

## Harlem in Black and White: Mapping Race and Place in the 1920s\*

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## Harlem in Black and White: Mapping Race and Place in the 1920s

Knowing that S. H. Kress' Five and Dime Store was located at 258 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street is enough to explain to anyone familiar with New York City why a commotion there on a Tuesday afternoon in March 1935 drew a crowd. As 125<sup>th</sup> Street was the main commercial thoroughfare north of Central Park, home to a streetcar line, a subway station, and an elevated train station, and the site of numerous places of amusement, including, opposite Kress', the old Hurtig and Seamon Theatre, rechristened the Apollo just a year earlier, it always teemed with pedestrians.<sup>1</sup> The address also helps identify the participants in the disturbance. By 1935, the African American and West Indian population centered on 135<sup>th</sup> Street had grown to number around 200,000 and spread out to residences in the blocks surrounding 125<sup>th</sup> Street, patronizing its businesses, and so providing most of the crowd attracted to Kress'.<sup>2</sup> The owners and staff of the store, however, remained white, true of businesses the length of 125<sup>th</sup> Street, as the well-known mass pickets organized by a coalition of church, fraternal, social and political organizations in the preceding year had dramatized. Two of those white staff created the initial disturbance when they apprehended a Puerto Rican boy shoplifting a knife. The subsequent appearance of a white police officer only added to the commotion. For years now the city's black population had been at odds with the overwhelmingly white police department. Although the store manager declined to press charges, and the officer released the boy out the store's back entrance, on 125<sup>th</sup> Street persistent rumours circulated among the crowd that authorities had beaten or even killed the boy. At 5.30 p.m., police gave up trying to control the crowd and closed the store. On the street, a group of men tried to speak to those milling around; when someone in the audience threw an object through a window in Kress' store, police arrested the speaker. The crowd reacted by spreading along 125<sup>th</sup> Street, smashing more windows and looting stores.<sup>3</sup>

Attacks on white businesses took the crowd not just along 125<sup>th</sup> Street, but also up and down Seventh and Lenox Avenues. That those streets were also commercial thoroughfares, that 125<sup>th</sup> Street was not the only place in Harlem where white businesses were located, is less well known and not obvious from the historical scholarship. Whereas 125<sup>th</sup> Street ran across the neighborhood, near its southern boundary, the avenues ran the full length of black Harlem. White businesses located on those thoroughfares were spatially as well as experientially in the midst of black life, a situation unaccounted for in scholarly accounts of Harlem. Whites are present in the rich pictures of black communities in the 1920s offered by historians, but very much on the margins. Gilbert Osofosky's *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto*, the foundational historical study of the neighborhood, devotes only a short paragraph to white ownership of the district's property and businesses. Historians Jervis Anderson, David Levering Lewis, Cheryl Greenberg and Irma Watkins-Owens make more references to that white presence, but offer few details beyond mention that blacks patronized those businesses as a result of lower prices, better selection and superior service. They have nothing to say about white police in Harlem, although Marcy Sacks, in *Before Harlem*, does describe officers allowing criminals to roam free, working to contain vice within the districts, and discriminating against, and attacking, black residents.<sup>4</sup> In marginalizing the white presence without detailing it or exploring relations between whites and blacks, scholarship on Harlem conforms to studies of the other black neighborhoods created by the African American migrations of the early twentieth century. The first generation of African American urban history, indelibly labelled the ghetto synthesis by Joe Trotter, focused, as Roger Biles recently put it, "almost exclusively upon white institutions situated outside of African American neighborhoods." In reaction, the next generation of scholars turned their

attention to the strategies pursued by African Americans, and to class divisions within black communities over those strategies.<sup>5</sup>

Scholars have paid more attention to the whites who travelled to Harlem after dark to frequent its cabarets, nightclubs and speakeasies. Particularly in the late 1920s, they came to drink the illegal liquor found more readily and largely free of policing in Harlem, and to experience the neighborhood's nightlife, in the form of the performances playing on racial stereotypes offered by nightclubs largely limited to white audiences, and the jazz and dancing of smaller, mixed-race nightspots. While those white slummers provoked the ire of respectable black Harlem for bringing vice to the neighborhood, few actual clashes between blacks and whites occurred – at least inside the venues. What did occur, Kevin Mumford and Chad Heap emphasize, was sexual permissiveness among whites and cross-racial sexual intimacy, extending from dancing to necking and petting. Mumford goes as far as to argue that for white homosexuals, “sharing space [with African Americans] in the speakeasies resulted in shared music and dance, common idioms and social rituals.” Rather than sexuality, Michael Lerner chose to emphasize commentary by black writers that saw mingling in nightclubs as dissipating racial animosity. However, the layout of nightclubs often limited mixing to being in each other's gaze and sharing the experience of a performance, Shane Vogel has recently argued, with blacks and whites seated at different tables and mixed race parties generally barred from sitting and socializing together.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the character of the interracial relationships that did form are the subject of considerable debate. Scholars of the Harlem Renaissance in particular disagree about the extent to which white sponsors influenced or exploited the African American authors with whom they became associated.<sup>7</sup>

In treating race relations in Harlem as essentially inconsequential in everyday life and harmonious in nightlife, historians are following James Weldon Johnson, the African American polymath and leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In his contribution to the influential *Survey Graphic* issue on Harlem, published in 1925, Johnson asserted, “I know of no place in the country where the feeling between the races is so cordial and at the same time so matter-of-fact and taken for granted.”<sup>8</sup> That situation only improved, in Johnson’s eyes, during the second half of the decade. Returning to the topic in his *Black Manhattan* (1930), he claimed that, “It is apparent that race friction, as it affects Harlem as a community, has grown less and less each year for the past ten years; and the signs are that there will not be a recrudescence.”<sup>9</sup> With the white presence dispensed with in this way, some historians have gone as far as presenting black neighborhoods as a place where, as sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Clayton put it in their classic study of Chicago, blacks “find rest from white folks as well as from labor.” James Grossman reproduced that image in his study of Chicago, describing the South Side as “a refuge, and a haven” for blacks from the discrimination and violence they faced elsewhere in the city. Marcy Sacks employed another variation of that characterization in describing early Harlem as offering its black residents “a world among themselves.”<sup>10</sup> Many other scholars implicitly adopt that picture by focusing on the building and fragmentation of African American communities. What conflicts between blacks and whites are discussed in these studies occur outside or on the boundaries of black neighborhoods, not within them.<sup>11</sup>

The glimpses of life in Harlem that can be gleaned from black newspapers, the *New York Age* and the *New York Amsterdam News*, and legal records are at odds with that image of the neighborhood as a place free of tensions between blacks and whites.<sup>12</sup> They are filled with reports of not only white business owners, police and slummers, but also other whites who

featured in the everyday life of black residents: deliverymen, salesmen and bill collectors; public school teachers; hospital staff; drivers; and sports fans. They describe interracial encounters often quite different from those that occurred in Harlem's nightclubs, contact that frequently led to conflict. These unaccounted for aspects of life in the neighborhood reveal that Harlem was a space of contestation, negotiation, resistance, and accommodation. That is not to say that friction with the whites present in Harlem, and other northern black neighborhoods, overshadowed the web of institutions, organizations and social and cultural practices that residents created, and that scholars of the African American urban experience have reconstructed.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it is to recast the context in which that community took shape, and to look at the pattern of race relations shaped by that community.

We bring into focus race relations within Harlem by using maps to locate and visualize the white presence in the neighborhood. Displaying information on a map does not provide answers, but generates questions about how to understand the patterns that are revealed.<sup>14</sup> The maps of Harlem reproduced in existing historical studies do not provoke queries about race relations within the district so much as foreclose them, being concerned only with showing the extent of the black residential population or individual landmarks within those boundaries.<sup>15</sup> Our site, *Digital Harlem*, employs real estate maps that feature footprints of buildings, literally filling in the empty blocks of the street map, and helping, as Ian Gregory and Paul Ell put it, to “subdivide the place under study into multiple smaller places and give some indication of how these places interact.”<sup>16</sup> That map is populated using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), working not with ArcGIS software traditionally favoured by social scientists, but with the vernacular tool Google Maps. This technology combines a database and a mapping system: the database allows material from a wide range of disparate sources to be organized and integrated on the basis of their shared geographical location; the

mapping system provides a means of visualizing that material, making it possible to see spatial relationships and patterns, and the complexity of the past.<sup>17</sup> This approach lets us analyze fragmentary qualitative evidence to reveal patterns of daily life in what other studies of Harlem have treated as ephemera: businesses, sporting events and performances, dances, robberies, parades, and traffic accidents. What we found was evidence of friction with whites that gave residents of Harlem a set of grievances, in addition to the discrimination in housing and the workplace already identified by historians, that shaped life in the neighborhood and help explain what led to the rioting that began on 125<sup>th</sup> Street, at Kress' store, that evening in 1935.

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Street life is central to the perception of Harlem as a black place. James Weldon Johnson provided a classic image in the *Survey Graphic* Harlem issue, published in 1925:

A stranger who rides up magnificent Seventh Avenue on a bus or in an automobile must be struck with surprise at the transformation which takes place after he crosses One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. Beginning there, the population suddenly darkens and he rides through twenty-five solid blocks where the passers-by, the shoppers, those sitting in restaurants, coming out of theatres, standing in doorways and looking out of windows are practically all Negroes; and then he emerges where the population as suddenly becomes white again.<sup>18</sup>

Journeying on Seventh Avenue in 1925 assured a visitor a rich picture of black life in Harlem, for by then, it was Harlem's main street, christened the 'Black Broadway' by writer Wallace Thurman.<sup>19</sup> It was on Seventh Avenue, and Lenox Avenue, one block to the east, that Harlem's parades took place, frequently enough to form a staple of everyday life, and featuring the fraternal organizations and religious congregations that formed the

neighborhood's rich fabric of voluntary groups.<sup>20</sup> On the sidewalks, individuals went 'strolling.' Donning their best clothes, women, and particularly men, took to the two avenues to display their style, to socialize with friends and to meet strangers.<sup>21</sup> On some corners, speakers held forth on soapboxes, with socialists such as Hubert Harrison the first to do so.<sup>22</sup> On every corner of both avenues from 128<sup>th</sup> to 148<sup>th</sup> Streets, residents could also find numbers runners. With some degree of regularity, roughly one in two of Harlem's residents placed bets on which three-digit number would be derived that day from the returns of the New York Clearing House, and many did so with runners working the street.<sup>23</sup> On Lenox, particularly between 127<sup>th</sup> and 135<sup>th</sup> Streets, numbers runners shared the corners with prostitutes also plying their trade.<sup>24</sup> In the evenings, blacks home from work filled the sidewalk shopping and socializing.

However, just beyond the gaze of anyone making a trip on the avenue there existed a significant white presence that made Harlem's streets something other than the solidly black spaces that James Weldon Johnson evoked. If a visitor stopped, and stepped into one of the stores that lined the street, they would almost certainly have encountered white faces.<sup>25</sup> The white men and women working in these businesses did not reside in Harlem; as Edgar Grey noted in his column in the *Amsterdam News* in 1925,

each day, while hordes of Negroes are wending their way down into the subways, up to the elevated lines and on trolleys and buses, hundreds of whites, non-residents of the community, are emerging from subways, alighting from surface, transit and motor cars, to do the peaceful and pleasant task of gathering in the honey which the queen bee – the Negro – has brought to the hive.<sup>26</sup>

A survey by the *New York Age* in 1916 found that whites owned 75% of the 503 businesses in the area where blacks lived, and employed only 150 blacks. As black settlement spread,



the paper repeated its survey in 1921, finding a few more black businesses, but the proportions remained the same. By 1929, another survey reported even greater white control: 81.51% of the 10,319 businesses in black Harlem were run by whites, with no change in their refusal to employ blacks.<sup>27</sup> Only on 135<sup>th</sup> Street, and in the beauty trade, did blacks predominate. Beauty parlors made only a limited impact on white dominance of the commercial arteries, as most operated out of residences located on cross-streets rather than on the avenues, with their proprietors unable to obtain leases to stores from white landlords or loans from white-owned banks to buy premises.<sup>28</sup>

From the avenues, white businesses extended their presence into the residential streets.

White deliverymen, insurance salesmen, and rent and bill collectors all ventured on Harlem's cross streets, and into its apartment buildings and houses. Prominent among this group were ice dealers. In an era before widespread electrification, Harlem's residents and businesses relied on ice to store food as well as cool drinks. For much of the 1920s, Italians enjoyed what the *New York Age* called "a practical monopoly in serving ice to the homes of Harlem." They typically operated out of cellars, usually located near intersections, buying ice from wholesalers, who carted it from the Colonial Ice and Coal Company, on Eighth Avenue and 151<sup>st</sup> Street, and delivered it to residents and businesses in the surrounding blocks. Unlike almost all other white businessmen, at least some also lived in Harlem. Vito Passantino, for example, lived in a furnished room on West 132<sup>nd</sup> Street, and later with another black family, to whom he had sold ice for several years, at 21 Maccombs Place.<sup>29</sup>

Whites could also be found on the avenues themselves. White conductors and drivers maddened the buses that traversed Seventh Avenue and the same was true of the elevated railroad that ran up Eighth Avenue and subway that ran under Lenox Avenue.<sup>30</sup> Lenox and

Seventh Avenues saw more traffic than any other roadway north of 59<sup>th</sup> Street, filled with vehicles heading to and from events at the Polo Ground and Yankee Stadium, and throughout the night, with hundreds of “pleasure cars and taxicabs” transporting patrons of Harlem’s entertainments.<sup>31</sup> While blacks owned and drove cars, automobiles driven by whites made up most of the traffic that passed through Harlem, including the vast majority of the taxis serving the neighborhood, thanks to the refusal of the three largest taxicab companies to employ black drivers.<sup>32</sup>

At least for a time, whites also retained exclusive access to some places within Harlem. Although the Lincoln and Crescent Theatres on 135<sup>th</sup> Street quickly sought patrons from among Harlem’s new black residents, theatres on Seventh Avenue and 125<sup>th</sup> Street continued to refuse them entry or restrict them to the balcony. Less than a year after the Lafayette Theatre opened in 1912, its management realized that they could only make money if they allowed blacks into all sections of the theatre, but it took nearly another decade and a half for the black population to spread and grow enough for the theatres in the 125<sup>th</sup> Street district to face the same pressures and desegregate, beginning with the Alhambra on Seventh Avenue and 126<sup>th</sup> Street in 1926, and Loews’ on Seventh and 124<sup>th</sup> Street the following year. Other theatres resisted into the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> So too did the Hotel Theresa, across Seventh Avenue from Loew’s, Harlem’s tallest building at thirteen floors, which remained segregated until 1940.<sup>34</sup> Against this tide of desegregation, the Cotton Club and the other white-owned nightclubs catered expressly to the middle and upper class white slummers who wanted to see and hear black performance without interacting too closely with blacks. However, the segregation at these venues was not absolute, and by 1930, as white visitors began to favor smaller, black owned, racially mixed venues, they closed, relocated or reinvented themselves.<sup>35</sup>

Institutional spaces in Harlem similarly remained under white control, reflecting blacks' relative lack of influence in city politics and government. Black police officers did serve in the neighborhood, but whites made up the vast majority of the officers in the station on 135<sup>th</sup> Street, and who patrolled posts along the avenues and manned traffic posts at their major intersections.<sup>36</sup> All the firefighters based at the station on West 137<sup>th</sup> Street were white; New York City's one black firefighter worked downtown, on Broome Street.<sup>37</sup> Harlem Hospital, while it filled the block between 136<sup>th</sup> and 137<sup>th</sup> streets east of Lenox Avenue, in the very heart of the black neighborhood, had no black staff until a few nurses were hired in 1917, and no black doctors able to visit patients or conduct surgery until 1925. Although the staff slowly became more mixed over the remaining years of the decade, going to the hospital still meant entering a white space. And not only the staff were white; as late as 1929, whites made up one third of the patients, reflecting the fact that the hospital's district reached down to 110<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>38</sup> Attending school likewise took Harlem's children into spaces overseen by whites, although, unlike the hospital, by the end of the 1920s, few whites joined them. In 1928, 400 of the 500 teachers in Harlem's eight public schools were white, but only 2000 of the 15,000 pupils.<sup>39</sup> The same pattern was also evident in two of Harlem's three Catholic schools. The third, on West 151<sup>st</sup> Street, was associated with a parish in which whites were still a majority in 1929, reflecting the relatively slow pace at which blacks became the majority in Harlem's Catholic congregations.<sup>40</sup>

This white presence was also augmented by crowds numbering in the thousands who came to Harlem each evening, emerging out of lines of taxis and cars and pouring out of the subway to throng Seventh and Lenox Avenues. If in the late 1920s the greatest number made their way to the neighborhood's nightclubs and speakeasies, those were never the only

entertainments that drew outsiders to Harlem. Whites made up a significant minority of the audience at Seventh Avenue's Lafayette Theatre.<sup>41</sup> They attended basketball games at the Renaissance Ballroom, five blocks north of the theatre, and at the Manhattan Casino on Harlem's northern border, 155<sup>th</sup> Street. Boxing bouts also drew large crowds of whites to the Commonwealth Casino, the venue on East 135<sup>th</sup> owned by the white McMahon brothers. During summer afternoons in the 1910s and early 1920s, whites could also be found among the fans at baseball games at Olympic Field, a block north of the Commonwealth Casino at Fifth Avenue and 136<sup>th</sup> Street, and at Lenox Oval on 145<sup>th</sup> Street, and later at the venues in the Bronx and Washington Heights to which Harlem's teams relocated.<sup>42</sup> Part of the draw of all those sporting events for patrons of both races was that they frequently pitted blacks against whites.<sup>43</sup> But even games between black teams drew white fans. Lester Walton, covering sports for the *New York Age*, went as far as to claim in 1911 that "more whites attend baseball matches between colored clubs than colored." Most reports in the 1920s put the proportion of white fans at somewhere between one quarter and one half of crowds that numbered in the thousands.<sup>44</sup> Beyond the stands, many referees and umpires were also white, until at least the second half of the 1920s.<sup>45</sup>

Locating this white presence in Harlem raises the question of how blacks responded to the myriad interactions they had with whites within the boundaries of the neighborhood. The relative harmony evoked by James Weldon Johnson, which historians have argued could be found in nightlife, did also characterize sports events and many of the encounters between blacks and the whites who ran the neighborhood's businesses. But those commercial exchanges also produced conflict and crime, clashes echoed in residents' dealing with police, drivers, and criminals.

Black residents clashed regularly with police officers, a ubiquitous presence in Harlem, patrolling posts and wandering its streets in plainclothes. “Every one of [us] is made to feel like a soldier in an army of occupation,” one white officer complained, “engulfed by an atmosphere of antagonism.”<sup>46</sup> Policing that was both “too vigorous and too lax” fuelled that mood. On the one hand, blacks faced arrests without cause and ‘on suspicion,’ and, when in police hands, suffered random beatings, including the officially sanctioned abuse of suspects that in the 1920s acquired its label as “the third degree.” On the other hand, officers turned a blind eye toward vice in Harlem, ignoring speakeasies, numbers gambling and prostitutes – or at least those who paid to be overlooked, who were mostly white.<sup>47</sup> Harlem’s residents, individually and collectively, challenged that behavior. Early one morning in September 1927, for example, Carter Watkins, a twenty-eight-year old barber, was on the stoop of his home on St Nicholas Avenue with several companions, having recently returned from work. Two officers, one white and one black, ordered him inside. Carter refused, asserting that as a tenant he had a right to be there; the officers, claiming that he also had made an obscene remark, tried to arrest him, batons swinging. Carter’s friends scattered, but his cries brought Peter, his younger brother, to his aid. A fierce brawl resulted, leaving all four men with bruises and broken bones. The Watkins brothers alleged that they sustained at least some of their injuries after being handcuffed, in beatings administered on the way to the 135<sup>th</sup> Street station and within its walls. Two days later, when arraigned in the Magistrates Court, they were still so covered in blood and bruises that a reporter described their features as “unrecognizable.” Few residents traded blows with police to the extent that these two men did, but others did join them in taking on officers in court. The Watkins secured supporting testimony from the superintendent of their building and three women tenants, and, even more importantly, Reverend Hayes, who knew the family from Danville, Virginia, arranged for a lawyer to represent them. Such actions were not without consequences. Another man

who appeared to testify found himself under arrest, charged with assaulting the officers, a scenario that would be repeated in many other cases, although in this instance the ploy failed. After a two-day trial, Magistrate Silberman dismissed the charges against the Watkins brothers, and urged action against the officers.<sup>48</sup>

Hardly surprisingly, there were many occasions when residents were so riled by police activity that, far from waiting to challenge them in court, crowds took direct action against officers. Where court hearings took place outside Harlem, crowd actions generally occurred on the neighborhood's heavily populated arteries, Lenox and Seventh Avenues and 135<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>49</sup> Precisely what happened in such encounters was the subject of much debate in the New York press, with white papers quick to see any gathering of blacks as a riot and their black counterparts equally certain that such assemblies were marked more by curiosity than any desire to commit violence. Accounts of a disturbance on Lenox Avenue near 138<sup>th</sup> Street in July 1928 bared the completely different perceptions of the white and black press. A woman yelled out of a window at a nearby traffic police officer, Charles Kubiell, that he should stop a fleeing Clarence Donald. After a short and sharp chase Donald was apprehended. At this point the accounts divided along racial lines. The *New York Times* reported that Donald knocked Kubiell down, whereupon a crowd rushed to join him in attacking the officer. The *Age and News*, by contrast, reported that bystanders were provoked into violence by the sight of police beating Donald as he stood with his hands in the air and then striking a nearby woman who rebuked them for assaulting the suspect. Even the *Age*, however, had to admit that many of those who subsequently joined the fight had no idea what had happened. For them, it was enough that blacks were fighting police officers, an attitude that reflected, as the reporter put it, individuals "embittered against white police." Nevertheless, most of the crowd of over 2000 took no part in attacks on police, and were

easily dispersed by the firetrucks and carloads of armed police reserves summoned to the scene. Editorializing in the *Age*, Fred Moore described these bystanders as simply “unoccupied people taking the air” -- this happened after all in Lenox Avenue on a Sunday evening in summer -- drawn to the arrest by the noise, commotion and congregation of people, not, as his white colleagues claimed, by a racial hatred that made them riotous. Certainly, had black feeling been as antagonistic as the white press claimed, there were many more opportunities for disturbances than ever occurred.<sup>50</sup>

Although in July 1928 the *Age* editorialized in defence of the police – perhaps in response to criticism from the white press – and warned of the danger of Harlem cultivating a sentiment of being “agin the police,” generally the paper took the lead in protesting about police violence. Marilynn Johnson has argued that anti-brutality activism lay largely dormant in the 1920s, pointing to the small number of cases taken up by the NAACP.<sup>51</sup> Notwithstanding that quiescence, the *Age* extensively covered cases of police brutality, including six months worth of stories about the death of Hubert Dent in police custody in 1922.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps in part because of that stance, victims of police violence, their families, and witnesses came to the paper, and its editor Fred Moore, for help. He advised them how to gather evidence and take action, sometimes even going to the police station to help make a complaint, arranged for lawyers, and wrote to the Police Commissioner and District Attorney on their behalf. Such efforts succeeded in having some officers put on trial or brought before Deputy Commissioner for disciplinary hearings, even if ultimately they were rarely held accountable.<sup>53</sup> Moore also campaigned for more law enforcement, most famously by regularly publishing a list of addresses that housed speakeasies, in an unsuccessful effort to stir the police to action. The *Age* championed the hiring of more black police officers, and celebrated their achievements. Not numbered among the successes of these black officers,

however, was a reduction in tension between residents and the police. Possibly demonstrating some of the pressures of surviving in the police force, black officers featured in the attacks on both the Watkins brothers and Clarence Donald and behaved in ways that were indistinguishable from their white colleagues.<sup>54</sup>

Traffic accidents involving white drivers led to clashes similar to those precipitated by policing. In the mid-1920s, an average of almost ten people a day, including two children, suffered injuries in automobile accidents between 130th and 155<sup>th</sup> Streets, most on the avenues. Traffic police, stationed at the most dangerous intersections over the course of the 1920s thanks to the agitation of black leaders, could not control the traffic. In fact, on at least one occasion, Officer Reuben Carter, the black officer who manned one of Harlem's most prominent intersections, was himself hit by a vehicle while at his post.<sup>55</sup> Nor did the signal lights installed on the avenues in 1928 appear to help much; a misunderstanding of the signals was a common explanation for crashes.<sup>56</sup> Given that most drivers, including all those driving public transport and most behind the wheel of taxis, were white, many crashes were interracial affairs. Some flared into confrontations that drew in bystanders in the same way that clashes with police did. Such was the case one afternoon in June 1925, when a crosstown streetcar hit a black laborer named Thomas Emanuel as he tried to cross 145<sup>th</sup> Street near Seventh Avenue. Apparently he suffered only minor injuries, at least until he demanded an explanation from the white motorman. A short pithy insult directed at the black man led to blows and then another motorman joined in and countless bystanders followed suit. A wild brawl, accompanied by a cacophony of swearing, screaming women and children, whistles and car horns, ensued for some twenty-five minutes, stopping traffic, and ending only when a police officer finally arrived. In a decision suggestive of the way things were in Harlem, police charged Emanuel, and not with assault, but with inciting a



riot.<sup>57</sup> Given the white presence in Harlem, blacks could not always count on the odds being in their favour in such clashes. When Dr. Perry Cheney started arguing with a white man after their vehicles were involved in a collision at the corner of Eighth Avenue and 145<sup>th</sup> Street in December 1926, he soon found himself surrounded by a group of whites. At least one, John Torpey, allegedly admitted that he had “rushed into the fight merely on the basis of color without waiting to determine who was right.” In the ensuing “free-for-all,” Cheney drew a pocketknife and stabbed Torpey. While his action scattered much of the crowd, Cheney ultimately paid a high price for that respite. Arrested and charged with assault, the black man failed to convince a jury that he had acted in self-defence, and was sentenced to a term of eighteen months to three years in Sing Sing prison.<sup>58</sup>

Whites who visited Harlem could also draw hostile reactions, depending on where they went. Those seeking sex and cheap liquor on Harlem’s street corners and side streets provoked more antagonism than did those patronizing entertainment venues. Some men in search of prostitutes mistakenly approached respectable black women, inflaming both the women and male bystanders.<sup>59</sup> More often, white men in search of a ‘good time’ became the prey of thieves, who took advantage of their unfamiliarity with the neighborhood. George Domurant, a nineteen-year-old elevator operator from the Bronx, and his friend, Edward Zarabinski, were walking on Lenox Avenue one evening in January 1930 when Eddie Robinson approached them. He offered to take them to an address where they could get “a drink and a girl.” The two men followed Robinson east down West 129<sup>th</sup> Street, into number 31, and up the stairs. Two black men entered the hallway behind the group, pulled knives and robbed Domurant and Zarabinski of \$15 and stripped them of their overcoats.<sup>60</sup> Such interracial crimes did not dissuade slummers and johns from spending time in Harlem, or at least on the avenues and in entertainment venues. Two men robbed in 1926, after being lured into a

hallway with promises that they would find prostitutes, were back in Harlem seven weeks later, attending a show at the Lafayette Theater, when they recognized one of their assailants.<sup>61</sup>

Whites making sales calls, delivering goods and collecting bills had no choice but to leave the avenues and traverse Harlem's residential streets and enter buildings, making them easy pickings for thieves. The appearance in the Washington Heights Court of an eight-man gang arrested for more than 75 hallway robberies in November 1925 drew a crowd of "delivery drivers for Gimbel Bros., Macy's, Hearn's and Best's, old gray-haired insurance collectors and real estate agents" to file complaints against them.<sup>62</sup> Thieves also targeted ice dealers and taxi drivers who ventured into Harlem's residential streets to do business.<sup>63</sup> As almost the only whites on those blocks, they were conspicuous, and consequently readily identifiable as worth robbing. Nonetheless, like slummers and johns, they did not abandon Harlem - although many likely joined Frederick McKee, a gas company collector, in changing their approach after being robbed. He armed himself with a revolver, and, in December 1928, shot one of a trio of men who tried to rob him.<sup>64</sup> Salesmen, deliverymen and collectors continued to visit because black residents did business with them, in effect encouraging and inviting a white presence in their buildings and at their front doors, if not necessarily inside their homes.

More accommodation characterized race relations at sporting events in Harlem, a situation that seemed to parallel that within the nightclubs to which thousands of middle and upper class whites flocked in the 1920s. Harlem's sports venues did not segregate spectators, as theatres did, nor did the seating limit encounters between blacks and whites as the tables in nightclubs did. Despite the racial mingling that must have taken place, the only reported

racial violence came at a baseball game in 1911. In the midst of a contest between a black athletic club and a Harlem-based white team, a dispute over the size of the glove being used by the black shortstop grew into a fight involving both teams and fans.<sup>65</sup> Although only a white newspaper, the *Harlem Home News*, reported that incident, the absence of similar violence in game reports in the *Age* and the *Amsterdam News* through the 1920s gives some credence to *News* sportswriter Sol White's description of the home ground of the Lincoln Giants, the white-owned team based in Harlem, as a place where "creed, color and all the prejudice flesh is heir to is smothered in the regard for true sportsmanship."<sup>66</sup> Although the press reported no violent clashes at basketball games or boxing bouts, tensions did exist within the crowds.<sup>67</sup> Romeo Dougherty, the sports editor of the *Amsterdam News*, characterized many white boxing fans as "hoping to see the colored fighters knocked from their thrones, and...to enjoy the satisfaction of witnessing the defeat of the colored boys."<sup>68</sup> By the same token, Gus Amos, the white assistant matchmaker at the Commonwealth Casino, complained that, "Whenever the Negro fighters win from white opponents at this club, and they usually win, their supporters become so enthusiastic that they often make unsportsmanlike and sometimes insulting remarks to the white fans." Black fans rarely went further, but when they felt a black fighter had been cheated of a win over a white opponent, Amos recounted, they did throw peanuts and pieces of hot dog, but seemingly at the judges and referee, not the white fans.<sup>69</sup> Similar feelings permeated basketball games, extending even to contests played outside Harlem. An *Amsterdam News* story in 1929 scolded the champion Renaissance team, which rarely lost in Harlem, for its record away from the neighborhood, where its "urge to win does not seem to be so strong," reminding the managers and players that "when they meet the best of the white teams, we look on them as our representatives and expect them to give the best in them to uphold our claim to the front rank."<sup>70</sup>

Part of what appeared to keep these antagonisms from flaring into conflict was the showmanship that characterized many black sporting performances. Bernie Butler, a sports columnist in *The Interstate Tattler*, complained that the “majority [of white fans] go for the buffoonery and the amusing actions and atmosphere to be found at [black baseball games].”<sup>71</sup> Other commentators used less critical terms; the *New York Age*, for example, attributed the crowds to the fact that blacks “play with more spirit and present a more colourful game.”<sup>72</sup> Whether entertainment or a particular black style, the showmanship of black sports helped, as Davarian Baldwin argues, keep white fans laughing rather than resorting to violence in the face of black success, as well as helping athletes manage the unequal application of rules by white officials and insecure guarantee of sportsmanship by white opponents. Moreover, as he notes, it also served a commercial imperative, providing a distinctive attraction and keeping fans interested in lop-sided games.<sup>73</sup> Certainly, scheduling interracial contests and attracting and accommodating white fans improved the commercial viability of many black teams and venues, just as the presence of white slummers was crucial to the broader economy of Harlem. When *Amsterdam News* columnist Edgar Grey investigated Harlem’s nightlife in 1927, he found “thousands of people earning a living from the activities of the community after dark.” Most of those blacks could be found outside the white-owned nightclubs: Grey spoke to 172 black taxi drivers who made much of their income ferrying whites, as well as locating “restaurants, night barber shops and tea rooms” that catered to white visitors.<sup>74</sup>

Reactions to white businesses in Harlem were even more mixed than to whites visiting the neighborhood. Although some businessmen “were shrewd enough to hold prejudice in restraint for the sake of trade,” as columnist Kelly Miller put it, hostility, like that elicited by

police and drivers, certainly bubbled to the surface.<sup>75</sup> Ordinary transactions erupted into conflicts that drew in other blacks. The screams of a black customer, for example, attracted an angry crowd of several hundred to a hat-cleaning and shoe-shining establishment on Lenox Avenue in July 1930. She had been arguing with the white proprietor, Philip Nasselbaum, over ribbon missing from a hat that she had had him clean, when he allegedly struck her. With the crowd besieging the shop, a police officer on the scene had to summon a squad in order to arrest Nasselbaum and protect his store.<sup>76</sup> Poor service, a lack of respect, cheating, and racist jibes all provoked black customers into similar angry challenges to white control of Harlem's retail spaces and banks.<sup>77</sup> However, in most cases, residents did not respond to objectionable behavior with confrontations. The *Age* lamented that instead most customers "meekly accepted" their treatment.<sup>78</sup> Characteristically more biting in its judgement, the *Interstate Tattler* noted that, aside from the occasional West Indian woman or housewife fresh from the South, "the rest of us seem to glory in being victimized," with women of the notion that "to insist on getting what they ask for or to protest against short weight would not be ladylike."<sup>79</sup>

More was at work in continued patronage of white businesses than a lack of fortitude or a concern with respectability. Some residents actually preferred them, choosing not to spend their money in stores run by members of their own race, and refusing to make payments to black collectors, to be served by black waiters or taxi drivers, or to be examined by black physicians. In explaining their behavior, those residents claimed white businesses carried more stock, provided better service and charged lower prices, and that white professionals had greater skill.<sup>80</sup> And in many cases, thanks to the refusal of whites to provide blacks with capital and access to training, they were correct. The *Age*, a relentless spruiker of black enterprise, accepted such complaints in regards to an older generation of businessmen, "the

old time, slow, sleepy negro business man,” with “his gloomy, half-lit, half-stocked place of business,” but pronounced the 1920s a new era, in which “keener men” would win black patronage.<sup>81</sup> The experiences of one firm celebrated by the paper suggested otherwise. Bell and Delaney, a menswear store in a new building on the corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Seventh Avenue, managed by William K. Bell, and backed by Hubert Delaney, an assistant US District Attorney and his sister Sarah, a high school teacher, had the fittings and fashions of “a regular Fifth Avenue shop,” not to mention the imprimatur of its middle-class owners. When the business celebrated its fifth anniversary in 1930, the *Age* lauded it as a success.<sup>82</sup> Bell wrote the paper to qualify that achievement:

It has not been an easy task to go these five years....Our people, at first, are slow in patronizing their own businesses, because a great many of them think that their own just cannot give them the same values that other people give for the same prices. But just stick long enough with fair business methods, and gain their confidence, and many in our group will walk any number of blocks to spend one nickel with you.<sup>83</sup>

More often than not, however, residents chose to walk right on by black businesses, and into the stores of their white competitors. They would not support the race at the expense of their ability to consume equally, as Americans. Alongside all that happened in Harlem to give blacks a new consciousness of what they could achieve, shopping offered a contrary picture of the race’s limitations, one reinforced by repetition.

While residents largely ignored black businesses, whites did resist efforts by blacks to move into at least one form of commerce, the ice trade. Italian icemen secured their trade against black competition through agreements with janitors and superintendents for exclusive access to a building’s residents.<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, by 1931 the number of blacks dealing in ice grew to 120, selling more tonnage than any single white company. Vito Passantino’s experiences

suggest that some of those gains had been achieved by force. When he opened a cellar on West 148<sup>th</sup> Street, a black dealer across the street threatened him if he did not close. Subsequently the sign in front of his cellar was stolen, and in the following months, his cart broken and advertising board taken, and he also lost a number of customers. Within a few months Passantino abandoned the business.<sup>85</sup> In July 1931, two Italian companies, fighting over who would control the Harlem trade, now the richest in the city thanks to the spread of electrification in the rest of New York, began selling ice at half price. As black retailers saw their business melt away, some responded with violence: one, having carried a 75 pound block of ice up five flights of stairs only to find a white dealer had taken his customer, later assaulted his rival with an ice stick. A new organization also appeared, the Afro Ice Dealers Association, which threw itself into the price war, undercutting the white companies. With the support of the Harlem Housewives League and the National Negro Business League, they took to the streets in trucks displaying placards adorned with the Association's name, and slogans such as 'Give Us A Break,' and went house to house. Harlem's residents gave them their business, even when the Italian companies countered by staffing their trucks with black workers, and within ten days a truce had been negotiated, returning prices to their original levels.<sup>86</sup> Whether the end of discounted prices also saw black customers return their custom to white dealers was not reported.

Tensions created by efforts to extend black economic activities in Harlem paled in comparison with the upheaval that resulted when whites attempted to gain control of the neighborhood's most lucrative enterprise. Marginalized in the legitimate economy, a small group of blacks found success outside the law, running gambling on numbers. Invented in 1920 or 1921, numbers had by 1924 exploded into a racket turning over tens of millions of dollars every year. Confined in the 1920s to black neighborhoods, and taking the form of

thousands upon thousands of small bets of only a few cents, numbers largely escaped the attention of whites outside Harlem. Not so the white gangsters and bootleggers who ran most of the neighborhood's clubs and speakeasies. In 1924, and then again in 1931, whites tried to take over the industry, first Moe Immerman, Hyman Kassell, and a group of Jewish bootleggers, and later Dutch Schultz, a Bronx bootlegger with ties to the Mafia. As well as trying to lure black runners and collectors into their employ, paying black bankers' debts when a popular number hit in return for a share of the business and using their police contacts to have competitors harassed, white gangsters employed a strategy that reflected the neighborhood's spatial order: they attempted to shift the locus of numbers gambling from the apartment block and street, from black Harlem, to its stores, the businesses run by whites, including a chain of stationery stores Kassell established and staffed with his relatives.<sup>87</sup>

While both Immerman's group and Schultz wrested much of the numbers racket away from blacks, neither gained control of the game in Harlem. Much of the explanation for that failure lies in the way residents reacted to the white incursions. The *New York Age* and its editor Fred Moore campaigned against gambling, helping in 1926 to provoke a police crackdown on businesses running numbers that increased the costs of the racket and cut white bankers off from their customers. More tellingly, black players showed a reluctance to place their bets with whites. Collecting a bet involved a performance that selling illegal liquor or groceries did not, talking easily and well in a banter drawn from the details and dreams of life in Harlem and the slang it spawned to create a sense of intimacy. Whites struggled to hit the cultural notes in tone and manner that accompanied playing the numbers, and even to gain a hearing when they called at homes to collect bets. As the black writer Claude McKay noted, in this context, "colored folk are not comfortable with whites penetrating into their homes."<sup>88</sup> Black runners and collectors responded to the white



takeovers by organizing, and appealed to residents to patronize independent black bankers, and on occasion went on strike. At the same time numbers queen Stephanie St Clair directly challenged Schultz, attacking his businesses and unleashing a wave of violence and killings. After a white assassin's bullet finally put an end to Dutch Schultz and his efforts to control numbers in 1935, blacks and whites reached an accommodation. Most of the money bet on numbers continued to leave the neighborhood, but blacks operated some banks and handled most of the day to day operations of the game, which, as had been the case from its invention, took place largely in Harlem's black spaces, its residences rather than its businesses.<sup>89</sup>

Such encounters puncture any sense that Harlem offered a world apart from whites or a realm in which blacks could relax their concern about racial discrimination and violence. To be sure, there were a multitude of places within Harlem controlled by blacks, mostly residences, but also churches, fraternal lodges and some dance halls and theatres. But white controlled businesses and public places ran through the heart of Harlem, fragmenting the black district in ways obscured by maps that represent the district as a solid area of black residences. Mapping the places that made up Harlem and the breadth of everyday life that occurred within them reveals the variety of interactions that blacks had with the whites within the neighborhood. In keeping with James Weldon Johnson's picture of racial harmony, residents shared sporting venues as well as nightspots with white visitors without incident. They also gave their custom to white storeowners who did business in Harlem, and used services supplied by or managed by whites. However, they also experienced hostility, exploitation, and violence from some police officers, drivers, visitors, business owners and gangsters, and reacted by contesting and resisting that conduct. Such friction with whites within the neighborhood, of longer standing than unequal treatment in the New Deal and the

breakdown of political organizations targeting white businesses, and as much a part of black life as discrimination in housing and the workplace, helped trigger the reaction of residents to what happened on 125<sup>th</sup> Street that evening in March 1935. In the context of the contestation, negotiation, resistance, and accommodation we have examined in this article, the riot was not an abrupt departure from the character of Harlem in the 1920s, nor a sudden explosion of violence. Racial tensions and violent clashes with whites were a recurrent feature of everyday life. What appears new in 1935 is not the violence, but its scale: if James Weldon Johnson's stranger had taken his journey on the morning after the riot, along with crowds of blacks, he would have seen white shopowners cleaning up the 697 plate glass windows shattered by their black customers.<sup>90</sup>

## NOTES

[This article draws on evidence and maps from our web site *Digital Harlem* < <http://www.acl.arts.usyd.edu.au/harlem> >. Rather than reproducing static maps in this article, we have included links to posts on the *Digital Harlem Blog* that contain images and discussions of the maps, with details of how to recreate those maps on the site itself. Maps on the site provide access to the details of our sources. The maps are also dynamic, allowing users to combine the sources in ways we have not and explore other topics and issues.]

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<sup>1</sup> For descriptions of 125<sup>th</sup> Street, see Jervis Anderson, *This Was Harlem: 1900-1950* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), 47 and 236.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper, 1971), xvi; James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Da Capo, 1930), 147.

In recognition of the diverse origins of the people of color who lived in Harlem, we identify only those born in the United States as African American. When an individual's origins are not specified, we identify him or her as black. We also employ black when referring to the community as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> *The Complete Report of Mayor La Guardia's Commission on the Harlem Riot of March 19, 1935* (New York: Arno Press, 1969).

<sup>4</sup> Osofsky, 121; Anderson, 66-67; David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin, 1981), 26, 109, 163-64, 219, 221; Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, "Or Does It Explode?" *Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 27; Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 127-28, 130, 146-47; Marcy Sacks, *Before Harlem: The Black Experience in New York City Before World War I* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 84-85, 93-94.

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<sup>5</sup> Roger Biles, “*Black Milwaukee and the Ghetto Synthesis*,” *Journal of Urban History* 33, 4 (2007): 540. For examples of the first generation of scholarship, see Osofsky; David Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); and Kenneth Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); For the second generation of scholarship, see Joe Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks’ Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Albert Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993); Kimberley Phillips, *Alabama North: African-American Migrants, Community and Working-class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Davarian Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); and Christopher Robert Reed, *The Rise of Chicago’s Black Metropolis 1920-1929* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011). For brief mentions of white businesses in black communities, see Allan Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 184; and Richard W Thomas, *Life for Us Is*

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*What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 208-14.

<sup>6</sup> Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the early twentieth century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 83-85, 115, 150-154 (quotation on 85); Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 189-230; Michael Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 214-16, 222, 225; Shane Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 23, 43, 64-65, 80-84.

<sup>7</sup> For just one example, see George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> James Weldon Johnson, "The Making of Harlem," *Survey Graphic* 6, 6 (March 1925): 639.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 156.

<sup>10</sup> St. Clair Drake and Horace Clayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in A Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1945) 1993), 387; Grossman, 262-65; Sacks, 195.

<sup>11</sup> See the studies cited in note 5.

<sup>12</sup> The legal records examined for this article are the Manhattan District Attorney's case files, held in Municipal Archives in New York City. As vast collection includes all the felony cases held for trial, we gathered a sample consisting of all the case files involving blacks that we identified from the years 1916/1917, 1920, 1925, 1928, and 1930, a total of 2929 cases.

<sup>13</sup> We ourselves have analyzed the crucial role that membership of churches, fraternal organizations, social clubs, and sports teams played in allowing Harlem residents to manage the social realities of living in the neighborhood. See "This Harlem Life: Black

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Families and Everyday Life in the 1920s and 1930s,” *Journal of Social History* 44, 1 (2010): 97-122.

<sup>14</sup> David Bodenhamer, John Corrigan and Trevor Harris, “Introduction,” in *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship*, eds. David Bodenhamer, John Corrigan and Trevor Harris (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), vii-xiv.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 147; Osofsky, xv-xvii; Greenberg, i; Stephen Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African-American Culture, 1920-1930* (New York: Pantheon, 1995)

<sup>16</sup> *Digital Harlem* <<http://www.acl.arts.usyd.edu.au/harlem/>>; Ian Gregory and Paul Ell, *Historical GIS: Technologies, Methodologies and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 185.

<sup>17</sup> For discussions of historical GIS, see Gregory and Ell, 1-19, 89-90; Anne Kelly Knowles, “GIS and History,” in *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data and GIS are Changing Historical Scholarship*, ed. Anne Kelly Knowles (Redlands, CA.: ESRI Press, 2008), 2-7; and David Bodenhamer, “History and GIS: Implications for the Discipline,” in *Placing History*, 222-230.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, “The Making of Harlem,” 635.

<sup>19</sup> Wallace Thurman, “Negro Life in New York’s Harlem: A Lively Picture of a Popular and Interesting Section” (1927), in *The Collected Writings of Wallace Thurman*, eds. Amritjit and Daniel M Scott III (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press 2003), 40-41. See also the chapter on Seventh Avenue in Anderson, 319-323.

<sup>20</sup> Johnson, “Making of Harlem,” 636; Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 168-69; Stephen Robertson, “Parades in 1920s Harlem,” *Digital Harlem Blog* <<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/pardes-in-1920s-harlem/>>

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<sup>21</sup> Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 163; Anderson, 321-23; Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin': African-American Expressive Culture from Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 225-36.

<sup>22</sup> Watkins-Owens, 92-111; Stephen Robertson, "Harlem's Soapbox Speakers," *Digital Harlem Blog* <<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2011/02/01/parades-in-1920s-harlem/>>

<sup>23</sup> Shane White, Stephen Garton, Stephen Robertson and Graham White, *Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem Between the Wars* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Robertson, "Prostitution Arrests," *Digital Harlem Blog* <<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2009/10/05/prostitution-arrests/>>

<sup>25</sup> Most street vendors were also white; see *Amsterdam News (AN)*, November 5, 1930, 11; and Stephen Robertson, "Harlem's Street Vendors," *Digital Harlem Blog* <<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2011/01/05/harlems-street-vendors/>>

<sup>26</sup> *AN*, May 13, 1925, 16.

<sup>27</sup> *New York Age (NYA)*, March 9-April 27, 1916, 1; *NYA*, February 5-April 23, 1921, 1; Greenberg, 27.

<sup>28</sup> On 135<sup>th</sup> Street, see *NYA*, April 9, 1921, 1, 2; and Frances Blascoer, *Colored School Children in New York* (New York: Public Education Association of the City of New York, 1915), 72-73). On beauty shops, see George Haynes, "Impressions from a Preliminary Study of Negroes in Harlem, Borough of New York City, 1921," Folder 1, Box 1, George Edmund Haynes Papers (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture); James N. Simms, *Simms' Blue Book and National Negro Business and Professional Directory* (Chicago: Simms, 1923), 192-96, and Stephen Robertson, "Harlem's Beauty Parlors," *Digital Harlem Blog* <<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2010/09/10/beauty-parlors/>>. On white landlords

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unwillingness to lease to blacks, see *NYA*, March 9, 1916, 1; *NYA*, April 6, 1916, 1; *NYA*, March 19, 1921, 1.

<sup>29</sup> *NYA*, July 21, 1928, 1; Court of General Sessions Probation Department Case File (PDCF), 15760 (1930). We have employed pseudonyms for individuals on probation, as required by Municipal Archives. See also Stephen Robertson, "Ice Dealers in Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s," *Digital Harlem Blog* < <http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2010/08/01/ice-dealers-in-harlem-in-the-1920s-and-1930s/> >

<sup>30</sup> Joshua Freeman, *In Transit: The Transport Workers Union in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 28; Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 106; *AN*, July 30, 1930, 11.

<sup>31</sup> *AN*, June 8, 1927, 14; *World*, October 16, 1927, 15M; *AN*, June 20, 1928, 8.

<sup>32</sup> *NYA*, September 8, 1923, 1. A story in the *Age* claimed that 5000 blacks in Harlem had automobile licenses in 1920 (August 20, 1920, 2).

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, 110-11; *NYA*, June 21, 1919, 1; *Tattler*, November 2, 1924; *PC*, December 3, 1927.

<sup>34</sup> Anderson, 320; *AN*, July 30, 1930, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Heap, 82; Lerner, 218; Vogel, 80-85.

<sup>36</sup> James Lardner and Thomas Reppetto, *NYPD: A City and Its Police* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 240-41; *World*, October 16, 1927, 15M.

<sup>37</sup> *AN*, March 9, 1927, 14; *AN*, September 21, 1927, 1.

<sup>38</sup> *World*, April 27, 1930, 6E; Arthur Davidson, "A History of Harlem Hospital," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 56, 5 (September 1957): 373-380. There were several small black-run private hospitals in Harlem, but their cost put them out of the reach of all but the most-wealthy residents. They too had white patients. See Stephen Robertson, "Harlem's



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Hospitals,” *Digital Harlem Blog*

<<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2010/06/01/harlems-hospitals/>>

<sup>39</sup> *World*, July 1, 1928, 7E.

<sup>40</sup> *World*, Sept 29, 1929, 6E.

<sup>41</sup> David Freeland, *Automats, Taxis Dances and Vaudeville: Excavating Manhattan’s Lost Places and Leisure* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 143; Johnson, *Black Manhattan*, 173-74.

<sup>42</sup> For examples of whites at basketball games, see *AN*, April 1, 1925, 4; and Bob Kuska, *Hot Potato: How Washington and New York Gave Birth to Black Basketball and Changed America’s Game Forever* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 151. For examples of whites at boxing, see *NYA*, Oct 7, 1922, 7; *NYA*, April 7, 1923, 7. For examples of whites at baseball games, see *NYA*, August 10, 1911, 6; *NYA*, May 22, 1920, 6; *NYA*, July 19, 1930, 6. See also Stephen Robertson, “Basketball in 1920s Harlem,” *Digital Harlem Blog* <<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2011/06/03/basketball-in-1920s-harlem/>>; and Stephen Robertson, “Harlem and baseball in the 1920s,” <<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2011/07/27/baseball-1920s-harlem/>>;

<sup>43</sup> For the drawing power of interracial basketball games, see *AN*, February 28, 1923, 4; *AN*, Oct 17, 1923, 4.

<sup>44</sup> *NYA*, 29 June 1911. For reports of white fans, see *NYA*, Aug 17, 1911; *NYA*, August 15, 1912; *NYA* May 5, 1923; *NYA*, June 2, 1923.

<sup>45</sup> In the 1920s, black baseball teams began employing some black umpires, but never fully committed to replacing white officials, who they insisted were more qualified and better equipped to enforce discipline during games. See Neil Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball: The Rise and Ruin of a Black Institution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004),

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173-74. For a black owned team supplying a black umpire for an interracial game, see *NYA*, May 22, 1920, 6. For the use of white referees in basketball games, see Kuska, 32, 86.

<sup>46</sup> *The Crisis*, 52 (January 1945): 16-17, cited in Osofsky, 148.

<sup>47</sup> Khalil Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 247-263 (quotation on 249); Marilyn Johnson, *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 114, 134-140, 182

<sup>48</sup> *AN*, September 28, 1927, 1; *NYA*, October 1, 1927, 1

<sup>49</sup> *NYA*, August 20, 1921, 1; *NYA*, May 10, 1924, 1; *NYA*, June 12, 1926, 1; *AN*, August 25, 1926, 3; *AN*, July 31, 1929, 2.

<sup>50</sup> *New York Times (NYT)*, July 23, 1928, 1; *NYT*, July 24, 1928, 23; *AN*, July 25, 1928, 1; *NYA*, July 28, 1928, 1; *AN*, August 1, 1928, 1; *NYA*, August 4, 1928, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Marilyn Johnson, 181-84.

<sup>52</sup> For Hubert Dent, see *NYA*, July 1, 1922, 1, 5; *NYA*, July 8, 1922, 1, 5; *NYA*, July 15, 1922, 1; *NYA*, July 29, 1922, 1; *NYA*, August 5, 1922, 1, 2; *NYA*, September 2, 1922, 1; *NYA*, November 11, 1922, 1, 2; *NYA*, January 27, 1923, 1. For other examples, see *NYA*, August 19, 1922, 1; *NYA*, May 10, 1924, 1; *NYA*, March 24, 1928, 1; *NYA*, March 8, 1930, 1. Since this article was written, Shannon King has discussed the July 1928 clash in his "Ready to Shoot and Do Shoot": Black Working-Class Self-Defense and Community Politics in Harlem, New York, during the 1920s," *Journal of Urban History* 37, 5 (2011): 757-74. Without discussing the evidence presented here about the *Age's* activities, he has characterized it as defending the police, and credited the *Amsterdam News* coverage after the 1928 riot for taking the lead in urging organized action against police violence.

<sup>53</sup> *NYA*, April 14, 1923, 1; *NYA*, March 24, 1928, 1; *NYA*, June 9, 1928, 1; *NYA*, July 21, 1928, 1

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<sup>54</sup> *NYA*, August 9, 1924, 1; *NYA*, September 22, 1928, 1; *NYA*, March 28, 1925, 1; *NYA*, June 1, 1929, 1; *NYA*, October 12, 1929, 1. See also Marilyn Johnson, 183-84.

<sup>55</sup> *AN*, July 11, 1923, 12; *AN*, June 20, 1928, 8; *NYA*, September 15, 1928, 1; *World*, October 16, 1927, 15M; *NYA*, July 11, 1925, 1

<sup>56</sup> *AN*, June 20, 1928, 8; *NYA*, July 7, 1928, 1; *NYA*, July 28, 1928, 3; Stephen Robertson, "Traffic Accidents in 1920s Harlem," *Digital Harlem Blog*

<<http://digitalharlemblog.wordpress.com/2010/04/01/traffic-accidents-in-1920s-harlem/>>

<sup>57</sup> *AN*, July 1, 1925, 1.

<sup>58</sup> *AN*, December 29, 1926, 1; *AN*, January 26, 1927, 1; *AN*, October 19, 1927, 1; *AN*, October 26, 1927, 1, 2.

<sup>59</sup> *AN*, October 7, 1925, 1.

<sup>60</sup> District Attorneys Closed Case Files (DACCF) 179931 (1930) (Municipal Archives, New York City). For another example, see DACCF 182706 (1930).

<sup>61</sup> *AN*, September 22, 1926, 3.

<sup>62</sup> *AN*, November 11, 1925, 1. For other examples, see DACCF 160397 (1925) and DACCF 182637 (1930); *AN*, July 2, 1925, 2; *AN*, March 3, 1926, 3; *AN*, July 31, 1929, 2; *AN*, October 22, 1930, 3.

<sup>63</sup> DACCF 161272 (1925); DACCF 182364 (1930).

<sup>64</sup> *AN*, December 12, 1928, 1. See also *AN*, July 31, 1929, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, 69.

<sup>66</sup> "At the Oval," *AN*, April 23, 1930, 16. Such an atmosphere seemed to also exist when black teams played in the stadiums of white major league teams; see *NYA*, May 22, 1920, 7 (an interracial game).

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<sup>67</sup> For accounts of similar tensions and violence at sporting events in Chicago, see Baldwin, 224-25 and Gerald Gems, "Blocked Shot: The Development of Basketball in the African American Community of Chicago," *Journal of Sport History* 22, 2 (1995): 135-48.

<sup>68</sup> Romeo Dougherty, "Lenox Sports Club Should Fall in Line," *AN*, January 21, 1925; A defensive report on mixed bouts at Commonwealth Sports Club reported that, "About four thousand people witnessed this bout, about half of whom were colored. There was no disorder whatever." See *NYA*, Oct 7, 1922, 7.

<sup>69</sup> *NYA*, January 16, 1926, 6

<sup>70</sup> *AN*, February 6, 1929

<sup>71</sup> *Interstate Tattler*, January 6, 1928, 11

<sup>72</sup> *NYA*, October 19, 1935, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Baldwin, 228-32. See also the discussion in Adrian Burgos, *Cuban Star: How One Negro-League Owner Changed the Face of Baseball* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 85-8, 149-50.

<sup>74</sup> *AN*, April 6, 1927, 16.

<sup>75</sup> *AN*, March 25, 1925, 16.

<sup>76</sup> *AN*, July 23, 1930, 2.

<sup>77</sup> *NYA*, July 10, 1920, 1; *NYA*, October 6, 1923, 1; *AN*, January 15, 1930, 8; *AN*, October 28, 1930, 4.

<sup>78</sup> *NYA*, July 28, 1928, 3.

<sup>79</sup> *Interstate Tattler*, January 4, 1929, 1

<sup>80</sup> *NYA*, April 13, 1916, 1, 2; *NYA*, September 30, 1922, 1; *NYA*, June 23, 1923, 1; *AN*, February 16, 1927, 4; *PC*, August 13, 1927, 3; *The World*, Aug 19, 1928, 8E; *AN*, March 25, 1925, 16.

<sup>81</sup> *NYA*, July 17, 1920, 1.

<sup>82</sup> *AN*, July 29, 1925, 8; *AN*, July 23, 1930, 2.

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<sup>83</sup> *AN*, July 30, 1930, 20

<sup>84</sup> *AN*, May 30, 1928, 8; *NYA*, July 21, 1928, 1.

<sup>85</sup> PDCF 15760 (1930).

<sup>86</sup> *AN*, July 15, 1931, 1, 3; *AN*, August 5, 1931, 3; *AN*, August 12, 1931, 2; *NYA*, August 8, 1931, 1.

<sup>87</sup> White, Garton, Robertson and White, 102-119, 175-99.

<sup>88</sup> Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1940), 113

<sup>89</sup> White, Garton, Robertson and White, 102-119, 175-99, 230-43

<sup>90</sup> *NYT*, March 30, 1935, 17.