Quinn recalled “marching side by side with you and our great friend [James] Baldwin” in Paris in 1963 to protest Jim Crow. Deflecting Marshall's call to let a black man play Christophe, Quinn cited Hollywood's history of casting actors without regards to their racial phenotype. Noting his own run as the titular character in *Zorba the Greek* and Marlon Brando's turn as Emilio Zapata in *Viva Zapata!*, he lamented that without these kind of compromises, “these pictures would never have been made.”

Insisting that others in the black community supported his position, Quinn announced, “I have just met with the black leaders of CORE and the . . . Black Caucus of Gary, Indiana, who are all tremendously enthusiastic about my undertaking.” Quinn closed by portraying himself as a victim in this debate: “It is not pleasant to hear that I who fought

101 Ibid., 51.
against segregation am now being discriminated against by the people for whom I have fought so far.” Inviting Marshall to a meeting in Los Angeles later that year, Quinn explained that he was “aware of all the implications, all the pitfalls that this [film] involves,” but that playing the part of Christophe, “would probably be the most courageous of my entire career.”

Marshall's response was measured, but insistently reasserted his initial argument. He first corrected Quinn's memory. “Though you consulted with us on how to organize the Paris march,” he wrote, “joining us in the actual march from the American church to the American Embassy was precisely what you did not do.” Linking Quinn's decision to such racist blackface portrayals as those of Al Jolson, Amos 'n Andy, Eddie Cantor, and Lawrence Olivier's turn as, “Othello as a blackface hustler,” Marshall noted that while those “were offensive enough in their time . . . today they would be impermissible.” Challenging Quinn's self-identification, he asserted that Quinn was indeed white and pointed out that no black actor who was not passing has ever played a heroic white character in a movie. “If you appear as Christophe in your film,” he concluded, “we . . . will have no alternative to conclude that you are not only riding up front in the bus but taking full advantage of that hard fact.”

Like Quinn, Marshall wrote that he been to Haiti to scout locations, bolstering his claim further by stating that he had the permission of Aîme Césaire to base his adaptation on the Martiniquan intellectual and politician's 1963 play, *The Tragedy of King Christophe.*

103 Ibid., 52.
Marshall's repeated insistence that the Blackness of Christophe was intrinsic to his character was intertwined with arguments about his insistence on control over representation. But William Marshall was not the only one to criticize Anthony Quinn following his appearance on *The Dick Cavett Show*. By the summer of 1972, others had joined the fray.

In June, Ellen Holly, who played a ground-breaking lead role on ABC's daytime soap opera *One Life to Live*, penned an open letter to Quinn that was published in the *New York Times*. Holly declared it “distressing” that Quinn would choose to play “one of the most remarkable single figure[s] in all of Black history” in blackface makeup. Asserting once again the importance of racial representation on screen, Holly argued, “a generation of black children searching so earnestly to define their racial identity would learn of [Christophe] for the first time from a screen image that presents him as a white man in makeup.” More than simply a question of representation, it was the permanent nature of film as a physical medium that made Quinn's actions reprehensible for Holly.

“The indelible quality of the screen image” and its “relentless kind of immortality” meant that that this film and the character would remain intact long after the actors had retired and passed on. “Must we live through Alec Guinness as Touissant L'Ouverture and

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104 According to interviews and newspaper accounts, Holly's role on the show was the result of a letter she wrote to the editor of *New York Times* about the social experience of passing as light-skinned African American woman. Agnes Nixon, the show's creator, created the role of Carla specifically for Holly. Carla began her run on the show portraying an Italian-American woman, but six months into the first season, her heritage as African American was revealed to viewers. The move shocked critics and prompted Southern affiliates to boycott the show. *One Life to Live*'s ratings, however, were boosted by the controversy, fulfilling Nixon's goal turning the soap opera into a vehicle for the examination of ethnically and socioeconomically diverse storylines. This “social conscience,” stood in contrast to other soap operas of the era which were largely focused on the travails of white upper-class characters. See: Ellen Holly, “Living a White Life—for a While,” *New York Times*, 10 August 1969, D13; Agnes Nixon, “What Do Soaps Have To Do To Win Your Approval?”, *New York Times*, 28 May 1972, D13; Gloria E. Abernathy, *African Americans' Relationship with Daytime Serials*, Dissertation, The University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1992; Libby Slate, “One Life, 25 Years: ABC Serial Hits a Quarter Century Still the Soap With a Social Conscience,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 July 1993, 74.
Charlton Heston as a prince of Benin?” she asked, noting Guinness’s brownface Prince Faisal in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and Heston’s turn opposite Sir Laurence Olivier as the Mahdi in *Khartoum* (1966). Finally, Holly attacked Quinn’s assertion that if not for him, this history would remain neglected. “Believe me, the black community has a deep concern for its own history,” Holly declared, before asking him to show regard for the, “sensibilities and emotional needs of the black community and relinquish the title role to a black actor.” The article, entitled “Black History Does Not Need Tony Quinn,” expanded the debate further and generated a number of letters, almost all of them expressing reservations or outright opposition to Quinn’s project.105

Quinn’s response to Holly echoed many of the arguments that he had used against Marshall, but his attempts to address the controversy did not stop criticism of his project.106 In a June letter to Holly, Quinn ended his short column stating, “[Christophe] has been a hero of mine long before you ever heard of him. I know his worth. I pray I will be worthy of the task. I am willing to accept the challenge. In short, if not me—who? If not now—when?”107 In September of 1972, Emily F. Gibson of the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and Pamela Haynes of the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, answered Quinn’s rhetorical question. Haynes, the author of a weekly column entitled “Right On” opined that, “when James Earl Jones can play Thomas Jefferson . . . without eyebrows being raised, then Anthony Quinn can play [whomever] the hell he wants to on screen.”108 Furthermore, she asserted that his motivation


107 Ibid., D1.

was primarily financial. “When you look at the booming Black film market, it is no surprise that Anthony Quinn wants to slide in and make his pile along with the rest.” Financial motivations aside, it was a dark day if, “we need a white man in Black face to teach us about revolution,” she lamented.109

Gibson devoted two of her “Revolutionary Reflections” columns to criticizing Quinn's project, and offered further evidence of the actor's relationship with the Duvalier government. Published on 6 and 20 September 1972, the articles included interviews with Marshall and urged readers to write to Quinn's agent, Richard McFadden, to protest his client's refusal to back down. Gibson also claimed that the actor was financing a Haitian newspaper, Haiti Hebdo, to promote the project in Haiti and encourage support among Haitians.110 “Black people have to do something,” Gibson reported Marshall as stating, “we must do something so that we control the land we are living and functioning on and the lenses that mirror us in the eyes of the world. If not, we're going to continue to get very inferior interpretations of who we are.”111

Christophe of Haiti


When Mayfield came on board the project, he offered his thoughts on the difficulties in getting such a movie made reflected a racial power gap in Hollywood. Attributing this gap to a lack of will, he explained to Marshall that the reason Black actors, writers, and filmmakers, “have not done better (except at the bank) is that when they sit down to make a movie and they have all of their white and coloured people about them they do not really believe they belong at the head of the conference table.” In contrast, Mayfield told Marshall, an “arrogant nigger (like you) who has the nerve to think he belongs at the head of the conference table . . . is in danger and will be continually thwarted.”

Despite his awareness of the overwhelming odds against the realization of such a production, Mayfield threw himself behind the project. The letter included logistics for flying Mayfield and Joan Cambridge to Los Angeles to work with Marshall and his partner, Sylvia Gussin, while it laid out Mayfield’s vision for the film.

Mayfield’s completed a first draft of the script in late 1972 and he visited Marshall and Gussin in Los Angeles to present his pitch. In another letter from 1973, he emphasized the primary objectives of his script, now in the midst of a second draft. The story, he argued, needed to humanize Christophe, especially in his troubled relationships with his family, administrators, and servants. He wanted to cut many of the long descriptions of scenery and instead focus more on action, the interplay between the characters, and center Christophe’s blackness in the story. Mayfield argued that Christophe’s life as a slave and a servant were key to humanizing and explaining his actions. Mayfield also pressed Marshall to allow him to

write a treatment, which he argued would better allow Marshall to sell the project to the investors in the United States.113

In this treatment, which revealed more clearly Mayfield's idea of what the film should look like and what purpose it was to serve, he makes clear the objectives behind the film. “The story of Christophe is also the story of the Haitian Revolution,” the treatment declared. Additionally, Mayfield also referenced the public debate still being carried out in the opinion section of the nation's newspapers. “Henri Christophe was black,” he asserted, “and that the makers of the Haitian Revolution were men and women from Africa.” Mayfield emphasized the novelty of the story as well, noting that “the story of Christopher and the Revolution is unique because it has never been told before in this art form.” Buoyed by an unshakable sense of purpose, he asserted that the picture, “cannot fail because it is entirely new, shattering all precedents and reaching far beyond the horizons of so-called ‘Black’ motion pictures.” Why make a movie about Christophe, Mayfield asked rhetorically, because, “it's one hell of a story, and it's never been told before.”114

During the summer of 1973, Julian Mayfield, again accompanied by Joan Cambridge, spent another six weeks at Marshall's home in Los Angeles where they presented the second draft. The revised script remained dramatic and dialogue-heavy, emphasizing Mayfield's preference for plot-driven stories. Though largely focused on Christophe, the script was reminiscent of Mayfield's earlier work, in which he created characters of various classes and political leanings to discuss the social, economic, and political difficulties inherent in


114 Julian Mayfield, *Christophe* film treatment draft, Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 18, 2.
Christophe's efforts to remake the nation. Christophe emerged from the scripts as a dynamic, violent, and unpredictable ruler whose lofty goals were laid low by hubris. Mayfield injected action, scenes of slave brutalization, and battle sequences into Césaire's story, providing Christophe with motivation for the acts of brutality attributed to him and the reasoning behind the re-enslavement of the Haitian people for what amounted to financial gain. Acknowledging Christophe's flaws, Mayfield and Marshall presented a man driven to free his people from white rule at any cost, even that of their freedom. While the script opened and closed on the events of 1820, flashbacks covered Christophe's arrival in Haiti as a young African torn from his mother's embrace, his early life as a slave, his rise to a respectable position as the Head Chef of a Cap Haitien hotel, and his decision to join Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines in their effort to free Haiti from French rule.

The historical events portrayed in the film, however, revealed that Christophe was no morality play. At its core it was an unflinching portrait of power, blackness, and masculinity in the Age of Revolutions. Once again, Mayfield was driven by a desire to present a nuanced and historically accurate portrait of a deeply flawed black man facing an impossible situation of his own making. By presenting a violent despot as the product of the brutal history of colonization and enslavement, Mayfield did justify the actions that Christophe took in Haiti, but offered context and motivation and a realistic account of the consequences of Christophe's brutality. Rather than a rehabilitation, Christophe was a recognition of the titular character's humanity, his impact on the world, and commentary on the society from which he had emerged.
Christophe's central problem, and the focus of Mayfield's script, was the king's inability to effectively construct new modes of production and novel forms of political organization beyond a repudiation of colonial anti-blackness and a resistance to European-dominated enslavement. As those who have historicized Christophe have noted, not only did he continue with Touissant L’Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines's emphasis on large-scale plantation agriculture, primarily through forced labor, but modeled his government and the State of Haiti upon the system of European monarchy.115

As a vehicle to examine the decisions and political modes that proliferated in the Caribbean and Africa following the end of formal colonialism, Christophe provided Julian Mayfield with a means to deploy history to examine one-party authoritarian rule that followed in the wake of African independence movements. Christophe's emphasis on labor and hard work in service of state sovereignty resembled Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Touré's projects in Ghana and Guinea, respectively. In contextualizing Henri Christophe for Marshall's movie, Julian Mayfield's writing alluded to his previous support for Kwame Nkrumah and implicitly supported his ongoing work for Forbes Burnham.116 Christophe was more than an epic historical drama, he argued. It explained and contextualized the actions of

115 Christophe personally oversaw the development of a system of Haitian peerage, beginning in 1808. The new Haitian noble class included 4 Princes, 8 Dukes, 22 Counts, 40 Barons, and 14 Knights. He also founded a College of Arms to create heraldic visuals. For his own coat of arms, Christophe used a crowned phoenix rising from flames. Underneath the phoenix was the motto “Je renais de mes cendres” (“I rise from my ashes”). See: C.L.R. James, Black Jacobins, 199.

116 In an odd twist, Mayfield wrote a letter to Burnham following his return to Guyana after his second meeting with Marshall asking the Prime Minister to consider shooting the film in Guyana. The letter made note of the resemblance of Rupununi, a region in Southern Guyana, to the highlands of Haiti's interior. “[I]n view of the present economic crisis . . . there is no reason why the Rupununi should not be used for making such a motion picture, and my view is that Guyana should strive to become a motion picture capital of the world.” No reply from Burnham about this subject is present in Mayfield's archive. See: Letter from Julian Mayfield to Forbes Burnham, Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 32, Folder 2, 1.
contemporary authoritarian leaders in Africa and the Caribbean, making sense of their aims and the measures they undertook to preserve their national sovereignty, even in the face of transnational ideologies like pan-Africanism.

In early 1973, Quinn's project stalled. The lack of further press from Quinn and the brief run of *Haiti Hebdo* as a magazine suggests that this controversy took its toll on either his funding or his will.\(^{117}\) Junius Griffin of the NAACP and other Black leaders had by then disassociated themselves from Quinn and the project quietly disappeared from public view. Notably, though, in the autobiography of his adult life, *One Man Tango*, Quinn does not mention of *Black Majesty*, the controversy, or William Marshall. Despite multiple trips to Los Angeles, where Julian Mayfield did dual work as a representative for the government of Guyana and working on *Christophe* with Marshall and Gussin, it became clear to both men that their vision for the film was no longer aligned. Despite a letter from January 1973 declaring of Mayfield's first draft, “your contribution so far to be splendid,” receipt of the second draft that summer provoked negative comments from Marshall. He criticized the second draft, stating, “[l]et us not violate historical fact,” referencing Mayfield's decision to take liberties with Christophe's story in service of a more compelling narrative.\(^{118}\)

By 1975, following his return to the United States, Mayfield presented Marshall with a third draft of the script and discussions between the two men broke down completely.

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\(^{117}\) Newspaper archives indicate no mention of Quinn's project after November 1972 and *Haiti Hebdo* quietly disappeared at some point before that.

\(^{118}\) Among other changes, in Mayfield's draft, Christophe dies of a stroke rather than take his own life. Christophe did have a stroke shortly before his suicide in 1820, but he survived until the Citadel of Sans Souchi was taken by renegade forces accompanied by Haitian peasants. See: Julian Mayfield, *Christophe* second draft, undated, SCH, JMP, Box 18, 97.
Unable to secure funding from black community leaders and artists, such as Berry Gordy and publisher John H. Johnson, Marshall was also dismayed by rejections from Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier, who had apparently tabled their own effort. Though he announced that Italian producer Dino de Laurentiis was now interested in the project, Marshall decided to part ways with Mayfield. Marshall assessed, “We feel that neither of the first drafts enhances the chances of winning support for the production, and we have never used them therefore in developing our campaign to get the picture made.”

Calling Mayfield's long-winded discourse on the moral contradiction between the slave economy and revolutionary democratic ideology “an unacceptable evasion of the story of Christophe,” Marshall asserted, “gratuitous fictions are of no use to us.” After a brief note about the legalities of ownership and rights, Marshall concluded, “[t]he ownership is mine and you have the honorable pork chops rights to be paid according to the regulations of your union.” Despite parting ways on the project, Marshall ended the letter on a hopeful note, declaring that “[a] friendship that can take the wear and tear of movie-making is a friendship indeed.”

As of 2018, a major Hollywood film on the Haitian Revolution has yet to made. Though never realized, Christophe provided Mayfield with an opportunity to build on the

119 Letter from William Marshall to Julian Mayfield, 11 August 1975, SCH, JMP, Box 5, 1; In Mayfield's response, he asserted his control over his work, but indicated a desire to stay friends. No further correspondence between the two men is present in Mayfield's archive, however, and, despite conversations with Gina Loring Marshall's daughter, it is unclear whether Marshall's papers have been preserved in an archive.

120 Ibid., 2.

121 However, the 2001 film, The Feast of All Saints, about Haitian refugees living in New Orleans, featured a dramatization of the revolution in an opening scene. And, in 2012, a French biopic entitled Touissant was produced for French television.
themes he had been exploring since his biographical portrait of Nkrumah in *The Lonely Warrior*, the double-bind facing African postcolonial leaders in *Death at Karamu*, and his rejected biography *Burnham of Guyana*. Remaking a state hobbled by centuries of colonialism required a revolutionary reconstruction of society, but the danger of undemocratic and illiberal means in order to carry out these designs was ever-present. Part apologia and part contextualization, Mayfield's scripts for *Christophe* reflected his interest in promoting the cooperative republic of Guyana as an official with the Ministry of Information and Culture, even as it served to predict with uncomfortable accuracy the ultimate fate of Burnham's autocratic autarky.

This consideration of the efforts to produce a film on the Haitian Revolution in the 1970s not only fill in the gaps between Eisenstein's and Glover's failed productions, but also highlight the ways in which the Black Aesthetic and cultural nationalism encouraged black writers and actors to work toward realizing this project and others like it. Subsequent debate over the representation of Christophe in Hollywood widened existing fault lines in discussions over identity and representation, following a path familiar to twenty-first century debates over the performance of Scarlet Johansson in *Ghost in the Shell*, Jake Gyllenhaal as the eponymous *Prince of Persia*, and Rooney Mara as Tiger Lily in the reimagined *Pan*. However, one letter in the *New York Times* exchange highlights an oversight that few, if any, of the participants considered in their impassioned exchanges.

On 9 July 1972, the *New York Times* devoted its opinion page to the question, “Should Tony Quinn Play a Black Man?” Among the responses was a brief letter from two Haitian men, Alix Mathieu and Pierre-Michel Fontaine, then living in Boston, MA. Mathieu and Fontaine expressed their pleasure at learning that Christophe's story was to be brought
to the screen, however, they poignantly noted an important absence in the projects that had been publicly declared. “[W]e are more than a little intrigued,” their letter continued, “by the fact that neither Miss Holly nor Mr. Quinn touched upon one of the most fundamental issues contained in the controversy—the obvious fact that Christophe was a Haitian, that his story took place in Haiti and that, consequently, talented Haitians should have an opportunity to make a contribution to the movie if it is to carry a minimum of realism.”

Noting that neither Holly nor Quinn had indicated their intention to hire Haitian actors for important roles, Mathieu and Fontaine expressed their concern that “it will not be the first time, or indeed, the last, that some enterprising Americans are exploiting Haitian history, culture or natural beauty, with little direct benefit to the Haitians themselves.”

In collapsing black and white American identities into that of an imperial power, colonizer, and exploiter of Caribbean nations, Mathieu and Fontaine voiced the frustration that many in the African Diaspora had with African American debates over race and power revealing the ways in which the pan-African ideal was often unmade by national and imperial realities.

Burnham of Guyana

In the final chapter of *Burnham of Guyana*, Mayfield considered the problems that the Prime Minister continued to face in his effort to remake the nation into a self-sufficient, sovereign state. Foremost in his mind was the “colonial mentality” that Burnham had sought to destroy in his 1970 constitution. “[B]enevolent and self-seeking British traditions,” Mayfield wrote, “have left a heavy cross of attitudes which are bound to retard West Indian

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progress.”123 Citing George Lamming, Richard Wright, and Amiri Baraka, Mayfield carefully dissected the “colonial mentality” and concluded that meaningful change in Guyana required “not so much sophistication, but determination to change within a generation, and willingness to sacrifice and submit to a national discipline in order to accomplish that chance.”124 Like Christophe in Haiti, Forbes Burnham demanded the full dedication of the people of Guyana toward a fundamental change in their nation. But, also like Christophe, Burnham's consolidation of power and the increasing corruption of the ministers and politicians he surrounded himself with undermined his authority and popularity.

Julian Mayfield saw the ways in which the pan-African ideal of racial solidarity lacked the kind of programmatic and practical steps necessary to construct a more just and equitable space. However, in putting his faith and labor at the service of the black nation-state he ran up against familiar problems. In a 1975 essay, Guyanese sociologist Walter Rodney dismissed the idea it was possible for Guyana under Burnham to be truly revolutionary and instead criticized it as a neo-colonial state.125 The PNC, he argued, was merely the “consolidation of the petty bourgeoisie as a class around the state.”126 The expropriation of sugar plantations did not end low wages for laborers, they merely redirected

123 Mayfield, Burnham of Guyana, 204.

124 Ibid., 205.

125 Walter Rodney was assassinated by a car bomb on 13 June 1980 in Georgetown following independence celebrations for the new nation of Zimbabwe. A member of the Guyanese Defense Force, Gregory Smith, is reported to have given the bomb to Rodney. This has led many in Guyana and abroad to connect his assassination with Forbes Burnham suggesting that Burnham ordered Rodney's killing. Burnham died in 1985 at the age of 62. See: “Guyanese Leader, dead at 62, had a reputation for ruthlessness,” The Globe and Mail, Toronto, ONT, 7 August 1985, P10.

the profits of that labor to those who were close political allies of the PNC. Similarly, Burnham's efforts to create self-sufficiency by blocking imports of foreign made goods enriched the large landowners who produced the substitutes; coincidentally they were members of the PNC. “Using progressive rhetoric, establishing a single “peoples” party and affecting state ownership,” Rodney argued, the government succeeded in recreating colonialism with a black face.127

Though his departure from Guyana was preceded by fears for his safety and concerns over the escalating political violence in that nation, Julian Mayfield's sudden return to the United States appears unrelated to Guyanese politics. In September, Mayfield abruptly left for Washington where he apologetically wrote Prime Minister Burnham, explaining that he was being treated for a “moderately severe case of hypertension” in Providence Hospital.128 That December, he formally requested a medical leave of absence, filling Burnham in on the status of Burnham of Guyana and the positive reception of Joan Cambridge's first novel by agents and publishers.129 Correspondence indicates that, though he was no longer employed by the Guyanese government, he maintained close contact with

127 Ibid., 20.
128 Letter from Dr. Marvin S. Belsky, MD, Undated, SCH, JMP, Box 32, Folder 12, 1.
129 Cambridge's first novel, Clarise Cumberbatch Want to Go Home, was published in 1987. Written in the distinctive creole of her native Guyana, the novel traces a poor Guyanese woman's journey to the United States to find her wayward African American husband, Harold. Portraying a Third World, feminist perspective on the masculine militancy of African American radical movements, the protagonist is continuously dismissed, marginalized, and ignored by the very people who claim to be acting in her interest. In one of the novel's most poignant scenes, she encounters a young Afghan woman and the two women bond over the recent invasions of Grenada and Afghanistan by the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. The encounter offers a poignant example of how even radical African American critiques of the Cold War were inadequate when it came to issues of gender, class, and relationships that crossed into the Global South. Cambridge currently lives and works in the interior of Guyana. See: Joan Cambridge, Clarise Cumberbatch Want to Go Home (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1987).
Minister McDavid and others in the Ministry and kept abreast of current events in Guyana. However, in October 1975, he wrote to Burnham once again to formally submit his resignation, citing ongoing health concerns declaring he could no longer work for the Ministry.

During his time in Guyana Mayfield, though inspired by pan-African ideals nevertheless challenged those ideals by embracing Guyana's own Burnhamist nationalism. With a land base in South America, a black government, and a population seemingly determined to throw off the yoke of the colonial mentality, Mayfield arrived in Guyana with plans to aid in the construction of the kind of nation he hoped to reside in for the remainder of his life. However, in light of the timing and abrupt nature of Mayfield's departure, as well as his subsequent yearlong stint as a Fulbright scholar teaching in West Germany, it is likely that Mayfield had had enough of the escalating political violence and his departure was, if not a repudiation, then a soft rejection of the tenets of Burnhamism and the leadership of the Prime Minister. Following the Fulbright, Mayfield settled once again in Washington with Joan Cambridge, teaching first at the University of Maryland and then being hired at Howard University where he served as the writer-in-residence in the university's English Department. Never one to rest on his laurels, Mayfield's final years saw the continuation of the intellectual, author, and activist's strident critique of American foreign policy, global capitalism, and the perils of blackness in a white world.

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.
—Edna St. Vincent Millay

During an early morning conversation at a snack bar in Washington's National Airport on 25 January 1984, a young black Washington Post reporter, Milton Coleman, interviewed the Reverend Jesse Jackson about life on the campaign trail. A self-described “prophet on a political mission” Jackson trailed a crowded field led by Senator and former astronaut John Glenn and former Vice President Walter Mondale. Despite his recent diplomatic mission to Syria, where he arranged the release of downed U.S. airman Lt. Robert Goodman, Jackson complained bitterly about the campaign process and ongoing media reports of his close association with Arab leaders. At some point during this interview, Jackson reportedly made reference to Jews as “hymies” and referred to New York as “hymietown” in remarks not directed to Coleman.


On 13 February 1984, these statements were published as part of a comprehensive article exploring the escalating tensions between Jackson and American Jews and ignited a firestorm of controversy. Jackson responded to the article by lashing out at reporters and questioning the journalistic ethics of The Washington Post. During an appearance on Face the Nation with reporter Leslie Stahl on 19 February, Jackson denied that he made the remarks and agreed to a meeting between the candidate and the editors of The Post where the editors revealed Coleman as the source. Eight days later, on 27 February, Jackson gave a speech at the Temple Adath Yeshurun where he apologized for the remarks. “In part, I am to blame,” Jackson explained to the 400 worshipers at the in Syracuse, New York synagogue, “[f]or that, I am deeply distressed.” The damage had been done. Despite a strong showing in primaries, where Jackson received 18.2% of the primary votes, he lost the nomination to Walter Mondale in July.

What had begun as a conversation about the relations between African Americans and American Jews soon morphed into a conversation about the responsibilities of black reporters in reporting on black political leaders. After the Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan came to Jackson's defense and called Coleman a, “no-good, filthy traitor,” veteran black reporter Carl T. Rowan took to the editorial page of The Washington Post and criticized Farrakhan for “trying to hold black journalists to a standard of stupid, self-destructive

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4 "The Post said a nameless, faceless person said it,” Jackson told reporters on a flight after the story was published. “[I]n the story they do not have a source. It's a rumor and whoever said it should expose his face and say the reason why.” See: “Jackson denies he said Jews are Hymies,” The Atlanta Constitution (1946–1984), 19 February 1984, 13A.


racism.” No black reporter, Rowan continued, “has a special obligation to swallow and forget whatever is said in error by a political candidate who is black.”

On 15 April, civil rights lawyer William M. Kunstler and South African writer Clive Leeman weighed in with support for Jackson, distinguishing between the candidate’s offhanded remarks and Farrakhan’s violent invective, but all the while opposing Rowan’s remarks.

As a regular contributor to *The Washington Post’s* editorial page, Julian Mayfield was invited to join the conversation in early April. The interviewer asked Mayfield to answer whether or not Jackson or Coleman should consider themselves, “Black first or American First?” Mayfield’s response, “Sorting Us Out,” began with an anecdote. “My first three days in the Army were very integrated,” Mayfield recalled, “I even played poker with white boys on the troop train to Fort McClellan, Ala.” But, upon arrival, “[a] tough-looking little white sergeant hardly looked up from his clipboard as he grumbled, ’All right. White troops over heah. Nigra troops over theah.’ Reality had set in again.” There was little point, Mayfield argued, in asking Jesse Jackson or any other black person in politics or journalism whether they were black or American first, because the white questioners were the ones who “know whether Jackson is the black candidate, or an American candidate that happens to be black.”

If they were forced to respond to this “dumb question,” African Americans may demand to “know if there is a contradiction” between their blackness and their Americanness. “If the answer is yes, they will, of necessity, have to choose blackness.”

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final rejoinder to the debate over Jesse Jackson’s blackness versus his Americanness, Julian Mayfield once again wrote to *The Washington Post*, this time in response to a column by journalist Joseph Kraft. In that column, Kraft castigated Jackson, calling him “an affront to the white majority.” Turning his attention to Kraft, Mayfield denounced the columnist for his attacks on Jackson and for giving readers “a refresher course in the arrogant assumptions of white superiority.” It seemed that Jackson, Mayfield wrote, had the permission of whites to “raise hell about civil rights at home, but when he is seen talking to presidents, premiers and prime ministers, whites are justified in suspecting that he may be talking about something as important as power.”

Colorblindness, Mayfield concluded, remained as improbable a solution to white supremacy in 1984 as it had in 1959. Then he had cautioned black writers to avoid submerging themselves in the American mainstream and acquiescing to the psychological demands of whiteness. Twenty-five years later, a still un-resigned Mayfield refused once again to yield, arguing that his blackness remained inseparable from his identity as an American. The problem, he asserted, was that white Americans did not regard him as a fellow citizen unless he gave up his claims to that black identity. While the United States may have made strides in public articulations of racism in the quarter century that elapsed between these two arguments, the political, economic, and cultural realities of American identity remained distressingly intact.

The last decade of Julian Mayfield’s offered little in the way of financial or artistic success, but he remained as committed as ever to the projects he undertook. The recipient of

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a Fulbright Fellowship in 1976, Mayfield spent that academic year in West Germany and Turkey, but his return to the United States was marked by economic privation and rejection letters from editors. Working for a series of small newspapers based in the Washington, D.C. area, including The Washington North Star and Time Capsule, Mayfield was unable to make ends meet and returned to teaching. Lecturing at the University of Maryland, College Park, Mayfield was hired as the writer-in-residence at Howard University, where he would teach until 1984.

Leading classes such as, “American Negro Literature,” “Twentieth Century American Literature, and creative writing workshops, he remained a popular teacher and his classes were always full. African and African American Studies professor Wahneema Lubiano described Mayfield as “intellectually and pedagogically generous.” She considered his teachings and his support fundamental to her move to Stanford and the competition of her PhD. “Julian,” she recalled, “was part of what made me realize that I could be an intellectual and political at the same time, that I did not have to slip off the mantle of one to be the other, and that living a life doing work that was an intertwining of the two was not only possible but beautifully enjoyable.”

Working closely with writer and critic Eugenia Collier at Howard, the two non-tenured faculty struggled against the administration’s destructive budget cuts and low pay for adjunct faculty. In spite of a punishing workload, Mayfield remained committed to his fiction-writing and once again revisited his memoirs. “Tales of the Lido,” a collection of vignettes from his time in Ghana went through multiple revisions during this period, though

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11 Email from Wahneema Lubiano to author, 27 April 2019.
he recounted that he would have to spend time in Ghana in order to finish it. He also wrote several short stories, but none of which made it to publication. Multiple rejections, few prospects, and his commitment to writing in spite of his other activities took their toll on his relationships and his health, as friends and relatives repeatedly urged him to eat better and drink less.

In early October 1984, Julian Mayfield was admitted to the Coronary Unit at Washington Adventist Hospital in Takoma Park, MD after suffering a major heart attack. Messages of support poured in from friends and family, but on 20 October 1984, he passed away. “The Giant That Many Overlooked” was dead at the age of fifty-six.12 Three weeks after his death, Cambridge wrote a letter to The Washington Post critical of the recently re-elected President Reagan. “I will not speak for my husband,” the neatly-typed letter read, “I only know that Ronald Reagan had best mind how he tramples the rights and lives of the people Julian Mayfield loved and defended for his entire life, or the President will find himself plagued by one hell of a revolt among the ancestral spirits now [that] Mayfield has joined them.”13 Even gone, Julian Mayfield’s voice and acerbic critique lived on.

In a 1979 interview conducted by Harriet Jackson Scarupa, Julian Mayfield reiterated his abiding interest in power. “I have got, I am certain, a certain power fixation. I am fascinated now and have been for many years by Black people who wield power—to any extent.” Power, for Mayfield, served as a shorthand for the interconnected nature of politics.

12 “The Giant That Many Overlooked” was a play for children written by Obi Egbuna, Jr. and Joan Cambridge. In it, Egbuna and Cambridge invite children to dramatize important events in Mayfield’s life, his influences, and those whom he influenced speaking as important figures, such as Mae Mallory, Robert F. Williams, Paul Robeson, Maya Angelou, Alice Windom, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Most recently, “The Giant that Many Overlooked” was performed by the Mass Emphasis Children’s Theater in Washington, D.C. See: “The Giant that Many Overlooked,” <https://youtu.be/B4CMjZa5eK0> Accessed 1 September 2017
and art, blackness and Americanness, and the ways in which people identified themselves and contested those identities thrust upon them. During a career that spanned five decades, Julian Mayfield's life and his work revealed the oft-hidden influences of the black Left and an ever-evolving radical black critique of racial capitalism couched in a definition of an artist to whom politics and art were inseparable.
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Biography

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