

**Masaryk University
Faculty of Arts**

**Department of English
and American Studies**

Literatures in English

Mgr. et Mgr. Jan Beneš, M.A.

***Black Empire of the Air: Black Aviation
in the Harlem Renaissance and George
S. Schuyler's Serialized Fiction***

Dissertation

Supervisor: doc. PhDr. Tomáš Pospíšil, Ph.D.

2018

*I declare that I have worked on this dissertation independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*

.....
Author's signature

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor, doc. PhDr. Tomáš Pospíšil, Ph.D. for his kind patience, support, and invaluable advice. I also want to express my gratitude to Dr. Kateřina Prajznerová, Dr. Amy Earhart, Dr. Ira Dworkin, Dr. Violet Johnson, the Czech Educational Foundation of Texas, and my family who have all supported and guided me through the writing process and my studies at Masaryk University and Texas A&M University.

Table of Contents

- INTRODUCTION1**
- 1. THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THREE BLACK NEWSPAPERS 25**
- 2. AVIATION’S MESSAGE OF GOODWILL WITH MILITARY THREAT IN THE BLACK PRESS 32**
 - 2.1 Origins of Black Aviation’s Goodwill Message36**
 - 2.1.1 Aviation as Military Threat: The Tulsa Race Riot, Marcus Garvey, and the Black Press37
 - 2.2 Bessie Coleman: Black Aviation’s Joan of Arc42**
 - 2.3 Coleman’s Successors: Joel “Ace” Foreman and Hubert Fauntleroy Julian49**
 - 2.3.1 Hubert Julian’s Goodwill Message52
 - 2.4 Lindbergh, the Black Press, and Aviation Editorials58**
- 3. THE AVIATION CAMPAIGN: EDUCATION, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES, AND REPRESENTATION 68**
 - 3.1 William J. Powell’s Creation of and Contribution to the Aviation Campaign68**
 - 3.2 Educating Harlem: Black Aviation in New York and the South.....96**
 - 3.3 Black Aviation Education in Chicago: John C. Robinson, Female Aviators, and Military Displays 104**
 - 3.6 Flying the Distance: Breaking Geographical and Racial Barriers 146**
 - 3.6.1 The Loudest Voice of Black Aviation: Hubert Julian149
 - 3.6.2. Flying Haiti 162
 - 3.6.3 Writing the First Transcontinental Flight and Erasing Another Boundary173
 - 3.6.4 Forsythe and Anderson’s Goodwill Flights for Interracial Understanding180
 - 3.7 The Next War Will Be Fought In the Air: Black Aviation’s Military Dimension 194**
 - 3.7.1 Ethiopia’s Significance for Black Aviation199
 - 3.7.2 Black America’s Fascination with Ethiopia202
 - 3.7.3 From Chicago to Ethiopia.....210
 - 3.7.4 John C. Robinson’s Ethiopian Endeavors in the Black Press214
 - 3.7.5 Showing Off: John C. Robinson’s Technical Expertise on Display218

3.7.6 A Hero's Welcome	223
3.8 I'm Flying to Memphis: John C. Robinson's Untold Mission	226
3.9 The Writing in the Sky.....	230
4. <i>BLACK EMPIRE OF THE AIR: READING AVIATION IN GEORGE S.</i>	
SCHUYLER'S SERIAL FICTION	233
4.1 Introduction.....	233
4.2 Educating the Black Internationale's Army and Putting it to Work.....	242
4.3 Revenge and Fury Raining from the Sky	250
4.4 Control of the Air: Armed Liberation, Decolonization, and Survival	266
4.5 Black Empire in the Context of Frederick Douglass' and Booker T. Washington's Treatments of Technology	281
4.6 Love is in the Air	300
4.7 The Flying Ethiops in Revolt in Ethiopia	306
CONCLUSION: THE SKY IS THE LIMIT	324
WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED	336

INTRODUCTION

In 1926, the Harlem Renaissance was in full swing. Knopf released Langston Hughes's first collection of poems *The Weary Blues* and Boni & Liveright published Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death*; Walter White's *Flight* also came out that year. Alain Locke's *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, published in 1925, triggered an inspired intellectual debate about the merits of black literature and art throughout 1926 – George S. Schuyler, for example, penned “The Negro-Art Hokum” for *The Nation*, in which he expressed skepticism toward the existence and the development of “new art forms expressing the ‘peculiar’ psychology of the Negro” (122). A week later, Langston Hughes challenged Schuyler's views in “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” claiming that “for the American Negro artist [there is] a great field of unused material ready for his art” (156). W.E.B. DuBois joined in later in the year with “Criteria of Negro Art,” famously declaring that “all Art is propaganda and ever must be.” And a group of young artists – Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, Aaron Douglas, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Langston Hughes – published a controversial new magazine *Fire!!*, “devoted to younger negro artists,” in the fall of 1926. Essays, poems, novels, and magazines by black Americans were thriving.

Few more so than Urban League's academic magazine, the *Opportunity*, which held its prestigious annual award dinner on May 1, 1926. As Harlem Renaissance's leading non-Garveyite newspapers, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *New York Amsterdam News*, informed, “some of the most distinguished persons of both races in the field of the arts, letters and music” witnessed as Arna Bontemps took the Alexander Puskin Poetry Prize and Countee Cullen received his fourth poetry award (“Win Contest Prizes for Literature,” “Opportunity Magazine Awards 22 Literature Prizes”). However, this exhilarating announcement of the progress of the Harlem Renaissance was overshadowed by another piece of news that day: the tragic death of Bessie Coleman, black America's heroic aviatrix. Coleman's face, the

photographs of her wrecked plane aflame, and the reports on her demise dominated the cover pages of black newspapers. Harlem, Chicago, and other black communities around the country mourned the loss of a creative, ingenious, internationally-recognized and internationally-minded figure, who embodied the spirit of the New Negro and the Harlem Renaissance – yet has rarely been discussed in the context of the period’s *zeitgeist*.

Academic discussions and scholarship of the Harlem Renaissance have mostly revolved around the New Negro’s artistic expression in the literature, theater, music and dance, as well as the visual art of the era. Nathan Huggins’ seminal *Harlem Renaissance* (1971), for example, delves into the era’s “naïve assumptions about the centrality of culture” (303), while Genevieve Fabre and Michael Feith’s *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance* (2001) emphasizes the rehabilitative aspect of New Negro art. The more recent *Escape from New York: The New Negro Renaissance beyond Harlem* (2013) and *A Companion to the Harlem Renaissance* (2015) explore the inter- and trans-national impact and inspirations of Harlem Renaissance art and its artists. Even paradigmatically groundbreaking monographs such as *The Harlem Renaissance in the West: The New Negro’s Western Experience* (2012) or *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Cholocate Babies: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (2011) acknowledge the primacy of literature and art in their discussions of the era.

Indeed, the ideologues of what Richard Wright originally referred to as the “Harlem school of expression” emphasized art as a means of redeeming the stereotypical image of black America; although, as Josef Jařab points out in *Masky a Tváře Āerné Ameriky*, these redemptive attempts often resulted in new, but inverse stereotypes (21). James Weldon Johnson, for example, urged in the preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry* the “demonstration of intellectual parity by the Negro through the production of literature and art” (vii). Charles S. Johnson, upon founding the *Opportunity*, proclaimed that “each book,

play, poem, or canvas by an Afro-American would become a weapon against the old racial stereotypes” (quoted in Lewis 48). And Alain Locke, in the seminal “Enter the New Negro,” announced that “renewed self-respect and self-dependence” have entered “the life-attitudes and self-expression of the Young Negro, in his poetry, his art, his education and his new outlook” (631). Since the New Negro was now being “seriously portrayed and painted,” his cultural production would “enrich American art and letters” and bring about “the revaluation [...] of the Negro in terms of his artistic endowments and cultural contributions, past and prospective,” explained Locke. Most importantly, such newly-found appreciation for black arts and letters would establish black America as “a collaborator and participant in American *civilization*” (632-4, emphasis mine). Much like the authors of slave narratives, New Negro artists would write and perform African Americans’ humanity for all of America to acknowledge.

For Locke, New Negro’s artistic contribution was a means of achieving civilizational parity, as well as of instilling a sense of racial pride. Proving “racial civility” (Huggins 196) through art would lead to “the rise from social disillusionment to race pride, from the sense of social debt to the responsibilities of social contribution,” and would ultimately rehabilitate the “race in world esteem.” It would then position “the American Negro [...] as the advance-guard of the African peoples in their contact with Twentieth Century civilization,” prophesied Locke (632-3). He envisioned an international platform for New Negro artists through which art was to be not only restorative, but also dynamic and forward-thinking; inter- and trans-national with emphasis on Pan-Africanism. In fact, Locke saw the international leadership role of black America as its claim to modernity in announcing that the “[American Negroes’] new internationalism is primarily an effort to recapture contact with the scattered peoples of African derivation.” The potential role of “the American Negro in the future development of

Africa is one of the most constructive and universally helpful missions that any modern people can lay claim to,” explained the Harlem Renaissance’s patron of the arts (634).

Overall then, Locke envisioned that creative contributions, ingenuity, and artistry would prove black humanity, and establish black Americans as civilized and modern; ready to assume leadership among the dark peoples globally. His vision, however, underscores the heavy burden put by Harlem Renaissance ideologues on the black artists’ shoulders. In his “Criteria of Negro Art,” DuBois echoes Locke in stating that “the growing recognition of Negro artists [represents] the real solution of the color problem. The recognition accorded Cullen, Hughes, Fauset, White and others shows there is no real color line.” In other words, Locke, DuBois, and others were fixed, as Huggins puts it, “on a vision of high culture” produced by the most talented New Negro artists believing in racial uplift through art (10); to the point that they hardly mentioned jazz music in their texts, deeming it too low-brow (Fabre and Feith 19, Williams 1), and mostly ignored other cultural production of the era as well.

Such obsession with (high) art in the writings of both the Harlem Renaissance intellectuals and, later, academic scholars obfuscates the fact that the burden of representation – struggles against stereotypical depictions – and new displays of humanity and ingenuity, along with the desire to connect Africa-descended peoples around the world did not fall solely on black artists’ shoulders. The movement was, according to David Levering Lewis, its historian, a “somewhat forced phenomenon, a cultural nationalism of the parlor” (xv) and, as Langston Hughes famously claims in *The Big Sea* (1940), “the ordinary Negroes hadn’t heard of the Negro Renaissance. And if they had, it hadn’t raised their wages any” (178). Rather, as Davarian L. Baldwin explains in *Escape from New York*, “more than Harlem’s arts and letters, the very notion of a New Negro consciousness was produced and consumed through the various race protests, race papers, race records, race films, race sporting leagues, and race enterprises that circulated across the country and around the world” (16). Sterling Brown, one

of Harlem's most famous poets, even argued for the inclusion of athletics among the arts," because of its value for and popularity among all Americans (Anderson 180). Indeed, as recent scholarship and the historical record indicate, the Harlem Renaissance was not a New York-based movement predicated on art, but, instead, a multifaceted and "truly a national phenomenon" (Wintz and Glasrud 1), filled with "a range of New Negroes who were more than just the objects of black modernist art and writings waiting for aesthetic construction" (Baldwin 4). Bessie Coleman represented one such model New Negro race leader and role model.

Coleman's story of artistry, however, barely appeared in *The Crisis* or the *Opportunity*, Harlem Renaissance's prestigious literary magazines. Rather, it filled the pages of race newspapers read and consumed by millions of people of color nation- and worldwide. Coleman left Chicago to study aviation in France and arrived in Harlem with an international pilot license in October 1921. A close friend of Josephine Baker's, Harlem's legendary performer, the aviatrix was celebrated upon her return by the cast of Broadway hit with an all-black cast, *Shuffle Along*, including Baker, Florence Mills, and Paul Robeson. The *Chicago Defender* even celebrated Coleman with a cartoon ("Shuffle Along Company Gives Fair Flyer Cup," "They Can't Keep Us Down"). In her first interview, Coleman explained to a reporter for the *Defender* that "because I knew we had no aviators, neither men nor women, and I knew the Race needed to be represented along this most important line, I thought it my duty to risk my life to learn aviation and to encourage flying among men and women of the Race who are so behind the white men in this special line" ("Aviatrix Must Sign Away Life to Learn Trade"). As early as 1921, well before Alain Locke, Coleman thus formulated her civilizing mission to represent the race in the revolutionary and utterly modern art of aviation.

With lack of representation in the highly-skilled field in mind, Coleman planned to open a school in Chicago and had even been asked to teach flying in Moscow, the *New York*

Times reported (“Negress an Air Pilot”). Furthermore, when Marcus Garvey’s Harlem-based Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), a powerful back-to-Africa organization, held its Third International Convention in August 1922, Coleman appeared at the event to inspire the members to formally establish a bureau of aeronautics, tasked with opening a flying school (Snider 93-4). The aviatrix also performed at parades celebrating the Harlem Hellfighters and the 8th Illinois Infantry, legendary WWI units. Coleman was an internationally-minded black aviation crusader, too, as she expressed desire to spread the gospel of aviation in pan-American countries (“Bessie to Fly Over Gotham,” “Bessie Gets Away; Does Her Stuff”). In the first half of the 1920s, Coleman – who once explained to a French reporter that she wanted to “cause the Negro to change Uncle Tom’s cabin into a hangar” (“Bessie Coleman Famous Aviatrix”) – became a New Negro role model. As the *Pittsburgh Courier*’s George S. Schuyler eulogized upon Coleman’s funeral in his “Views and Reviews” column in May 1926, Coleman “wanted to be an aviatrix and would not be frustrated by racial barriers. [...] More and more Negroes are following her example. Many more ought to.”

Like Harlem Renaissance ideologues, intellectuals, and artists, Coleman was during her short-lived career preoccupied with subversion of old stereotypes and representation. African Americans had long been viewed as technically incompetent, explains Bruce Sinclair in *Technology and the African-American Experience*: “denying them access to education, control over complex machinery, or the power of patent rights lay at the heart of the distinctions drawn between black and white people” in the United States (2). Coleman, however, “believed in the regenerative powers of technology” and sought “for blacks to represent themselves as technically competent” (10); or, to use Locke’s terms, as members of the American civilization. Coleman presented black aviation as a proof of civility and humanity. Like other Harlem Renaissance artists and figures, the flyer went to France to

develop her art under the tutelage of experts and, upon her return, performed in front of large crowds to foster race pride and promote positive image of African Americans as technically capable and ingenious. Before her death, Coleman was even booked to star in a race film by Richard E. Norman about flying, which materialized in the 1926 hit silent movie about a heroic WWI-veteran-turn-railroad-detective, *The Flying Ace* (Lupack 162-5).

Coleman's vision also included inter- and trans-national aspects. The aviatrix cooperated with Garvey's UNIA and hoped to engage other nations and peoples of color in aviation. Like Hughes, McKay or DuBois, Coleman had contacts with the Soviet Union. And, like Schuyler and Charles S. Johnson, she had a strong connection with the Harlem Hellfighters and other black military units and veterans.¹ Finally, her art of flying and her stunning performances for communities of color across the nation and in Europe fostered the development of the general Harlem Renaissance's print culture, particularly the black press. Regular celebratory articles about Coleman drove the circulation of the *Defender* and Garvey's *Negro World* to figures over 200,000. In these numerous interviews and reports, Coleman also established black aviation's objectives and its role as a means of representing the race. In short, Coleman was a Harlem Renaissance and New Negro artist in her own right.

After Coleman's death in 1926 and Charles Lindbergh's successes from 1927 onwards, black America – especially on the pages of the black press – feared that there would be no one to replace “Brave Bessie” in developing black aviation. Indeed, Coleman's fellow aviators took up her cause and activities, but initially without much success. However, between 1929 and 1939 – the year when the United States Congress established the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP) for black pilots, a precursor to the Tuskegee Airmen program – black pilots organized popular air shows, carried out long-distance flights, organized

¹ Charles Johnson was a volunteer with the 103rd Pioneer Infantry Regiment in France during WW1. He later rose to the rank of sergeant-major. Schuyler, who at the age of 17 enlisted in the army and was stationed in Hawaii and Seattle, was sent in 1917 to Camp Des Moines to train the cadet officers in the units which would later be known as the Harlem Hellfighters (Lewis 13-45).

segregated schools and clubs, and, importantly, took initiative to promote black aviation to the public via the black press. They began to directly form black aviation's image in symbiosis with black papers and journalists, continuing and advancing Coleman's pioneering work as a New Negro role model. Including Bessie Coleman's years of fame and omnipresence in black newspapers, black aviators thus led almost a two-decade-long campaign – from 1921 to 1939 – for aviation in the black press during a period better known as the Harlem Renaissance.²

Black Aviation in the Black Press: Crusading Advocacy, Protest, and Community

Building

Black newspapers represented an ideal channel for the promotion of and advocacy for black aviation during the interwar period since, at that time, the black press emerged as “one of the most important institutions [...] through which racial protest was expressed [and represented] the most militant agitator that [African Americans] possessed” (Bullock 208). The institution also functioned as the mechanism which fostered the abstract, “imagined community” of black America. As Benedict Anderson explains, “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” The black press played a central facilitating and institutional role in bringing about such communion, because “communities are to be distinguished,” according to Arnold, “by the style in which they are imagined” (6). Unlike the general press in the United States, the black press imagined and presented the black national community as well as the local ones “through its coverage of black organizations, social functions, personalities, issues, events, and achievements,” explains Hayward Farrar. In doing so, it “offered its readers a definition of black community” (xi).

² The dissertation here follows the periodization – approximately 1919 to 1940 – utilized by, among others, Henry Louis Gates and Nellie McKay in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, Venetria K. Patton and Maureen Honey in *Double-Take: A Revisionist Harlem Renaissance Anthology*.

In its emphasis on all things African American, and increasingly Pan-African, the interwar black press, according to Gunnar Myrdal's seminal *An American Dilemma*, "define[d] the Negro group to the Negroes themselves." It was through black newspapers that the "individual Negro [was] invited to share in the sufferings, grievances and pretensions of the millions of Negroes far outside the narrow local community. This create[d] a feeling of strength and solidarity," the building blocks of a community. In this way, asserts the Swedish sociologist, "the press, more than any other institution [...] created the Negro group as a social and psychological reality to the individual Negro" (911). The black press thus "helped create, maintain, and mold the black communities it [...] served" (Farrar xi).

At the same time, the black press played the role of an advocate for its communities and the national community in general. It "served as the black community's voice and, by its expression, as a preservative of that community's identity," explains Brian Carroll. Black newspapers advocated and crusaded for their community's causes and needs, they protested Jim Crow policies. Thus, the newspapers "imbued African Americans with a sense of purpose and destiny, functioning as an instrument of social change, enterprise, artistic self-esteem, and racial solidarity. [...] In fulfilling these roles these newspapers contributed to the development of a national black consciousness" (3). Overall then, African Americans "used the press as a communication device to foster their identities" as they "could read about themselves and their own accomplishments and applaud the verbal body blows that colored journalists slammed at American racial prejudice" (Baldasty and Lapointe 15).

As the black American community's builder, connector, and voice, the black press exerted immense influence and control over that very community's progress, development, and demeanor. As Myrdal argues, the black press operated "as the chief agency of group control. It [told] the individual how he should think and feel as an American Negro and create[d] a tremendous power of suggestion by implying that all other Negroes think and feel

in this manner” (911). One of the techniques employed by the black press in developing a community-wide consciousness was the racial uplift ideology. Although uplift was originally articulated as a program of the black elites in which “by adhering to a code of temperance, thrift, polite manners, sexual purity, cleanliness and rectitude, blacks contradicted racist stereotypes about their alleged inferiority” (quoted in Field 3), the black press in the interwar period – especially with the onset of the Great Depression – began to transform the basic tenets of uplift as it increasingly addressed and spoke for the interests of working- and lower-income African Americans. Black papers accentuated protest, crusading tones, and advocacy campaigns which emphasized black America’s needs. They eschewed assimilationist uplift policies which would endear African Americans, through emulation of white middle- and upper-class values, to the majority population. Indeed, the black press still encouraged “individual initiative, mutual assistance, social responsibility, interracial cooperation, and economic independence as components of a general [uplift] strategy for promoting the advancement of African Americans (Field 3), but it also attacked more vigorously America’s racially segregated economic, political, and social structures. In black papers, racial uplift was not entrenched in class distinctions as before WWI, but in building a common New Negro consciousness of progress and advancement around which the entire black American community could coalesce and move forward.

The black aviation campaign in the black press stands as an example of one such massive national advocacy movement rooted in highlighting certain common racial uplift values to combat racist stereotypes and demeaning depictions of African Americans as inferior. Aviation education and complex, skilled work available to anyone, individual pioneering aviators’ initiative with the objective to attract and benefit the local and, in turn, the national black American community, and the black aviation leaders’ international outlook are the values which define and characterize the crusade for black aviators in the interwar,

Harlem Renaissance black press. The campaign produced race role models and leaders whose success in the highly-skilled and utterly modern field of aviation despite segregation was highlighted and celebrated as behavior and path to a bright future which the readers should support and emulate. The aviators' achievements and increasing success, argued black newspapers, would benefit the entire national community as they would signal to white America that African Americans can fly, can operate sophisticated machinery, and can participate in and contribute to the technological progress that the United States were undergoing in the interwar period. African Americans would thus rightfully earn their place in the U.S. Army, particularly the new Air Corps.

The campaign for black aviation also served its part in the production of emancipatory, non-Eurocentric knowledge, and in the “resistance to the white race dogma [...] popularized among the Negro people through the Negro press” (Myrdal 96), which stereotyped African Americans “as different and inferior in the biological, medical, and anthropological sciences” (Stepan and Gilman 170). In the context of aviation, the dogma materialized in the form of barring black applicants from flying and navigation schools and the Army flying units on account of their intellectual, technical, technological, and scientific inferiority (Broadnax 18-25). The black press, however, functioned as a channel in which one can find and trace a “‘critical tradition’ in relation to scientific racism [produced by] those stereotyped by the sciences of the day” (Stepan and Gilman 171). This tradition involved “recurring tropes, recurring techniques of reenvisioning identity, [and] certain patterns in the tactics of re-representation” (179). Aviation as a scientific and technological field, as well as the campaign in the black press, played an important role in developing and enhancing the existing critical tradition which ultimately sought to counter the notion of African Americans as inferior.

As this dissertation project argues and shows, the Harlem Renaissance-era black press engaged on behalf of black aviation in the tactics of transvaluation and recontextualization of the discourse on aviation. As black aviation students as well as seasoned black aviators were repeatedly excluded, barred, and segregated from aviation education institutions, flying clubs, and other organizations because of their skin color and the alleged physical and mental deficiencies associated with it, the black press challenged, subverted, and reversed these very same values attached to people of color in aviation. The press thus began to advocate for black aviation.

The rhetorical strategy of transvaluation used by the black press, explain Nancy Leys Stepan and Sander L. Gilman in “Appropriating the Idioms of Science: The Rejection of Scientific Racism,” involved accepting “the terms set by the dominant discourse, but [also] chang[ing] the valuations attached to them.” Race differences were sometimes acknowledged, but “the ‘inferior’ element in the hierarchy was revalued and renamed. This strategy entailed a transvaluation of the terms of the dominant discourse.” Indeed, “this simple process of transvaluation of the terms from negative to positive was not always convincing, observe Stepan and Gilman, “since the resisting minority was always in a position of lesser legitimacy than that of the dominating voice.” However, for the aviators, the journalists, the black press as a whole, and the audience, “such transvaluations often had considerable weight. Reactive and defensive though transvaluations may have been, the result was often empowerment [as] upon the basis of such reversals political solidarities were created” (181) and the black American community was strengthened as it rallied around a common cause.

As this dissertation shows, once black aviators and the black press realized that segregation would not allow the development of black aviation within and through the system of white educational and professional institutions and organizations, the flyers and the newspapers worked in symbiosis to highlight as a positive development the fact that black

aviators were still able to succeed in the field despite the era's segregation and racism. Particularly in the period between Bessie Coleman's passing and the first historic achievements by black aviators in 1932, individual amateur black aviation pioneers as well as group efforts in the form of segregated schools, clubs, and air events such as circuses and exhibitions were embraced and promoted in the black press. As "a dialectical politics of self-segregation, solidarity and reversals was set in motion" (Stepan and Gilman 182), black newspapers employed emotional, crusading language and images – a set of tropes, phrases, and themes here designated as black aviation's message of goodwill – to rally African Americans to the cause of pioneer black aviators as representatives of the assertive and increasingly militant New Negro era.

The fact that white America insisted on segregating those African Americans who wanted to learn to fly and subsequently fight for their country because they were not deemed worthy of the highly-technical field was reversed rhetorically in black newspapers as a positive turn of events. This allowed, as black journalists argued, black aviators to develop their skills independently and make their communities even more proud when they achieved white aviators' level without having all the institutional support. Nevertheless, while segregation in aviation was thus embraced out of necessity as a rhetorical strategy to counter existing misconceptions and stereotypes of African Americans' technical and technological abilities and to highlight the development of black aviation independent of white structures, the reversal of values attached to segregation was not completely convincing. Indeed, the black press still advocated, protested, lamented, and crusaded for black aviators to be accepted to study at white aviation schools and to fly alongside white flyers at exhibition events, circuses, and, ultimately, in the U.S. Air Corps.

Along with the straightforward strategy of transvaluation or reversal of values of the dominant discourse on aviation, the black press also gradually sought to recontextualize the

existing debates surrounding aviation and the exclusion of black flyers from the United States' rapid advancements and ascendance in the field. Recontextualization, claim Stepan and Gilman, was "associated with a growing empowerment of minorities in science, an increased familiarity with its idioms and technologies, and, therefore, a new authority in challenging the claims of science on its own terms." In essence then, "the tools of science were used either to prove that the supposed factual data upon which the stereotypes of racial inferiority were based were wrong, or to generate new 'facts' on which different claims could be made" (183).

In the black press, recontextualization emerged especially in the period from 1932 onwards as black aviators, their segregated schools, clubs, and organizations notched one achievement after another despite segregation, racism, and Jim Crow combined with the Great Depression. Increasingly, black newspapers employed the persuasion technique of indisputable "data" of successful cross-country and international flights, the rising number of licensed pilots, student aviators, and African American-run aviation schools, as well as the overall black American community's air-mindedness, to argue that black aviators deserved a place in the nation's army's flying units. As familiarity – on the part of the black journalists and the reading public – with the parlance, science, and technology of aviation grew throughout the campaign, the black press utilized the scientific idiom of aviation as the *logos* in its support of black aviators. Ultimately, black aviation's progress – often discussed as scientific and technological progress of black America as a whole – was highlighted in the black press as a development which would benefit the African American community as it represented a form of racial uplift, a civil rights struggle, and proof of black Americans' humanity as well as technical and technological ability.

Black Aviation and the Harlem Renaissance

Still, the black aviation campaign in the black press was an even more complex cultural, social, and political phenomenon than it may seem. Throughout the almost two-decade-long campaign, black aviators and aviatrixes also directly participated in the overall cultural production of the Harlem Renaissance with their performances as well as in the era's print culture. Black journalists structured and lead the campaign with reports, columns, editorials, and photographs. But black aviators complemented the movement as they wrote letters to the editor and newspaper articles on their flying experiences, the physical reality of flying, and the history of black aviation. One of the pioneer New Negro aviators, William J. Powell, even published a racially-uplifting popular and widely reviewed book, authored and performed a successful aviation-themed and uplifting play, and directed a documentary propagating aviation among black Americans.

Thus, as the black press archive and historical records of the larger Harlem Renaissance era reveal, while intellectual figures and artists published essays, short stories, novels, poems, and led vigorous discussions about black art, politics, and civil rights in *The Crisis* and the *Opportunity* and other art-focused magazines, New Negro aviators and journalists led a nation-wide campaign for black aviation in the black press. The campaign countered existing stereotypes of African Americans' innate lack of technical and technological abilities by emphasizing black Americans' rising representation in the highly-skilled and modern field. It highlighted the economic opportunities available in the field of aviation, as well as the civil rights issue of including black pilots in the United States Air Service and later Air Corps. Keeping in spirit with the Harlem Renaissance's international aspect, black pilots – some of them Afro-Caribbean immigrants – proposed and carried out international flights to other nations of color, sometimes with the financial backing of black papers, to promote black technical ingenuity, interracial goodwill, and flying artistry.

The significant presence and role of black aviation in the multifaceted world of the Harlem Renaissance and its ideologues' objectives have, however, been left out of the era's history and scholarship, no matter how geographically or temporally defined. Even the most recent look at Harlem's sport scene, *The Culture of Sports in the Harlem Renaissance* (2017), ignores black aviation completely. Scholars of what has been termed the Black Chicago Renaissance and the New Negro Renaissance in Los Angeles have also largely omitted aviation in its early history. This dissertation project, however, recovers and explores the history, cultural significance, and artistic representation of black aviation during the Harlem Renaissance and the early years of the Black Chicago and Los Angeles Renaissance, here subsumed under the umbrella term of the Harlem Renaissance. The project argues for the inclusion of black aviation during the 1920s and the 1930s into the expanding definition of the Harlem Renaissance alongside other creative arts and politics as it represents a prime example of black creativity and ingenuity, a racial-uplift project, as well as a struggle for civil rights.

Specifically, in its first part, the project focuses on and analyzes the depiction and propagation of black aviation – through the rhetorical strategies of transvaluation and recontextualization – in and by the interwar black press, thereby drawing attention to the crucial role of the press in providing a counternarrative to existing stereotypical depictions of African Americans regarding science and technology. Black newspapers championed aviation as much as or more than the all-black basketball team called The Harlem Renaissance³ or the integration of baseball, the automotive industry and its opportunities for African Americans, or other social and civil rights causes such as housing conditions and criminal justice reform. The dissertation project thus argues that black aviation represented an omnipresent aspect of the popular and print culture during the Harlem Renaissance.

³ For more on the basketball team, see *On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey through the Harlem Renaissance* (2007) by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

The progress of black aviation – just like the Harlem Renaissance itself – was partially a result of the influx of black migrants into the industrial cities in the North and West as skilled mechanics educated in Southern black vocational schools sought employment. Black aviation was portrayed as a means of uplift and, although it was mostly represented by the African American middle class, the black press sought to engage lower-income classes in the field as well. Black papers employed sensationalism, emotional language, pride, and an eye for attractive stories and characters in their aviation campaign – the way black aviation was discussed reflects the black press’s practices as much as the successes of black aviators. Initially, the campaign was one-dimensional, engaged in transvaluation, as it celebrated the individual achievements of Coleman and her New Negro successors, while decrying lack of financial support. However, from 1929 onwards, and particularly between 1932 and 1939 – as the analysis of major black newspapers, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *New York Amsterdam News* demonstrates here – the black press gradually filled with texts by black aviators along with reports on and support of educational and organizing efforts, long-distance and international flights, inter- and trans-national cooperation, and eventual campaigning for black aviators’ inclusion in the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP).

Black aviation gradually rose in popularity among the general black American public as well as the popular culture stars of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Josephine Baker, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, William Pickens, and Claude McKay. Several famous New Negro journalists also repeatedly reported on black aviation: Floyd J. Calvin, J.A. Rogers, Percival L. Prattis, William Pickens, and George S. Schuyler interviewed black pilots and sometimes even ventured flights with them. Schuyler’s column “Views and Reviews” in the *Courier*, however, stands out among these texts. According to Melvin Tolson, Schuyler’s column was “the most discussed column in Negro America. I have heard his opinions attacked and defended in barbershops, Jim Crow cars, pool rooms, class rooms,

churches and drawing rooms” (quoted in Wilson 168). Between 1924 and 1943, Schuyler, one of Harlem Renaissance’s foremost journalists, public intellectuals, and authors, commented on and celebrated achievements by black aviator in his columns. His aforementioned eulogy for Bessie Coleman represents a mere tip of the iceberg as Schuyler’s journalism continually displays his erudition in the field of aviation all the way up to the 1943 review of Giulio Douhet’s seminal text on modern air warfare, *The Command of the Air*.

More importantly, as this dissertation project argues, Schuyler also integrated black aviation into his immensely popular serialized novellas – *Black Internationale* (November 1936-July 1937), *Black Empire* (October 1937-April 1938), and *Revolt in Ethiopia* (July 1938-January 1939), the plots of which are driven and framed by aviation and technological innovation. Schuyler’s full oeuvre thus indicates, as Ivy G. Wilson points out, that “one way to accentuate Schuyler’s presence as a writer of the Harlem Renaissance is to underscore his nonfiction prose as the backbeat to his creative writing” (163). This dissertation explores and highlights the connections between Schuyler’s journalistic work and fiction, both published in the *Courier*, and points out and analyzes the author’s engagement in promoting aviation as a New Negro phenomenon, as well as his awareness of black aviation’s popularity among the readership of the black press.

The second part of the project therefore analyzes George S. Schuyler’s journalistic and literary contribution to advocacy for black aviation, thereby expanding and deepening existing scholarship of his often controversial and eclectic work. It argues that not only was Schuyler among black aviation’s most vocal supporters in the black press, but also that his three novellas should be analyzed in the context of the author’s journalistic work on aviation to expand our understanding of the texts’ popularity and complexity. Schuyler the journalist and public intellectual criticized Harlem Renaissance leaders for selling out to white audiences with primitivism, while, as the author of three novellas of black pilots’ endeavors in Africa,

he depicted African Americans, Ethiopians, and other peoples of color as New Negroes: as modern and masters of a technology associated with only the most civilized of nations. In this way, his hardboiled texts integrate black journalists' rhetorical strategies of transvaluation and recontextualization and deliberately serve as racial propaganda, taking DuBois's call to its extreme. Schuyler consciously exploits Harlem and black America's fascination with New Negro aviators' successes from the late 1920s and the 1930s, especially with John Charles Robinson's heroic mission in Ethiopia in 1935/36 covered in depth and celebrated on the pages of the *Courier*.

The novellas also draw inspiration from black aviators' efforts between 1937 and 1939 to form an organization to lobby the Congress and campaign, with help from the black press, for the inclusion of black pilots in the United States Air Force. Schuyler's black pilots display military skills, organization, and technical ingenuity as they overpower colonial armies in Africa to finish Robinson's mission and avenge Italy's colonial war in Ethiopia. Consequently, the novellas therefore imagine and explore black aviation's potential for armed decolonization and violent liberation as they envision black pilots as modern fighters against white supremacy. Finally, the texts also approach black internationalism through an innovative prism of aviation – connecting Africa-descended people in a violent anti-colonial war lead primarily in the air – and subvert the long-standing stereotype of African Americans and Ethiopians as technologically and technically incompetent. Instead, Schuyler envisions black pilots as rulers of a *Black Empire* of the air.

Overall, in its two-part exploration and analysis of black aviation within the context of the Harlem Renaissance, this dissertation project follows the call of a distinguished scholar of the era, Cherene Sherrard-Johnson, that “extending the established boundaries of the Harlem Renaissance also means engaging in innovative recovery work” (4). The dissertation considers and engages with three Harlem Renaissance novellas and the journalistic work of

one the era's most-recognized public intellectuals and authors in a broader context of early black aviation history. At the same time, it recovers and situates the symbiotic efforts of black aviators and the black press within one of the most culturally productive eras of black America's history, thus highlighting the parallels between the objectives of the Harlem Renaissance and its pioneer aviators, New Negro models and race leaders. In general, the text also continues archival recovery and exploration of black newspapers and provides innovative contextualization and interpretation of literary texts from the Harlem Renaissance era.

Finally, the project provides a comprehensive, albeit not exhaustive bibliography of newspaper articles dealing with black aviation, continuing the pioneering work begun by Betty Kaplan Gubert in *Invisible Wings: An Annotated Bibliography on Blacks in Aviation, 1916-1993*. In doing so, the project maps, in-depth, early black aviation history as well as its contribution to Harlem Renaissance's print culture and cultural production. Existing monographs on black aviation such as *Double V: The Civil Rights Struggle of the Tuskegee Airmen* (1994), *The Divided Skies: Establishing Segregated Flight Training at Tuskegee, Alabama, 1934-42* (1992), *Blue Skies, Black Wings: African American Pioneers of Aviation* (2007), and *Storming the Heavens: African Americans and the Early Fight for the Right to Fly* (2018) have mostly focused on the Tuskegee Airmen and the early 1940s. The 1920s and the 1930s have been treated merely as pioneering years – a lead-up to the Tuskegee Airmen – during which a handful of successful individuals paved the way for the CPTP. Rarely have these two decades been considered in their own right. This dissertation, however, traces the aviation campaign in the black press throughout the Harlem Renaissance era and pinpoints the most significant aspects of this culturally significant and widely consumed phenomenon. It uncovers, for example, numerous pioneer female aviators, segregated clubs, airports, and schools, as well as plans by black pilots to establish segregated airlines.

The most recent scholarship on the Harlem Renaissance has tried to dispel the prevalent notion that, geographically speaking, Harlem was the cradle of black arts and letters during the 1920s and the 30s. Rather, as Wintz and Glasrud argue, “New York was more of a destination than an incubator” (2). Similarly, in tracing how widespread of a phenomenon early black aviation was – Chicago, Los Angeles, Harlem, Boston, Pennsylvania, Haiti, and Addis Ababa are shown to be influential black aviation hubs or centers during this time – the dissertation decenters Tuskegee as the focal point of black aviation history. In doing so, the text further highlights the nationwide as well as the inter- and trans-national aspects of early black aviation history. Some of the most important flyers were West Indian immigrants who, after learning to fly in the United States, took up Bessie Coleman’s call and spread the gospel of aviation in pan-American countries in direct anti-colonial reaction to the spread of the United States’ empire of the air, embodied by Charles Lindbergh and Pan-Am, in the Caribbean. Other black pilots taught foreign students of color or engaged in fights in the Spanish Civil War and Ethiopia’s war against Italian colonial forces. Education, military engagement, and public performances of black aviators along with their presentation in the black press thus resulted in the creation of an entire range of New Negro role models and race leaders, who inspired others inter- and trans-nationally to take up aviation as a means of demonstrating black humanity and civilization.

In his 1939 essay for the *Reader’s Digest*, Charles Lindbergh famously called aviation “a gift from heaven to those Western nations who were already the leaders of their era.” He declared it “a tool specially shaped for Western hands, a scientific art which others only copy in a mediocre fashion, another barrier between the teeming millions of Asia and the Grecian inheritance of Europe -- one of those priceless possessions which permit the White race to live at all in a pressing sea of Yellow, Black, and Brown.” Throughout the Harlem Renaissance era, black journalists and aviators sought and fought to dispel Lindbergh’s

interpretation of aviation as proof of white supremacy. The coverage of black aviation in the black press challenged segregation in aviation, but also celebrated and advertised New Negro aviators' successes within the constrictions and despite segregation. In the 1930s, as black aviation developed, black newspapers provided mounting evidence that African Americans, too, mastered this allegedly Western tool. In this way, as this dissertation hopes to show, black aviators not only challenged long-held stereotypes, but also assumed their role as Locke's advance-guard of Africa-descended peoples who have caught up with modern civilization. Seizing the moment in which the black press, through the rhetoric strategies of transvaluation and recontextualization, presented and popularized black aviation as a nationwide uplift and civil rights phenomenon, George S. Schuyler integrated and serialized assertive, militant, anti-colonial, Pan-Africanist, and highly skilled New Negro aviators into his extremely popular and shocking novellas of black aviation's potential.

Structure of the Dissertation and Acknowledgement

The dissertation is divided into four sections. The first one deals briefly with the history of the three black newspapers analyzed in this project: the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *New York Amsterdam*. The subsequent section discusses the origins of the black aviation campaign – and its materialization in the form of a goodwill message of aviation – in the three newspapers. It traces the emergence of aviation as a hotly-debated topic after the Tulsa race riot in 1921 and Bessie Coleman's arrival in that same year. Coleman's strategies of promoting black aviation, her successes, as well as her successors' failures are also addressed here. The third and longest section maps the development of black aviation and its campaign in the black press across the period between 1928 and 1939. It highlights the major figures – both aviators and journalists – of the movement, including George S. Schuyler, and identifies and analyzes the major themes and tropes utilized and debated in the campaign. The final section deals with Schuyler's serialized novellas and his depiction of black aviation in

the texts, underscoring the author's complex and hitherto ignored portrayal of New Negro aviators and aviation as a means of liberation and decolonization as well as a framework for romance in the novellas.

The dissertation project presented here is the result of a long research process into black aviation and the black press. It was facilitated by having access to the invaluable database of *Proquest Historical Newspapers*, which allowed key-word search through a vast collection of black newspapers. By searching for keywords associated with aviation – flying, flyer(s), pilot(s), aviator(s), aviatrix, and aviation – the database revealed almost one thousand newspaper texts dealing with the phenomenon of black aviation. Initially, this search took the shape of a seminar paper, then an annotated bibliography, and finally a Master's Thesis titled *Writing in the Sky: Black Aviation in the Interwar Black Press* and defended at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX in the spring of 2017.

The current dissertation project is, in a large part, rooted in the previous thesis – some of its sections, particularly throughout chapters 1, 2, and 3 are almost identical. However, the introduction, the focus and methodology, as well as the scope of the dissertation is vastly different. While the thesis analyzed mostly only two newspapers – the *Defender* and the *Courier* – the current text includes and adds also the *New York Amsterdam News*. The structure of the thesis was almost painstakingly chronological, but the dissertation follows a thematic and a broadly rhetorical focus in its analysis so as to allow black aviation's incorporation into the Harlem Renaissance. The introduction, the final chapter or the literary analysis of Schuyler's serialized novellas, and parts of the conclusion are all brand new texts which build on the findings of both the thesis and the subsequent dissertation research. Overall, the dissertation presents a more thorough, detailed, and expanded exploration of the black aviation phenomenon in the black press during and in the context of the Harlem Renaissance.

Throughout the text, the designation ‘African American’ and ‘black American’ is used interchangeably to refer to descendants of enslaved black people who hail from the United States. The terms ‘black’ and ‘Africa-descended people’ denote Africans, African Americans, and West Indians – hence the term black aviation – to convey the fact that not only African American pilots were part of the massive aviation campaign in the black press and of the Tuskegee Airmen. Finally, the term ‘people of color’ includes Africa-descended people as well as other ethnicities since Japan and Central as well as Latin American countries were directly or indirectly involved in the campaign discussed here.

1. THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THREE BLACK NEWSPAPERS

The history of the black press dates to the early 1800s. The first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, a weekly, was established in 1827 by John B. Russwurm and Samuel Cornish (Washburn 17). Other short-lived publications, around forty of them, followed until the Civil War with all of them focusing on protesting injustices to the race. After 1865, the black press divided between crusaders for civil rights and those which saw potential for profit rather than social change (Wolseley 24-6). One of the major figures in the development of crusading black newspapers was Frederick Douglass, who, during his career as a journalist, established several different papers. In 1847, he started the *North Star*, which later merged with the *Liberty Party Paper* into *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Aiding Douglass in these pioneering efforts was Martin R. Delany, a journalist often considered the original black nationalist. Douglass later continued with *Douglass' Monthly* and the *New National Era* in the Reconstruction period (30-37).

As the black population in the postbellum period was becoming more educated and communities along with churches were able to provide financial support to various papers and serve as its audience, the number of black newspaper publications soared. State-based and local newspapers flourished, with numbers rising from 31 publications in 1880 to 154 by 1890 (Wolseley 39). At the turn of the century, many of the local papers ceased to exist, while the black press became more established in large black communities. Newspapers were now founded as commercial ventures, where social causes may have still dominated, but other news claimed significant space as well. By 1910, there were an estimated 288 black newspapers with a combined circulation of about 500,000 primary readers, yet the newspapers typically passed from the purchaser to other people in the community as well, multiplying its impact (Washburn 83). As Frederick Detweiler noted in 1922 in his seminal *The Negro Press in the United States*, “the entire literate portion of the race reads

newspapers” with “each paper sold ha[ving] an average of five readers” (11). *The Philadelphia Tribune* and *The Baltimore Afro-American* dominated the national market along with Thomas Fortune’s *New York Age*, closely associated with Booker T. Washington, and Boston’s *Guardian* (Washburn 43-50). However, the 1920s saw the rise of Robert S. Abbott’s *The Chicago Defender* and Robert L. Vann’s *The Pittsburgh Courier*. The *New York Amsterdam News* (NYAN) joined influential black papers in the 1920s, too, as the voice of Harlem.

In *An American Dilemma*, Gunnar Myrdal famously notes that “the importance of the Negro press for the formation of Negro opinion, for the functioning of all other Negro institutions, for Negro leadership and concerted action generally, is enormous. The Negro press is an educational agency and a power agency” (179). The *Courier*, the *Defender*, and the NYAN fit this description perfectly. The three newspapers became a dominant force in the black press by the 1930s. Abbott launched the *Defender* in 1905, envisioning the paper as a fighter for the race; hence its title. It was barely surviving at first as its militant tone of muckracking, campaigning against prostitution, and for black causes did not seem to attract enough readers (Wolseley 52-3). It was not until Abbott decided to employ yellow journalism that the sales of the *Defender* soared, and by 1915, the paper had reached a circulation of 230,000 (Washburn 83, Wolseley 54). By 1925, the paper was circulated among 247,867 readers (Yeuell 93), with approximately two thirds of the issues sold outside of Chicago. According to Charles A. Simmons, the change in journalistic style brought about a larger number of subscribers to the *Defender*, and also stability and longevity as it “gave notice and recognition that the Negro press no longer could be brushed aside by authorities as merely an incidental medium” (27).

The *Defender* became a crusading newspaper. This was especially true once Abbott decided to sensationalize and highlight in red-color headlines the living conditions of African

Americans still residing in the South and launched a campaign in 1917 for “the Great Northern Drive.” The paper provided information on how to best leave the South for Chicago and other large cities in the North and helped migrants with train fare. The campaign became so successful that not only did some Southern states outlaw the distribution of the *Defender*, but the paper’s circulation had reached 283,571 by 1920 (Simmons 30-5). In this way, the *Defender* followed the black press’s tradition of advocating for a social cause. According to Wolseley, the paper later modified its militancy and became more moderate. Its circulation plummeted during the Great Depression to 73,000 by 1935 (52), when it was surpassed by the *Courier* as the major national black newspaper, which covered the Ethiopian crisis and the rise of Joe Louis. Nevertheless, during the 1930s and the 40s, the *Defender* “became the primary publishing vehicle for the cultivation and promotion of the Black Chicago Renaissance,” explains Darlene Clark Hine, “as well as a source for international news and perspective.” Even during the Great Depression, “when most black Americans were struggling to survive, [it] provided coverage of national and international events” (xxii). This included the detailed coverage of black aviators’ endeavors and lobbying for the CPTP.

The beginnings of the *Pittsburgh Courier* were not easy, either. Robert L. Vann took over the struggling Pittsburgh newspaper in 1910. Despite the early struggles in circulation, Vann did not consider adopting yellow journalism as a way of promoting the paper – though by the early 1920s, sensationalism began to appear in the paper, too (Washburn 129-32). It was during the Great Migration, fueled by the *Defender*, that Vann realized where the *Courier*’s potential lay: the newspaper became “an organ of social force by calling attention to various neighborhood problems,” often caused by the newcomers from the South (Simmons 45). Vann also stressed the importance of education for the black community and advertised employment opportunities. These feature heavily in the *Courier*’s coverage of

aviation throughout the interwar period, for education was perceived as a means of racial uplift, “as the gateway to advancement and upward mobility” (Field 5).

Vann had a clear plan of how to transform the *Courier* into a respectable newspaper. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, he worked on solidifying the newspaper’s reputation and financial situation as he hired George S. Schuyler, whose “Aframerica Today” series increased the paper’s circulation from 40,000 to 50,000. Other hires included Ira F. Lewis, Floyd J. Calvin, Percival L. Prattis, and J.A. Rogers, who gave credibility and a strong, distinctive voice to the conservative paper and brought advertisers (Wolesley 68, Buni 42, Washburn 133). As a result, the *Courier* was declared “the best colored newspaper published” by H.L. Mencken in 1930 (quoted in Washburn 133). Due to the *Courier*’s coverage of the rise of the legendary boxer Joe Louis as well as of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis in the mid-1930s, *Courier*’s national circulation reached 250,000 by 1937-8 – at a time when George S. Schuyler serialized his aviation novellas in the paper – with less than 10% of its readers in Pittsburgh. And, although the circulation dropped to 180,000 for the rest of the decade (Washburn133, Whitaker 202), the paper’s campaign for civilian pilot training managed to keep readers interested and propelled it into the 1940s, when the *Courier* became the most prominent black newspaper with circulation peaking at 357,212 in May 1947 (Buni 325).

Another reason for the *Courier*’s popularity may have been the repeated occurrence of texts by Harlem Renaissance authors. Zora Neale Hurston, for example, published a number of short stories in the paper (Carpio, Sollors 557). Walter White’s *Fire in the Flint* as well as George S. Schuyler’s *Black No More* and as many as thirty other novellas by Schuyler were serialized on the pages of the Pittsburgh weekly. The paper thus served as one of the major voices of the Harlem Renaissance nation- and worldwide.

Little has been written about the history of the *New York Amsterdam News* (*NYAN*). It was established in 1909 and James H. Anderson originally managed the paper from the San Juan Hill district of New York; but as Harlem swelled with the influx of immigrants, he moved the offices to uptown Harlem. Even though it is said that the paper struggled for survival between 1926 and 1935, it still managed, as will be discussed later, to invest heavily in various black aviation endeavors during the Harlem Renaissance era. At its height, the paper had a circulation of over 100,000. Similarly to the *Defender* and the *Courier*, the *NYAN* advocated numerous civil rights causes and participated in the Double V campaign during World War II. Due to its role as the major black-owned and black-focused newspaper in the New York City area, *NYAN* is now remembered especially for its reporting on the Civil Rights Movement, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the Freedom Riders. In the 1960s, the paper ran a column written by Malcolm X (“About Us”).

As is the case of the *Defender* and the *Courier*, the Harlem newspaper also ran numerous short stories, articles, and columns by and about various Harlem Renaissance authors and figures, including essays by DuBois, Roi Ottley, or Adam Clayton Powell (“About Us,” “Newspapers: The Amsterdam News,” Morial 13). While the *Courier* made its name, for example, by advocating for the integration of baseball, the *NYAN* promoted the all-black Harlem Renaissance basketball team, the first world pro-basketball champion, and other Harlem-based ventures and events which contributed to Harlem’s overall popular culture. Like the *Courier*, the paper thus functioned as one of the voices of the Harlem Renaissance

The post-WW1 period was one of growth for the black press. In 1933, there were approximately 150 black papers with a circulation of 600,000, and by 1940, the numbers increased to 210 papers and 1,276,000 subscribers, respectively, with the *Courier*, the *Defender*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *NYAN* being the most prominent black papers. However, as Washburn points out, “before the war, more than a third of the country’s

black families subscribed to a black paper, and during the war, between 3-5 million and 6 million of the nation's 13 million blacks read the papers every week," with the *Courier* expanding to 14 national editions (140). Why did the black press become so popular? Because, as Simmons puts it, the leading papers of their era "eventually established [themselves] as a vital force willing to fight for the causes of the Negro community" (49). Vann himself proclaimed that "racial achievements shall be heralded far and wide, [so] that others, perhaps too easily despaired, may take heart for renewed effort" (Buni 78). The black press fostered racial pride, highlighted any and every achievement by the community, and, "virtually everything [...] was propaganda for a cause, a practice inherent in protest" (Wolesley 202) against the white press, which virtually ignored black achievements.

In short, the black press has always played a crusading role. The *Courier*, for example, made its name by campaigning against a racist radio program called *Amos 'n' Andy*, fighting for ending the color line in baseball, and recognition of African Americans in the armed forces. The *Defender* facilitated the Great Migration and campaigned against prostitution, as well as for the inclusion of black Americans in the armed forces.⁴ The *NYAN* functioned as a communication channel for the Harlem community and reported in detail on the community's pro-Ethiopian sentiments and organizing efforts in the mid-1930s. As will be discussed further in this text, these papers also popularized, advertised, and made public pioneering achievements in black aviation – there are hundreds of photographs, short reports, celebratory articles, promotional editorials, and letters documenting the race's progress in aviation, from receiving solo licenses and carrying out successful flights to graduations from aeronautics schools and participation in or attendance at an air circus. All three papers financially sponsored black aviators or goodwill flights at some point during the Harlem Renaissance era.

⁴ Despite an unprecedented amount of research, Ethan Michaeli's *The Defender: How the Legendary Black Newspaper Changed America* only records articles about Bessie Coleman in the early 1920s and largely ignores the presence of black aviation in the paper during the 1930s.

While mainstream national newspapers followed the successes of numerous white aviators and aviatrixes, the black press reported on New Negro, pioneer aviators, thereby satisfying the African American community's demand for racial role models during the "Golden Age of Flight." Black aviation became one of the newspapers' crusades as African Americans developed the field despite and, simultaneously, because of segregation and Jim Crow. The following sections address the ways in which the papers promoted black aviation: by formulating what is here referred to as the "goodwill message of aviation" – a racial uplift message of education, economic opportunities, leadership, and black transnationalism, which included also a gradually increasing military dimension.

2. AVIATION'S MESSAGE OF GOODWILL WITH MILITARY THREAT IN THE BLACK PRESS

Two goodwill flights, which perfectly capture the aspirations as well as difficulties that symbolize the history of pre-Tuskegee black aviation, were carried out by New Negro pilots in mid-1939. Alfred Anderson, the first black commercial pilot's license holder and future flight instructor for the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP) at Howard University and the Tuskegee Institute (Gubert, Sawyer, Fannin 9), flew in his plane "The Goodwill Spirit of the American Negro" from Philadelphia to Cuba and Haiti to promote aviation and cordial relationships between African Americans and the two Caribbean nations ("Philadelphian Pilot on Goodwill Flight to Haiti," "Goodwill Flyers in Tuskegee"). The National Airmen's Association's (N.A.A.) Dr. Earl W. Renfroe, a commercial pilot and a pioneering dentist⁵, Dale L. White, a private pilot, and Chauncey Spencer, a parachute jumper, navigator, and the son of Anne Spencer, one of Harlem Renaissance's foremost poets ("Prepare for Flight"), planned a tour of about a dozen cities around the country in order to draw attention to and advocate for African American inclusion in a Congress bill proposing the establishment of the CPTP; virtually a program to train reserve pilots in case of a war.

Both flights served primarily as messengers of goodwill and demonstration of black America's technical ingenuity; they sought to recontextualize the existing belief that African Americans cannot fly and therefore do not deserve to join the U.S. military's flying units. The former flight signaled that the best of black pilots could safely navigate the airways over the United States and the Gulf of Mexico as well as spread the aviation gospel to Africa-descended people outside of the US. Anderson flew with Richard Robert Wright, Jr., the president of Wilberforce University and bishop in the A.M.E. church. In early 1939, Wright's father had organized the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce with the objective of, among

⁵ Renfroe's complex career is best depicted in *Essays on Earl Renfroe: A Man of Firsts* (2001).

others, promoting black aviation in the context of the US government's plan to finally train African Americans as civilian, and potentially military pilots (Haynes 208).

The latter flight exposed repeated problems with African Americans' concerted efforts to blaze a trail in aviation. Dr. Renfroe withdrew from the flight along with his plane, leaving White and Spencer scrambling for funds – which they obtained from a family of successful black entrepreneurs – only to subsequently stop thirty minutes into the flight due to technical difficulties on their rented plane (“Flyers Are Grounded by Motor Fault,” Scott, Womack 91). While Anderson and Wright's flight was a testament to the abilities and achievements of black pilots and entrepreneurs, the N.A.A. flight threatened to become a major setback in the efforts of the organization and the *Defender* in campaigning for the CPTP. Despite initial obstacles, however, both flights succeeded, providing an even stronger recontextualizing evidence of the skills and resources that black pilots and mechanics had learned to wield after almost two decades of pioneering work.

Most goodwill flights in the Harlem Renaissance period were conceived to promote interest in aviation among African Americans and draw their attention to economic opportunities in the field. Education and increasing demand for skilled factory, garage, and airport jobs, as well as aviation's overall future potential, were the staples of the goodwill message in the newspaper coverage of the flights. This message also reflected and incorporated the inter- and trans-national ethos of the Harlem Renaissance: pilots sought to foster inter- and intra-racial relationships both in the US and among other Africa-descended populations. The two flights above fit the mold perfectly. The objective of Anderson's flight was to bring “a message of goodwill from members of the Race in America to Haitians” (“Goodwill Flyers Safe in Haiti”) and demonstrate the abilities of race flyers in long flights. It also promoted several business ventures between black Americans and Haiti, the first black republic (“Haiti Invites Black Americans,” “Haitian Trade Project Gets Native's Okeh,”

“Philadelphian Pilot on Goodwill Flight to Haiti,”). The *Defender* and N.A.A.’s flight from Chicago to nine other cities was, on the other hand, envisioned to “arouse interest of aviators in other cities in a nationwide meeting to be held [in Chicago] in August and to thank congressmen and federal officials for helping include Negroes in the government air training program” (“Chicago Pilots Plan a 3,000 Mile Flight”).

Moreover, the flight was to promote Cornelius Coffey, Willa Beatrice Brown, and their aviation school. Coffey, who had by 1938 become black aviation’s leading figure, had founded the N.A.A., owned a flying school in Chicago, and was hoping for his institution to become part of the federally-funded CPTP, which would provide funding for both historically black colleges and universities as well as non-college aviation schools such as Coffey’s. White and Spencer’s flight was thus also designed to promote aviation education, predicated on meticulous ground coursework as well as actual flying experience at a government-licensed all-black airport in Chicago. The *Defender* played an essential role in promoting the flight as it devoted almost an entire page on May 20, 1939 to reports and photographs documenting the success of the newspaper-sponsored goodwill flight.⁶

Finally, the two goodwill flights carried with them an implicit understanding that piloting skills and mechanical abilities had a military dimension. While Anderson’s hop was designed to bring a peaceful message to Haitians, both flights were tied to the military potential of aviation due to their connection to the National Defense Appropriation Bill that had just passed through the Congress, and to the subsequent CPTP Bill. Although civilian in name, the proposed pilot training program was military in spirit, and both flights demonstrated not only the willingness, but also the desire of New Negro pilots to take a worthy part in the upcoming war.

⁶ Later in 1939, the *Defender* reminded its readers of the flight when it claimed that White and Spencer had inspired the West Virginia State College Institute to apply for inclusion in the CPTP (“*Defender’s* Goodwill Flyers Inspired”).

As the dissertation reveals, the specter of aviation's military potential is visible in many journalistic texts about black aviation from the Harlem Renaissance period. Black aviation and its coverage in the black press had included a military aspect from its very inception. After white American pilots destroyed the black neighborhood in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921, aviation became a matter of survival for African Americans and thus garnered much attention by black journalists. The black press also took notice when the U.S. occupation of Haiti and its other colonial ventures in the Caribbean region heavily featured aviation and led to the establishment of "the empire of the air" (Vleck 1) in the pan-American region. Furthermore, black newspapers reported on colonial armies' utilization of aerial bombing throughout Africa. Consequently, aviation quickly emerged in the early 1920s as not only a new measure of civilization in the colonizer-colonized dichotomy, but also as a new means of control of and violence against populations of color. This explains why support for the development of black aviation in the black press went hand in hand with urgent calls for the inclusion of black pilots in the United States Air Service and later the Air Force.

The two 1939 flights were harbingers of the ways in which the black press would campaign for the inclusion of African American aviators in the CPTP and later for the double victory abroad and at home – the legendary Double V campaign. The two flights were also a reification of the vision that pioneering aviators, newspapers, and political leaders began to formulate as early as 1921. The fact that the two flights succeeded and, especially in the case of White and Spencer's flight, were also heavily covered by black newspapers was the result of a two-decade-long campaign in which the black press in cooperation with black aviators had constantly sought to convey the importance of aviation for the black community and formulate a message – of job opportunities, education, and the military importance that had become increasingly visible. The first contours of a vision of black aviation began in 1921

with the so-called Tulsa Race Riot and the emergence of Bessie Coleman, which are discussed in the following sections.

2.1 Origins of Black Aviation's Goodwill Message

The 1920s, when Bessie Coleman and her initial successors promoted and attempted their flights, were a period during which the black press began to shape and articulate black aviation's goodwill message. Journalists and some political leaders expressed their fear about the military potential of aviation and urged the race, even more so than the goodwill messengers, to take up aviation, thereby imbuing the goodwill message with the ever-present dimension of an upcoming race war conducted in the air. This section explains and analyzes the origins of aviation's goodwill message with strong military dimension on the cases of the black press coverage of and reactions to the Tulsa Race Riot and the emergence of Bessie Coleman as a nationwide black aviation crusader.

It also discusses the attempts of Coleman's colleagues and successors – Ace Foreman and Hubert Julian – to replicate her. Julian, for example, helped formulate black aviation's goodwill message, but also exploited the black community's anxiety over aviation's military threat for his personal enrichment and fame. The section ends with an analysis of newspaper editorials' commentary on developments in black aviation, and their contribution to formulating the essential tenets of aviation's message of goodwill and military threat: education and economic opportunities, racial representation in aviation as proof of humanity and civilization, the increasingly military dimension of aviation, and the wish to spread the field internationally to other Africa-descended people.

2.1.1 Aviation as Military Threat: The Tulsa Race Riot, Marcus Garvey, and the Black Press

The growing field of aviation was associated in the black press with warfare from early on. In 1913, for example, the *Defender* reported on the use of airplanes in battle in the Balkan wars (“Airships Used in Balkans”). During WW1, as Jessi M. Snider observes in the seminal study *Flying to Freedom: African-American Visions of Aviation, 1910-1927*, black journalists began to pay more attention to aviation as reports on the use of airplanes over European battlefields began to make the pages of white newspapers and magazines (41). After the race riot in Tulsa in 1921, however, the reality of modern warfare was brought closer to home. In the ground and aerial attack on the predominantly black Greenwood community, 300 people were killed, 35 blocks of the “Black Wall Street” district were destroyed by incendiary bombs, over 800 people were admitted to hospitals, and 6,000 were detained by the police (Hirsch 28). While the riot was brutal and bloody, the black press focused specifically on the fact that airplanes and air bombs were used during the assault. James Weldon Johnson, for instance, stated that “there was no more hellish passion loosed against the Germans in the late war than was loosed by these white citizens of Tulsa against their colored fellow citizens” (quoted in Snider 65). Johnson must have seen air warfare’s potential in 1920 in Haiti, where “the [the U.S.’s] prospects of dominating improved further with the advent of aircraft” (Roorda 270). In 1919, for example, the Marines, on their “civilizing” mission as Johnson sarcastically called it, dispatched airplanes to fight the insurgent *cacos*, who were caught defenseless against aerial reconnaissance and dive bombing (“Self-Determining Haiti”).

In descriptions of the scenes in Tulsa, black papers thus adopted “martial language” and began writing of a race war (65). The war, it seemed, would be fought in the air. Despite the coverage of WW1 in the black press, it was not until Tulsa, argues Snider, that “the

presence of these latest machines of war [airplanes] in Greenwood brought this aspect of war alive for black Tulsans” and, conversely, for the African American community at large (67). Battlefields were no longer clearly defined and even civilians could now be attacked, while having no way to defend themselves. Importantly, the race riot also seemed to have been symptomatic of the white American population’s apprehensive reaction to the phenomenon of the Great Migration and the emergence of a more assertive, confident, and militant black population, the emblematic New Negroes. The population of the prosperous and booming Greenwood had risen to 11,000 by 1921. By the time of the riot, explains W. Sherman Rogers, “the community included two schools, a hospital, two newspapers, two theaters, a public library, 23 churches, and three fraternal lodges.” In short, “the Greenwood district was the hub of the social and business life of the community” (87-8).

The community’s confidence, gained by its prosperity, however, sparked outrage among white Tulsans; especially when the community’s leaders sent armed men to the courthouse on May 31, 1921, to prevent a lynching. The white citizens thought they were witnessing an uprising and viciously attacked Greenwood with, among other weapons, airplanes with incendiary bombs (Rogers 89). Not only was thus aviation weaponized to prevent an uprising, but also to punish the African American community’s insolence materialized in its prosperity and belief that its could prevent, with arms, a lynching. In this way, aviation became feared in the black press as a potential punishment against any aspiring and wealthy New Negro community. It spelled doom for communities of color in a potential race war. The presence of airplanes over Tulsa thus highlighted the technological advancements of the white population – and the “racial technology gap” (Snider 70-71). When the *Defender* and other papers published a short report in June 1921 on the establishment of The Knights of the Air, which included around 700 members of the United States Air Service and were organized by William J. Simmons, the Imperial Wizard of the Ku

Klux Klan (“Current Events”), the exposed technological and skill gap between the black and white population became a dominant issue in the coverage of aviation for the next two decades, permeating the otherwise positive, goodwill message of aviation as progress.

Some race leaders’ reactions to Tulsa focused on aviation as well. Marcus Garvey, for example, had predicted the race war, invoked in the coverage on Tulsa, as early as 1919. Garvey’s ultimate objective was, according to David Levering Lewis, “the establishment of a Liberian Zion and the eventual liberation of the ancestral continent [of Africa]” (37). Garvey’s UNIA preached the uplift of the black race and “encouraged self-reliance and nationhood,” with these goals embodied by the organization’s motto of “Up You Mighty Race” (38). As Snider demonstrates, Garvey “stressed the need [for African countries] to achieve economic and military power” to be able to fight “on the African battlefield, where the great war of races would be played out” (79); a development that eventually took place in the Italo-Ethiopian war, when Italian mastery of the air prevailed over Ethiopian mettle. Indeed, as Takaki observes, “technology was perceived as the means by which people of color [...] were to be subordinated” (quoted in Sinclair 5). Garvey thus saw modern military technology as crucial for the development of people of color’s power and, even though he mainly espoused naval technologies as they held a symbolic significance for the descendants of slaves,⁷ airplanes, too, gradually became part of UNIA’s plans (Snider 82-83). The Tulsa riot, writes Snider, “engendered a new appreciation of the airplane’s role in racial relations” and speakers at various UNIA branches began to elaborate on the importance of airplanes for the organization’s plans (85-86). Garvey himself inserted a message of aviation’s military potential into his speeches, observing, for example, that white colonists in South Africa had used planes against the local Bondelzwarts people (88).

⁷ See Snider 80-86 for a more detailed discussion of Garvey’s views on the supremacy of ships over airplanes.

Developing a stable of airplanes and training of skilled aviators became an integral part of UNIA's race war message and overall mission. Speeches and articles quickly turned to plans of action after Tulsa as the Brooklyn branch of UNIA proposed to purchase an airplane for the organization's African Legion – the plane was to be piloted by Capt. Edison McVey, “an attaché in the Universal African Royal Guards, a Legion division” (Snider 89). McVey, who would write an aviation column for Garvey's *Negro World* until 1933 (Horne 54) later stunt-flew with Hubert Julian, one of black aviation pioneer figures, who became member of the UNIA in January 1922 (Snider 91). When the UNIA held its Third International Convention in August 1922, Julian parachuted over Harlem and thrilled thousands of spectators, reminding them of the exciting, albeit horrifying, spectacle of aviation. Garvey then introduced Julian as a hero to the convention's crowd of 10,000. A few days later, Bessie Coleman, home from her second trip to France, appeared at the convention as well (Snider 92-4). With black aviators taking part in the convention, fundraising for the proposed airplane immediately began and the Brooklyn branch announced its purchase in July, 1923 (Horne 41). As a result, the UNIA even established the Black Eagle Flying Corps, headed by Julian, which joined the already existing Black Starship Line, the Universal African Motor Corps, and the Universal African Legion, a makeshift army (Womack 29, Jakeman 59).

Consequently, between 1922 and 1925, Garvey and his *Negro World* – one of early Harlem Renaissance's most widely read newspapers – continued to develop and shape its message on the military use of aviation. Even though Garvey was inspired by the martial language employed in the black press coverage of the Tulsa riot, it was his paper that began concerted efforts in creating an aviation message that served UNIA's purpose of presenting itself as the leading organization preparing the Africa-descended people for the upcoming race war. The racial technological gap was constantly reiterated as the *Negro World* – with an estimated circulation of 200,000 – published numerous articles on the ways colonial powers

were employing airplanes in their efforts to subdue local populations. The paper condemned, for example, Italy's use of air attacks in Southwest Africa in 1924, the British for bombing civilians in the Middle East, and the French for dropping bombs in Morocco and Syria between 1922 and 1926 (Snider 96-97). The newspaper, however, also rejoiced in the fact that Daniel Cole of Detroit, an African American, fought for the Foreign Legion in Morocco. The UNIA's mouthpiece also posited that "when you see a Zulu chief flying through the African sunlight on a motorcycle and realize that any average human being can be taught to run a flying machine in eight hours, you wonder how long 'white supremacy' will last" (cited in Horne 38-9). Overall, Garvey saw aviation and the colonial powers' ability to master the air as already threatening to African populations – despite the titillating prospects of the locals taking up aviation in retaliation – and was quick to warn of similar developments in the United States, particularly after Tulsa.

Nevertheless, as will be shown next, the non-Garveyite black press gradually began to emphasize aviation's civilian dimension – a goodwill message of aviation which stressed employment, participation in as well as contribution to America's economic and technological developments, and internationalism. As Garvey's Pan-African message of race war and African exceptionalism gradually lost traction as well as its main voice when Garvey was banished from the United States in November 1927, aviation's goodwill message filled the vacated space in the black press. However, despite becoming the dominant philosophy in the discourse on black aviation, goodwill would sometimes still be accompanied with reminiscences of the military potential of airplanes, and, more increasingly, with calls for inclusion of African Americans in the US armed forces, including the Aviation Service and the Air Corps. An illuminating example of such a mixed goodwill message is a *Defender* editorial from September 1925, which claimed that "we are inching along [in aviation]" yet warned readers that "the next war will be fought in the air" and urged them to become pilots

(“The Week” About Aviation”). The notion that black aviators should, too, be trained in air warfare never truly disappeared from the newspaper coverage of black aviation and would become a cause of its own once John C. Robinson became the head of Ethiopia’s Air Force in 1935; a cause which is reflected in George S. Schuyler’s *Black Internationale* and *Black Empire*. The combination of goodwill and military message of aviation would then drive the campaign for inclusion of black students in the CPTP from 1936 on.

2.2 Bessie Coleman: Black Aviation’s Joan of Arc

Although the events in Tulsa and the black press’s reaction defined the beginning of aviation coverage in black newspapers, it was Bessie Coleman who became the face of black aviation and would symbolize it until the emergence of the Tuskegee Airmen. As Snider points out, “Coleman recognized the importance of newspapers in reaching and maintaining a relationship with the public, and upon her arrival she made them a vehicle for publicizing her aims” (152). In taking up aviation as a racial cause with international and military dimensions, Bessie Coleman personified the early aviation goodwill message and her name would later be used as a reminder whenever black newspapers sought to emphasize the importance of studying and advancing aviation in the African American community.

Coleman, born in Texas in 1892, was the first major African American pilot known to the black public. Although Eugene Bullard had flown for the Lafayette Flying Corps during WW1, little information about the recipient of the French Croix de Guerre made it to the black American public until later in the 1920s, when the *Defender* mentioned the military hero in several of its articles about expats living in Paris.⁸ Coleman studied at the Colored Agricultural and Normal University in Langston, Oklahoma, and in 1915 moved to Chicago, where she worked as a manicurist at the White Sox Barber Shop and owned a chili parlor.

⁸ There are two reputable monographs on Bullard: *The Black Swallow of Death* (1972) and *Eugene Bullard, Black Expatriate in Jazz-Age Paris* (2006). Brent Hayes Edwards’s *The Practice of Diaspora* also mentions Bullard (pgs. 4, 63, and 66).

Coleman's brothers, John and Walter, would tell stories about French women flying airplanes and the war planes they had seen during their service overseas (Rich 26), presenting their sister with the image of aviation as a hobby as well as a military proposition. One day, Coleman made up her mind to learn to fly a plane herself.

Since she had been rejected at white aviation schools in Chicago, Coleman decided in November 1920 to take Robert Abbott's advice and try her luck in France (Gubert, Sawyer, Fannin 78). Abbott's *Defender* reported on Coleman's return from France with an international pilot license in October 1921, announcing that the aviatrix would give exhibitions "in the hope of inspiring others with the desire to fly" ("Chicago Girl Is a Full-Fledged Aviatrix Now"). One week later, the newspaper carried a short article about Coleman's warm reception by the cast of *Shuffle Along* ("Shuffle Along Company Gives Fair Flyer Cup," Freyberg 76) and a cartoon, titled "They Can't Keep Us Down." It depicted a plane with a flag announcing "Miss Bessie Coleman – Blacks' First Aviatrix."

Coleman quickly became the face of black aviation. Although it is unclear if and how much she was informed about Tulsa, the celebratory cartoon and the overall raving coverage that Coleman was receiving would indicate that the African American community had found the person who would lead its progress in aviation now that the field had become essential to survival. Coleman was aware of the overall importance of aviation for her race's future and did not hesitate to express it to journalists: In France, she had walked nine miles to school every day for ten months, and in interviews she did not forget to mention that her flying school stood near Rouen, the city where the English had imprisoned Joan of Arc ("Aviatrix Must Sign Away Life to Learn Trade"). Coleman, with enthusiastic help from the black press, presented herself as a crusader for the race and its future in aviation. In underscoring in black newspapers her dedication to advancing her race in the field, her anxiety over the racial technological gap, and the fact that she had studied under the tutelage of a WW1 ace who had

shot down thirty-one airplanes during the war, Coleman came to form the basis of aviation's goodwill message with a palpable military undertone.

The essential aspect of Coleman's goodwill message, as evidenced in her dedication to schooling in France, was an appeal to the black community to pursue technical and mechanical education. In February 1922, Coleman left for France and Germany to gain further advanced flying instruction. She explained to the readers of the *Defender* that she wanted to purchase a plane in Paris for her aviation school which she planned to open upon her return in New York City to "all who want to fly" ("Bessie Coleman Leaves New York for France"). During her stay in Europe, Coleman received another license, becoming "the first of her race to [be] a full licensed flyer," according to a short report in the July 1922 issue of *The Washington Post*. The paper noted that the aviatrix had to refuse an offer "from Moscow to teach flying by women" because of "Soviet disturbances," but now intended to open a flying school in Chicago ("Negress an Air Pilot," "Bessie to Fly Over Gotham"). Upon her second return from Europe, the aviatrix consequently sought funds to open the announced school – hence her aforementioned visit to the UNIA convention.

Coleman's emergence also spurred the black press to initiate its own crusade for the inclusion of African Americans in the US armed forces. In an article informing white readers about the aviatrix's successes in Europe, the *New York Times* mentioned that Coleman had piloted a 220-horsepower Benz-motored L.F.G. plane in Germany, "the largest plane ever flown by a woman" ("Negro Aviatrix Arrives"). A May 1924 article in the *Defender* then also noted that the aviatrix had piloted a Fokker bomber plane during her visit to Germany in 1922 ("Dutch Aviator Will Teach Race to Fly"). This would explain why the UNIA members, preparing for a race war to break out soon, had been so ecstatic when Coleman paid them a visit upon her return. Along with reminiscences about Tulsa, the news about Coleman's skills may have been why the *Defender* asserted in an editorial from May 1922 that "we should

have representation in the aerial service and proper steps should be taken to secure it” (“Let Us Fly”). Now that the race had a skilled pilot in its ranks, it was time for more African Americans, especially the WW1 veterans, to join the nation’s air forces.

Once Coleman was back stateside, she fully focused on spreading her message of goodwill, seeking to draw attention to aviation, its military dimension, and to recruit sponsors and students for her future school. Dubbed “Queen of the Air” by the *Defender*, Coleman explained in interviews that while in Germany, she had flown for Pathé films over prominent sites in Berlin – the film would later be used in the aviatrix’s promotional tour. She was also planning to bring in European experts to help her teach the race to fly and, in the meantime, she hoped to travel around the United States and “the pan-American countries” (“Bessie to Fly Over Gotham”). In wanting to take her exhibition flights and promoting black aviation internationally, urging people of color to take it up as a cause, Coleman enriched her goodwill message. The shift from teaching in Chicago – or in Moscow – to flying around the Americas added a new geographical and ideological dimension to the overall goodwill message. Even though Coleman’s own plans for spreading the gospel of aviation abroad never materialized – which is how the story of international flights by black pilots would go until 1932 – international and transnational outlook as well as the recognition of erasure of borders through aviation became an indispensable component in the coverage of black aviation.

Coleman also highlighted and exploited the notion of aviation’s military potential after WW1 and Tulsa; the aviatrix “often symbolically portrayed herself in martial terms,” explains Snider (229). In New York in 1922, shortly after her visit with the UNIA, Coleman performed her first US exhibition flight under the auspices of the *Defender* – this constituted the first time a black newspaper financed a black pilot’s flight. She flew in honor of the 15th New York National Guard Regiment, also known as the Harlem Hellfighters, which had made a name for itself not only for bravery displayed in combat, but also for spreading jazz around

Europe through James Reese's marching band (Lewis 1-6). The band performed while Coleman was in the air ("Bessie Gets Away; Does Her Stuff"). In Chicago, one month later, Coleman put on an even more spectacular and militaristic show, when, in honor of the 8th Illinois Infantry, the aviatrix showed stunts named after various European war aces and drove the crowd into frenzy during her second flight as she made the figure eight in the air ("Bessie Coleman Makes Initial Aerial Flight"). While Coleman's flying thus became firmly connected with the military, it was also distinctly African American military achievements that Coleman was celebrating. In return, she was recognized as a crusader with the skills of the most famous of war aces – and could thus lead the race in case of a race war fought in the air.

Unfortunately, in 1923, Coleman suffered serious injuries while flying in California, but vowed to return. Even from the hospital bed, she continued to propagate aviation, explaining that her injuries proved that "flying in the air is no more dangerous than riding an automobile on the surface" ("Bessie Coleman Says Good Will Come from Hurt"). A tone of criticism, however, also appeared in her message for the first time as she decried lack of funding and cooperation on the part of her race in establishing her aviation school. These problems would prevent Coleman from ever giving up barnstorming for a teaching career until her premature death in 1926, during yet another exhibition flight to raise funds. Lamenting the lack of funding and interest in aviation on black America's part in general would become another ever-present feature of aviation's goodwill message until 1938, especially in editorials.⁹

Recuperating from serious injuries, however, did not stop Coleman from further presenting herself in martial and also Pan-African context. Before a planned exhibition in Chicago in September 1923, Coleman's plane was exhibited at the Eight regiment armory

⁹ Snider provides an in-depth discussion of this type of tone in aviation coverage in Chapter 5 of her study.

(“No Flight by Bessie Coleman; Rain Interferes”). Furthermore, although the aviatrix had never joined the UNIA, she had cooperated with Garveyites in preparation for her exhibition in honor of the 15th infantry regiment (Snider 230). While in Paris, Coleman had attended the Pan-African Congress where she had met Prince Kojou Tovalou Houénou, a major figure in the Paris African community, who, according to Brent Hayes Edwards, fostered relationships between African American, Caribbean, and African intellectuals during the Harlem Renaissance (85). When Prince Kojou visited Chicago in 1924, as the aviatrix was taking a respite from her crusade, Coleman spoke at his reception and was rumored to have been his lover (“Prince Kojou of Dahomey Pays Tribute to Lincoln,” Freyberg 92). Although her connections with the Pan-African community loosened over time, Coleman had created an image of herself as a crusader with military-flying skills and transnational connections, willing to lead and educate her race.

In the end, it was Coleman’s funeral in 1926 that solidified her image for the following years as a Joan-of-Arc-like martyr, who died for her race’s aviation progress, and that established her goodwill message as the staple of black aviation discourse in the black press. The May 8 issue of the *Defender* carried a photograph of Coleman’s burning plane and a lengthy description of the accident in which the aviatrix fell out of the plane (“Bessie Coleman, Aviatrix, Killed”). A short obituary likened her to Crispus Attucks, the first American killed in the American Revolution, and Frederick Douglass, and eulogized her as a “pioneer, first in the air (“The Week: Pioneer”). Unlike the *NYAN*, both the *Courier* and the *Defender* devoted significant space to Coleman’s Chicago funeral, with the *Defender* carrying an editorial “As Americans Should Die” and *Courier*’s George S. Schuyler eulogizing Coleman. In stating that aviation offers “wonderful possibilities today for Negroes as well as whites” (“Views and Reviews”), Schuyler spread Coleman’s goodwill message on with his influential column.

More importantly, the newspapers showed to the public that Coleman was being awarded a funeral with military honors – becoming associated with other influential figures in black history – with the casket covered in the American flag, and six soldiers of the Eighth Regiment carrying the dead body. Ida Wells Barnett,¹⁰ Coleman’s mentor and one of the founders of the NAACP, delivered the eulogy, while Reverend J.C. Austin, an influential Chicago Garveyite and Pan-Africanist, officiated the ceremonies (“Brilliant Military Honors Accorded Fallen Aviatrix,” “Chicago Pays Parting Tribute to Brave Bessie Coleman”). In short, Coleman received a national-hero funeral and extensive emotionally-charged press coverage, which emphasized the military aspects of her goodwill message as well as her Pan-African connections.

However, Coleman left a void in the race’s aviation efforts. The *Defender* realized that Coleman’s passing signaled a new era in black aviation with no other role models at hand. Moreover, the void exacerbated the notion of the racial technological gap discussed by Garvey, Coleman, and the black press throughout the early 1920s. To stimulate active participation in aviation after Coleman’s death, the *Defender* disseminated Coleman’s goodwill message to educate the race in flying and prepare it for the future. In an August 1926 article on the new Ford company airplanes, for example, the paper noted that Ford had the country’s defense in mind when it had designed the new machines, and bemoaned the fact that, even though Bessie Coleman “worked tirelessly to quicken the interest of our people in aviation, [...] they seem to ignore [it] in spite of its increasing importance” (“Ford Tells President Plans for Air Force”). The proximity of the next war was again highlighted when the newspaper noted in 1927 that “aviation authorities, in discussing the rapid advancement of the airplane as an instrument of war, are wondering what would be the result if the Chinese army adopted the airplane on a large scale” (“Chinese in Aviation”). The article echoed

¹⁰ Barnett’s autobiography, *Crusade for Justice* (1970), unfortunately does not mention Coleman in any way.

another editorial from 1925, in which the next war, fought in the air, was described as pitting against each other the U.S., Europe, and “the aroused hatred of Asia” (“The Week: About Aviation”). With Coleman gone, it seemed that African Americans were lagging in aviation behind all races.

2.3 Coleman’s Successors: Joel “Ace” Foreman and Hubert Fauntleroy

Julian

Temporarily, the void that Bessie Coleman had left seemed filled when Joel “Ace” Foreman, Coleman’s contemporary from California, announced a transcontinental flight in 1927. Foreman’s was, as Robert A. Jakeman explains, the “first bona fide attempt at a long-distance flight by a black” (61). Foreman had made a name for himself, according to Snider, as a race car driver and a pilot in California and enjoyed the admiration of local journalists (249). For example, in September 1925, the 24-year-old “piloted his plane to 2,000 feet, nose dived, looped the loop, and stood on the wings of his plane in the first of a series of stunts, which were part of his exhibition” in front of a crowd of 350 spectators (“Race Aviator Flies for Hospital Fund”). In late February 1927, the *Courier* announced Foreman’s goodwill transcontinental hop, declaring emotionally that the proposed feat would launch “a new epoch [...] in the history of the Negro’s achievements.” The paper provided a short biography of Foreman, saying that “the local dailies have been running stories of his life and great interest is being attached to his flight.” Foreman was depicted as a showman of considerable piloting skills, poised to take Coleman’s place as the face of black aviation (“Los Angeles Mayor Sends New York Mayor Letter by Negro Cross Continental Flyer”).¹¹

Unfortunately, the epoch never materialized. Even though Foreman declared in the *Courier* that “he will make the trip easily, barring mishap,” the next article in the newspaper

¹¹ As a goodwill flight seeking to arouse the interest of the race in aviation, Foreman’s hop had another symbolic dimension, too, as the plane would carry a letter from the mayor of Los Angeles to the mayor of New York.

noted that upon take-off, the aviator had been flying in a plane that he had secured only a few hours before, and had been sent off by mere 500 spectators (“Los Angeles Mayor Sends New York Mayor Letter by Negro Cross Continental Flyer,” “Transcontinental Flyer Hops Off On First Leg of California-New York Journey”). In a strikingly dissimilar tone to the *Courier*’s, the *Defender*, perhaps owing to its employment of yellow, sensationalist style of journalism, depicted the scene of Foreman’s take-off as “a gala affair [where] everything was ideal for the attempt,” including ten thousand spectators. At the same time, the paper lamented that Foreman and his mechanic, Ace Ward, had met with “little encouragement from the white race and a little more from their own” (“10,000 Cheer Aviators as They Start Their Flight From Coast to Coast”). In an effort to promote the race aviator yet excoriate the lack of funding on the part of the black community, the *Defender* was spreading a mixed message of shaming its readers into supporting black aviators, while hailing the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP and the Negro Business League for funding the historic feat.

Foreman and Ward barely managed to reach Chicago. It took them four days to arrive in Salt Lake City, where they were stranded for days due to lack of funds needed to purchase a new motor for their inadequate old plane (“Cross-Country Aviators Down,” “Flyers Forced Down in Salt Lake”). The *Defender* carried a series of photographs from the scene of Foreman’s take-off, informed of the aviator’s technical misfortune, and explained in detail how Foreman navigated the stalled plane mid-air (“Snowstorm Forces Flyer to Come Down”). The paper showed that, despite mishaps, the two aviators were experts in their field. It sought to present Foreman as an expert technic and skillful aviator worth the readership’s time and money. As the *Courier* noted, too, the aviators had to walk four miles from their now motor-less plane to Salt Lake City in snow, and yet wished to continue in their flight anyway (“Cross-Country Flyer to Continue Flight”).

The editor of the *California Eagle*, Joseph Bass, following the emotionally-charged, crusading imagery of Coleman's goodwill message, depicted Foreman as a hero on an aviation mission for the race. Foreman, according to Bass, was "striving to make his contribution to progress depicting the prowess and genius of a race risking his very life to accomplish the end wholly unmindful of vain glory or any of the colorful things which men sometimes strive for" (quoted in Snider 256-7). Bass's goodwill message, like texts on Coleman during her career and after her passing, included personal sacrifice, lamentation, and call for the race to take up aviation education by following Foreman's example.

The message was heard, it seemed, in Chicago. When the two aviators arrived, they were welcomed, invited to give talks at churches and social gatherings and to ask for funds. Despite the flight's eventual failure, the *Defender* sensed a good story and published an interview with Foreman, in which the flyer implored the black youth that "they, too, with courage and training, can launch into the field of aviation." "The youth of our group," Foreman explained, "have too long been led to believe that [...] we have no place in the growing field of commercial aviation" ("Flyers Score Men Who Mock Their Efforts"). But his flight sought to awaken in the race the ambition to fly and to reverse the stereotype of African Americans' technical and technological inability.

Foreman's eloquence was strongly reminiscent of Coleman's. The *Defender* portrayed the young pilot as an unassuming, yet passionate crusader for the race's success in the field of aviation, and, even though Foreman's flight ended in Chicago when his plane was deemed "not airworthy" by aeronautical authorities (Snider 260), the black newspapers seemed to have found a new aviation hero. More importantly, even Foreman expressed his vision of aviation as essential if the race were to survive the upcoming race war: "[B]eing barred in the last war from the aviation service seriously affected [the race's] ambition to learn to fly. This ambition must be awakened," explained Foreman, "if we ever expect to leave the ground and

master the air as the other races of the earth have done” (“Flyers Score Men Who Mock Their Efforts”). Having been associated with the *Californian Eagle’s* Garveyite editors (Snider 265), Foreman was probably versed in the race-war rhetoric of the UNIA. Although he had not delivered on his promise to make it easily to New York and had to travel back to Los Angeles, where he finally arrived after almost four months, by train, the young pilot did state upon his arrival that “he may take a trip to South America” (“Ace Foreman, Los Angeles Aviator, Back Home Again”). In this way, Foreman echoed Coleman’s internationally-minded goodwill message of aviation.

Indeed, Foreman followed in Coleman’s footsteps both rhetorically and in terms of ideas after his return to California. In December 1927, he announced the opening of his own flying school, expecting “a considerable number of Negro boys and girls [...] to enroll in the school [...] owing to the world-wide interest in aviation” (“Negro Aviator Starts School”). The school opened in April 1928 (“Race Aviator May Take Part in Air Derby In Fall”). Although Foreman managed to realize his dream of opening a black aviation school, his career was cut short: in early August 1929, he drowned. The *Courier* carried a detailed biographical article on Foreman (“Ace Foreman Lived Eventful Life”), but there was no military funeral held for the young flyer. In a span of three years, the African American community thus prematurely lost two passionate pilots, upon whose deaths the black press was left with a creative, deeply personal and emotion-stirring narrative of martyrs who implored their fellow men and women with arguments about an upcoming war as well as of economic opportunities in commercial aviation to take up aviation as a worthwhile cause for the future of the race.

2.3.1 Hubert Julian’s Goodwill Message

Unfortunately, the discussion on aviation and its message to the readers – fostered and molded by Coleman, Foreman, and various texts in the black press – was picked up,

transformed, and discredited by Hubert Fauntleroy Julian.¹² The Trinidad-born parachutist claimed to be a doctor with a degree from McGill University in Montreal and to have had fictitious ties to the Canadian Air Force during WW1;¹³ hence his frequent designation in the black press as “Colonel Julian.” His escapades filled the pages of the black press until the 1950s and hampered back aviation’s progress and image for years. In 1922, Julian became popular for his parachute stunts in honor of the UNIA and for the Harlem Hellfighters. In May 1923, he dazzled Harlem with a parachute jump – while playing the saxophone – from a plane piloted by Edison McVey, sergeant first class “with the 95th Air Squadron of the United States Army” (“Julian Jumps from Plane 3000 Feet Up,” Horne 41). The *NYAN* planned to christen the pair’s newly-purchased plane in late May 1923 (“Julian to Again Jump from Plane”), but McVey, “one of the two daredevil aviators of the race,” according to the *Courier*, was severely injured in a plane accident (“Lieutenant Edison Badly Hurt in Fall”).¹⁴ In the following months, Julian became a headline joke in the black press as his wife, whom he had left in Montreal, called him a “love thief [who] left a trail of broken hearts in his wake” and sued for divorce (“Sued by Wife”).

Julian knew how to attract publicity for himself through aviation. In April 1924, the desperate parachutist travelled to Boston to seek funding for a plane to fly to Africa (“Aviator Seeks \$8,000”). In claiming to want to fly to Africa, he exploited the international dimension of Coleman’s and Foreman’s dreams of flying to Pan-American countries to spread aviation’s goodwill message. Also, having been a Garveyite, Julian was well aware of the ways Garvey was publicizing aviation’s military potential in articles about colonial powers’ bombing of various African countries, and he took part in the military displays of aviation organized by

¹² Although Gerald Horne claims that Julian “was no buffoon” (41), the numerous newspaper articles on Julian’s antics provide another image, as does the dislike towards Julian on his fellow black aviators’ part.

¹³ According to Snider (107), there were no records showing a black flyer in the Canadian army, nor were there any records of Julian having ever attended the university.

¹⁴ McVey had served, according to Gerald Horne, “with the 95th Air Squadron of the United States Army,” earning the rank of sergeant first class (41).

the UNIA. Unlike the heralded flyers that Coleman and Foreman had been, however, Julian could not fly a plane himself and seemed to have only tried to whet the black public's appetite for black flyers, while discrediting any funding campaigns on his behalf in the process. One month after Julian's trip to Boston, the Boulin Detective Agency, one of the first black detective organizations operated by a fellow West Indian (Brundage 306), announced that Julian "is not an aviator or pilot, but only a parachute jumper." The investigation by Boulin concluded that Julian sought to enrich himself by asking for funds, because, since he was not a licensed pilot, he could not legally take an airplane to Africa or anywhere else ("Herbert Julian Not an Aviator Detectives Say"). Despite his publicized shortcomings and legal troubles, however, Julian began in 1924 his career as black aviation's con artist, spreading a message of goodwill on which he did not intend to deliver.

A mere month after the Boulin exposé in the *Courier*, Julian continued to develop his own exaggerated goodwill message, with special emphasis on the international, border-crossing dimension of aviation. In June 1924, he brought a \$8,000 plane to Harlem, where it was supposed to be assembled for a test round-trip to Boston. On July 4, he was planning to hop off on a trip spanning four continents within thirty days – a feat nearly successfully carried out by the Italian, Mussolini-backed pilots Francesco de Pinedo, Carlo Del Prete, and Vitale Zacchetti in 1927 ("Francesco de Pinedo: A Flight Across the Atlantic and the Two Americas") – as he planned to visit South America, Haiti, Liberia, West Africa, France, England, Scotland, Iceland, and Canada. Julian's grey plane was dubbed "Ethiopia I." although the country was not on the destination list. Its tail was painted in red, black, and green, due to Julian's association with Garvey's UNIA. The organization, however, distanced itself from Julian's proposed trip ("Julian Brings \$8,000 Airplane to Harlem") as it was already losing credibility due to its own scandals.

Julian was a master of form over matter, rhetoric over action. He skillfully exploited Pan-African symbols in naming his plane Ethiopia I., thereby alluding to the biblical quote “Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God,” which represented the black biblical tradition and was reflected in Garveyism and the Rastafari movement (Moses 51). He combined the militant Pan-Africanism of the UNIA with Coleman’s vision of international promotional flights into a convoluted message of goodwill, which he could only promote, yet never actually deliver on. Indeed, his 1924 flight ended in disaster when Julian was pressured into taking off after a Department of Justice official had asked him to prove that he was not embezzling money from his aviation fund. In front of a crowd of 10,000, who were asked to donate even more money so that Julian could repay what he still owed to the plane owners, the parachutist ended in Flushing Bay after a three-minute flight, suffered internal injuries, and became the laughing stock of both the black and white press (Snider 116, “Aviator Hurt When Plane Falls”).

Even though Julian would never fly more than several hundred miles during his career, he presented his unrealizable goodwill plans in the black press for another decade and became one of Harlem’s most notorious figures. In 1926, Julian sought funds for another plane to fly to Liberia and, desperately searching for a successor to Coleman, the *NYAN* even published Julian’s own pleading text asking for funds. In it, the parachutist urged his fellow Harlemites – as “the only licensed black aviator,” according to the *Courier* (“Julian Pays \$9,000 on New \$15,000 Plane”) – that the opportunity to fly will not be given to black Americans until “we have proven that the same spirit of intrepidity that actuates the members of the nautic [sic] race to risk their lives furthering the science of aviation, dwells in the breast of this oppressed race.” Julian reveled in employing emotional, crusading appeals and rhetoric in pleading for funds for his flights. He also exploited the fact that the black press could speak directly to African American communities across the country when he announced that the

object of his flight to Liberia was to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence by flying a plane “owned by Negroes, manned by Negroes [...] from the centennial across the Atlantic to Africa” (“Julian Makes Ringing Race Appeal”). In the end, Julian’s plane was never paid for and the flight never materialized (“Julian Pays \$9,000 on New \$15,000 Plane,” “Julian Planning Liberian Flight,” “Julian Will Really Fly?”).

In 1928, the parachutist proposed to emulate Charles Lindbergh’s 1927 non-stop flight from NYC to Paris and, this time, managed to acquire sponsorship from Senator A. Spencer Field. In a series of promotional articles, the *Courier* and the *NYAN* recycled Julian’s old message with a new twist: taking a page from Coleman and Foreman’s book, Julian presented himself as an aviation crusader for the race, stating that “if anything happens, I shall be the only sufferer. [...] While I am sure the outcome will be satisfactory, I have no desire to place the life of another human being in jeopardy” (“To Go Lindy’s Way – Alone!,” “Julian Plans Paris-Return Flight,” “Julian Still Plans Atlantic Flight”). Julian’s message was similar to Coleman’s first statements upon her first return from France – as well as Bass’s defense of Foreman in the *California Eagle* – as was the exalting and flowery language in the *Courier* and *NYAN* articles describing Julian’s plans. Furthermore, Julian was satisfying the black press readership’s lust for yellow journalism as he toyed with the ever-present imagery of death, associated with early aviation attempts and Coleman and Foreman’s fate. He was also exploiting Lindbergh’s popularity among black Americans.

More importantly, however, Julian began playing the race-war card, too. In an interview before his proposed flight to Paris, the parachutist explained that if his flight proved to be a success, “the colored man will be recognized in a new light from the standpoint of value to his country. No longer will he be of service only to the Army and Navy. Once he has been granted a license to pilot a machine, he can go into the aviation corps.” Driving his message of military potential of his crusading flight home, Julian echoed Garvey and the

black press editorials in stating that “it is certain that if another war comes, it must be fought in the air”. The *Courier* adopted the language of Julian’s bold claims and shifted the tone of its aviation message toward sensationalism, despite its reputation as a conservative paper devoid of yellow journalism. The paper called Julian the “only blackbird ever to cleave the azure on man-made wings,” working for his race “eager for a Negro to attain a greatness in flying commensurate with that of his brethren in other branches of the arts and sciences.” Again, Coleman and Foreman’s message resurfaced here, but in a more exalted tone, typical of Julian’s self-promoting style aimed at stirring national and racial pride in the readership. The *Courier* even went as far as to hail Julian the “Bronze Lindy” and claimed that he had sought to make a transatlantic flight long before Charles Lindbergh and others even considered such a trip (“To Go Lindy’s Way – Alone!). Importantly, it must be also noted here that the *Courier*, in its celebratory coverage equated aviation with the arts and sciences, two areas in which African Americans had long been proving their humanity and worth to white America. For the black newspaper, then, the development of aviation among African Americans was parallel to the advancements made by the Harlem Renaissance’s artists.

The *Courier* even provided an extensive biography of the Julian, including an assertion that parachutist was “the only Negro pilot ever licensed by the National Aeronautic Association of the U.S.A.”¹⁵ Ever the crusader, “soft-spoken but with eyes sparkling determination,” Julian explained to the paper’s reporter that he had “no desire for personal aggrandizement [for] the sole purpose of my proposed flight is to stimulate a greater interest in aviation among my own people,” echoing Foreman’s confession to the *Defender* upon the failure of his cross-country trip. His success, Julian added, would lead to the founding of aviation schools where “Negroes may be taught the science of flying – free” (“Julian Names Plane Black Eagle”). From personal sacrifice and international aspirations for his flight to

¹⁵ Future reports in the two newspapers would reveal that Julian received his license as late as 1931. One report from the late 1930s even indicated that he was a student’s license holder only.

calls for establishing aviation schools for the race, Julian thus recreated a complete goodwill message, with implicit criticism of inadequate funding for pioneer aviators. Only one key component was missing – Julian ever successfully taking off.

Of course, during the years when Foreman and Julian shone in the spotlight, the black press reported on other pioneering aviators as well, usually providing a photograph and a short biographic profile along with it. In 1927, for example, the *Defender* published a photograph of Jesse S. Samuels, who was hoping to join the United States air mail service (“Future Flyer”), which, however, remained closed to race aviators until 1938, when another Illinois-based pilot, Grover C. Nash, delivered mail during the National Air Mail Week (“Race Aviator Flies U.S. Air Mail Route”). The *Courier* also reported on Clarence E. Martin and Walter E. Swagerty,¹⁶ who attempted to sign up for a non-stop-flight race to Hawaii in 1927 (“Black American Aviators to Enter \$35,000 Non-Stop Hawaiian Flight”).¹⁷ Jesse Boland made headlines in October 1927, when he flew a plane he had built himself over the city of Roanoke, Va. for several hours (“Roanoke Youth”). Technically-skilled youngsters around the country were trying to pave the way for African Americans in aviation, but Coleman also remained on people’s mind: newly-built apartments in Harlem were named after the deceased aviatrix in 1927 (“Harlemites Honor Memory of Aviatrix”).

2.4 Lindbergh, the Black Press, and Aviation Editorials

However, by the time Foreman returned to Los Angeles in June 1927 and one year had eclipsed since Bessie Coleman’s death, Charles Lindbergh had become an international superstar – the embodiment of America’s fascination with aviation and the measure of Western technical civilization which black Americans were trying to catch up with. Given

¹⁶ According to Jakeman, Swagerty claimed to have invented a “heavier than air machine” back in 1911 (54).

¹⁷ Swagerty appeared on the pages of the *Courier* again in September 1929 in an article on four air races in Los Angeles, where he demonstrated a “monocoupe, a pilot and passenger plane of small proportions” for the Velle Motor company. The article explained that Swagerty did not possess an aviator’s license (“Aviator Takes Part in Four California Races”).

Julian's antics and unfulfilled promises, Foreman's failure to land in New York, and Lindbergh's stunning non-stop flight from New York to Paris, editorials in the black press began to express skepticism towards the future of aviation among African Americans.

Indeed, the black press had reasons for doubt. As Jenifer Van Vleck points out in *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy*, the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics reported in 1927 that "aviation is being accepted by the people as a means of transportation and as a business in which industrial capital is being invested." According to Van Vleck, the "production of civilian aircraft quadrupled between 1927 and 1929; production of military aircraft increased from 1,995 to 6,193" (50). In 1928, twenty three new airlines would be established and by mid-1929, the U.S. had sixty- one passenger airlines, forty- seven airmail lines, and thirty- two cargo lines. The number of passengers was rising, too: from 5,782 in 1926 to 173,405 in 1929. Aviation patrons were boosting aviation progress: in 1926, the Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics was established. It provided "much- needed financial support for aviation education and research. By 1930, the fund had granted nearly \$2.7 million for the establishment of aeronautical engineering programs at eight leading universities, an aviation law institute, and educational initiatives for elementary and secondary schools" (40-51). While aviation in the African American community was barely was inching along, white America was flying forward.

The *Defender* and the *NYAN* celebrated Lindbergh's feat for weeks, while the *Courier* largely ignored it. All three papers, however, published sobering editorials on the present and future state of aviation among African Americans. The *Defender* also ran a syndicated comic strip "The Conquest of the Air" by Nicholas Afonsky from June 2, 1928 to May 4, 1929 – 45 installments altogether. Along with Lindbergh trivia and later reports on the goodwill flight to pan-American countries, the paper used Lindbergh to inspire and urge its audience to take up or at least support aviation, while it decried black Americans' lack of opportunities in the

field. An editorial commemorating Bessie Coleman from May 1927, for example, observed that “disaster seems to attend all our efforts in [aviation], partly because of a lack of interest on our part, and partly because of insufficient preparation on the part of those who are trying.” Education opportunities were scant, too, noted the editorial, as “we are barred from schools of aviation [...] and lack of funds makes it impossible for us to procure first class equipment for our efforts in aviation” (“Bessie Coleman”).

Despite these unfavorable conditions, however, another editorial from May 1927 exhorted that “men of your color who pioneer in aviation come the hardest way. [...] For them to be aviators requires more than ordinary heroism, for they fly with the poorest of equipment, the cheapest of planes, and the scantiest encouragement.” Comparing Ace Foreman with Lindbergh, the editorial observed that “no cheering thousands gather when [Foreman and Ward] take off, no checks flow in to reward their work.” And yet “their fight is the hardest kind [...] and their reward is pitiful. It took nerve and courage for Lindbergh to fly from New York to Paris. But it takes nerve and courage for the aviators of your color to fly at all” (“The Week: Nerve and Courage”). Despite Foreman’s and also Julian’s failures, the black press thus sought to transvalue or reverse the image of aviation among African Americans as an exercise in futility, particularly in the face of Lindbergh’s achievement. Despite eventual defeat, black aviators were attempting to blaze a trail in aviation and the black American public should reward them with attention, support, and funds, argued the *Defender*. In response to the editorials, letters from the readers poured in for months. An aviator, for example, promised to “keep striving on to the top of the ladder of success” (“From an Aviator”), while others debated why black Americans could not succeed in aviation and other endeavors, venturing reasons from poor diet to lack of financial backing (“The Stuff of Which Lindberghs Are Made,” “The Lindbergh Question,” “More About Aviation”).

The *NYAN* also employed the discussion of Lindbergh's courage and overall character to inspire and engage its readership. In "Lindbergh and the Negro Problem," a former member of the UNIA, Sybil Bryant Poston, urged black Americans to "go it alone [and] to become pioneers, trail blazers with confidence in ourselves and a belief in the ultimate triumph of our race." Along with the *Courier*, the Harlem-based paper also ran an editorial titled "What Will the Negro Contribute to Aviation," in which it reminded the readers that race pilots often face ridicule and lack of interest in their efforts, but it also struck a hopeful tone in arguing that Lindbergh's achievements should inspire the race's youth to "begin a serious apprenticeship in aeronautics [although] the time is not yet favorable for a big adventure in aviation by a race man." Since people of color had contributed to navigation and participated in voyages and explorations, the time would come, argued the text, for "those of dusky skin" to do their part in aviation as well. While hopeful in vision, the editorial read as a sobering reminder of the state of aviation among African Americans. As in the *Defender's* case, responses to the sobering message came in the form of letters.

Along with tidbits on Lindbergh's non-stop flight, however, the *NYAN* devoted most attention to its exclusive coverage – as the only black newspaper – of Lindbergh's historic goodwill flight across Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean between 1927 and 1928. Upon the aviator's visit to the Virgin Islands, for example, the newspaper took pride in enumerating the various black dignitaries present at the welcome ceremony ("Negroes to Welcome Lindbergh," "Correspondent Tells of Lindbergh's Arrival") and celebrated Toussaint L'Ouverture in reports on Haiti ("Lindbergh and Haiti, the Country of a Great Liberator").

It must be noted, however, that while the paper celebrated and raved about Lindbergh's visit to the Caribbean, it was also countering the mainstream press's coverage of the goodwill flight. Lindbergh was repeatedly hailed by white reporters as a conqueror of both

the air and the countries visited; the “Columbus of the Air [who] has sailed the uncharted spaces to the new world in the imagination, admiration and affection of his fellow-men” (“Lindbergh Arrives at Santo Domingo”). To solidify his image as the “aerial successor” to Columbus, Lindbergh was even gifted in Haiti “a mahogany paper weight loaded with metal from the anchor ring of [...] Santa Maria” and had a street leading to the statue of Toussaint L’Ouverture named after him, the *New York Times* informed (“Haiti to Give Flier Relic of Columbus”).

Reports repeatedly depicted Lindbergh as a benevolent apostle of the gospel of aviation and civilization to the backward populations of the region. In “Lindbergh Lands at Port-au-Prince as New Discoverer,” the *NYT* explained that Haiti’s “illiterate negro peasants [...] discovered colonel Lindbergh much as the Indians did Columbus, for they had never heard of him before.” Indeed, the uncivilized population of color in Haiti and other islands could not fathom who Lindbergh was, the *NYT* were saying, for even though “the inarticulate negro peasants [...] have become accustomed to seeing the Marines flying planes, [they] have little means of understanding Colonel Lindbergh’s achievements” (“Haitian Opposition Wars on Lindbergh”). As the newspaper would have it, Lindbergh resembled a god-like creature, descended from the skies – in Cuba, Lindbergh’s Spirit of St. Louis was allegedly received as a “supernatural machine,” with thousands of people observing and touching it “reverently” (“Lindbergh Reaches Goal at Havana”). Overall, the *NYT* recycled the existing imagery of Lindbergh as a discoverer and pioneer, as well as “the embodiment of transnational whiteness” (Van Vleck 46), and transposed it onto the exotic Caribbean, which Lindbergh graced with his civilizing mission.

The *NYAN* ran articles and editorials critical precisely of such exoticization and U.S. colonialism embodied by Lindbergh. An editorial from February 1928, for example, pointed out the “plight” of the Virgin Islands under U.S. rule (“Lindbergh at St. Thomas”). Another

text noted that Mexico “was not fooled by the goodwill idea” behind Lindbergh’s flight and that “American capitalists were obnoxious to Mexicans” (“Citizens Entertain Senorita Fuentes”). In another editorial, “America’s Orgy in Haiti,” the newspaper predicted that “the brutalizing policy of the United States will recoil upon itself, especially in its attempts to win the friendship of Latin America. “Personal favor, handshaking and flying machines,” asked the text, “what are they worth in the face of such political, social, and economic debauchery as prevails in Haiti?” Thus, whereas the *NYT* saw Lindbergh’s flight as an opportunity to promote US dominance over the Caribbean and the region’s skies as a conquering, yet civilizing mission, the voice of Harlem – keeping in spirit with its Renaissance – would have none of it. Instead, it repeatedly highlighted and criticized the Marines’ racism in Haiti, US imperialism, and eventually exposed Lindbergh’s goodwill as ultimate show of power.

The *Courier* – and even George S. Schuyler, it seems – largely ignored Lindbergh’s successes; excepting the aforementioned sobering editorial. In a column, “The Camera,” Robert L. Vann himself did briefly observe that “all the glory is [Lindbergh’s]. His example is ours.” But Geraldyn Dismond, the *Courier* and Harlem Renaissance’s gossip columnist, publicist, and radio announcer nicknamed “Harlem’s Hostess” (Kellner 101), used Lindbergh’s reception in New York in 1927 mostly to commemorate Bessie Coleman, “whose courage overcame the obstacles of sex, color, and limited means and education.” Lamenting and emotionally appealing to her readers – as was expected of aviation’s goodwill message in the black press – Dismond noted that Coleman “was a credit to the people who did little enough to honor her” (“Through the Lorgnette of Geraldyn Dismond”). A June 1927 editorial, aptly titled “Lindbergh and Lynching,” then quipped that “so long as the fiendish custom of mob murder continues in this country such dramatic exploits as the flight of Lindbergh are incapable of removing the stain from our national escutcheon.” Per the *Courier*, Lindbergh’s success meant few positive consequences for black America. Finally, a

score of advertisements for events where a new dance – the Lindy Hop – would be performed and danced in Harlem filled the pages of the Pittsburgh weekly as well.

Martyrdom – as the reactions to Lindbergh indicate – remained one of the main elements of the goodwill message that the black press was conveying, but distrust in aviation and the realization that making headway in the field would be a longer journey than expected because of segregation and lack of flyers, resonated in editorial texts as well. Eventually, skepticism of individual, Sisyphean efforts led the authors of editorials to focus on more organized, group- and systemic-level efforts. For example, in “The Week” from May 1927 – an editorial column on the *Defender’s* front page – the paper shifted its message towards the consequences that the undesirable state of affairs in black aviation had on the race’s civil rights in general. Titled “Heroes of the Air,” the column first discussed the unsuccessful non-stop transatlantic flight of two French flyers, Nungesser and Coli, explaining the interest of the race in the flight by noting that France provides “men of your color [...] equal opportunities to achieve honors in all fields.” While the United States attempted its own flight, pilots of color were not wanted, the text pointed out, even though the race had already furnished its own pioneers, namely Bessie Coleman, a “martyr to the progress of aviation.” The column reminded its readership that African Americans had been represented in aviation, but were now invisible; whereas in France, where Coleman had studied and was hailed as a wonder by numerous flying aces, men of color flourish. Progress in aviation and civil rights were thus connected, as subsequent coverage in the black press would demonstrate.

If advancements in black aviation were vitally connected to the community’s civil rights, so were they to the hopes of black soldiers’ inclusion in the US military aviation units. The *Defender*, perhaps due to Abbott’s connection to Coleman, was in the forefront of early campaigns for the inclusion of African Americans in all branches of the armed forces. It focused mainly on inclusion in the aviation service. In one September 1927 editorial, the

Defender called “the few attempts made at flying by our people [...] feeble and disorganized,” but proclaimed Bessie Coleman “valorous” and of “indomitable courage and will,” reminding its readers of the aviatrix’s intentions to start an aviation school. The Chicago paper also connected aviation with the race’s lack of representation in the military when it declared that black soldiers have been “a part of every modern achievement. We have taken part in every conflict in which America has been engaged since its inception,” and asked, “Shall the mighty spirit of Bessie Coleman die?” (“Bessie Coleman’s Spirit Must Live”). Another September editorial, “No Chance to Fly,” asked “for a chance to prove ourselves in the air” since “the next war will be fought in the air,” and demanded that racial “barriers [be] removed in aviation circles.” The specter of a war fought in the air without black Americans’ participation haunted these editorials.

Invoking Coleman’s legacy worked, however, as the answer that the *Defender* received one week later was encouraging. Frederick W. Smith of the 8th Illinois Infantry – the regiment Coleman flew in celebration of in 1922 – related that there were 25 high school graduates in the regiment “who are at the present time clamoring ineffectively for training in aviation [...] but our struggle for recognition is a feeble one because no man of power in our Race supports the youth in such endeavors.” Smith proposed that politicians be lobbied to establish a black air squadron in the Illinois National Guard (ING), as it had been done for the white soldiers (“Letter to the Editor: National Guard Aviation”). However, the idea would not come to pass until the early 1930s, when John C. Robinson and Cornelius Coffey established the first black squadron in the ING. Another military officer responded to the *Defender*’s challenge when Lieut. H.D. Meadows, a WW1 veteran, proposed a school named after Coleman, which would teach the race’s youth in aviation, as the field offered unlimited job opportunities (“Youths Must Prepare for Aviation Age”). In this way, Coleman’s message, with its military aspects, was being vigorously debated. Finally, the *Defender* argued in a

February 1928 editorial, “Give Us a Chance,” that “the government owes it to us to give us this chance [and] let down the bars in our [...] aviation service, and we will prove what real service and real loyalty mean.”

The exciting narratives as well as the tragic fates of Bessie Coleman and Joel Foreman, along with Hubert Julian’s escapades, reported in the black press gave contours and helped define the central tenets of the aviation campaign and its goodwill message. Technical and mechanical education combined with existent and potential future economic opportunities would lead to black representation in aviation and would help bridge the racial technological gap, black newspapers and aviators argued and exhorted their audience. Crusading aviators and aviatrixes would lead the race in this civil right struggle and, if only the U.S. government decided to bring down barriers in aviation schools, airports, aviation clubs, and the military, black America would develop an entire generation of aviators capable of protecting both its nation and its communities in case of an attack. Crossing boundaries, even before Lindbergh’s historic feat, remained an objective among black aviators, too, as they wanted to spread the goodwill message of aviation across the nation as well as to other nations of color. However, lack of funding, of skilled and successful aviators, as well as mainstream developments in civilian and military aviation, and the bypassing or avoiding of black Americans in the U.S. military brought out another element of the aviation campaign – lamentation and skepticism, especially in newspaper editorials.

All of this clearly shows that the *Courier*, the *Defender*, and the *NYAN* were making a concerted effort to promote black aviation. As the goodwill message of aviation slowly developed throughout the 1920s, black newspapers adopted aviation as a cause and deployed a distinctive force and voice in their coverage of the race’s advancements in the field. The following pages map the aviation campaign’s progress throughout the rest of the Harlem Renaissance era, focusing on the aforementioned tenets of black aviation’s goodwill message.

The mapping reveals a geographical variability in black aviation efforts as well as the field's popularity across genders, the era's cultural icons, and black immigrant communities.

3. THE AVIATION CAMPAIGN: EDUCATION, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES, AND REPRESENTATION

3.1 William J. Powell's Creation of and Contribution to the Aviation Campaign

While Hubert Julian's escapades – a proposed non-stop flight to India, allegedly heading the Ethiopian Imperial Air Force, and changing his citizenship from British to Italian in order to try and assassinate Mussolini – remained on the pages of the black press until 1937, actual pilots and their bona fide endeavors gradually took over newspaper reports. In 1928, black newspapers introduced their readers to aviators and aviation enthusiasts who would later become instrumental in the full-on campaign that the black press launched a year later. For example, they reported on Dr. A. Porter Davis, a Kansas City-based pioneer aviator, who, following the example of Coleman and Foreman, announced that he was planning to found a local aviation school (“Kansas City Physician Purchases Airplane,” “Kansas Physician Buys Plane”).¹⁸ Or they introduced William J. Powell: on October 27, 1928, the *Courier* published an inauspicious photograph with the headline “Form Flying Club,” showing the charter members of the Los Angeles branch of the Bessie Coleman Aero Club, organized by William J. Powell, the club's national president.

From 1929 onwards, black pilots, inspired by Powell's leadership, would take initiative in directly forming the movement of black aviation and its image in the black press. Although their timing could not have been more unfortunate with the onset of the Great Depression, black aviators and aviatrixes began to write letters to the editor, articles on their flying

¹⁸ Per the *Defender*, Davis, a well-off physician, had also been discriminated against when he had wanted to store his plane at a local airport on the Kansas side of the city, but was rejected by white pilots who objected to him being allowed on the field, asserting that “his presence greatly harmed the property's development.” Davis had previously been rejected by white-owned airports on the Missouri side as well (“Kansas Aviation Field Bars Physician's Plane”).

experiences, the physical reality of flying, and the history of black aviation. In publishing a book, writing and performing a play on aviation, and directing a documentary, Powell co-created and led a nation-wide campaign for black aviation in the black press. Powell's close relationship with the *Courier*, developed in early 1929, altered the existing goodwill message formed by Coleman, Foreman, Julian and the black press prior to 1929, as it was now the pilots – William J. Powells, Herman Banning, James Holt Peck, and, with the onset of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis, also Janet Waterford, John C. Robinson, and Willa Brown cooperating with the *Defender* – who directly influenced and shaped the message sent out to the readership. In Powell's era, even more emphasis was put in black newspapers' editorials and articles on promoting aviation and mechanical education, as well as active participation in aviation events. Black aviators-authors also began to build and call for institutional structures to be built to secure black aviation's continuous development. Overall then, black aviators and the black press transvalued – or accepted – the reality of segregation and Jim Crow in aviation and, while still lamenting white Americans' racism, began to celebrate and promote all-black efforts to advance aviation among African Americans.

This section discusses aviation education efforts in the newspaper coverage of aviation between 1929 and 1939 as well as the constant advertisement on the part of aviators and journalists of economic opportunities for aviation mechanics and pilots. In particular, this section traces the educational and promotional activities of William J. Powell in California, Charles E. James in Harlem and Atlanta, and John C. Robinson and his colleagues and successors, Cornelius Coffey and Willa Brown, in Chicago. Their objective was, as it had been before, to secure representation in the field of aviation and to prove black Americans' technical competency; to reverse the existing stereotypes of African Americans' technical and technological ineptitude. While the campaign was becoming increasingly concerted, it still consisted mostly of reports on and photographs of individual achievements. What

distinguishes this period from the early 1920s, however, is the gradual emergence of group efforts and the establishment of segregated schools and clubs. It is also at this time that George S. Schuyler, *Courier's* preeminent columnist, became an important aviation advocate, in particular, for his criticism of Hubert Julian and attempts at presenting aviation as a worthwhile and serious technical, technological, and scientific undertaking.

The *Courier* started the year 1929 off with an editorial “Opportunities in Aviation,” providing statistical evidence of rapid progress in aviation and encouraging its readers to take it up. The text argued that “tuition fees are not prohibitive, and those who are not physically fit to become pilots can make themselves eligible for well-paying jobs on the ground.” It also opined that “there ought to be more Negroes in this field,” because schools outside of the South were admitting race applicants. Finally, it challenged the black community to take up the cause: “a good way to get a number of our folks in this new and prosperous industry is for various local organizations to establish scholarships for that purpose. What Negro community will be the first to do this?,” asked the paper.¹⁹

Several organizations and pioneers answered the call. The *Defender*, for example, published a photograph of black students at the All American Aviation Association, which had allegedly established branches in Chicago, Kansas City, and Los Angeles (“Future Flyers”). Indeed, attempts at opening aviation schools for students of color began as early as 1927, with Joel Foreman opening his school in California and Walter C. Moreno establishing an aviation club in Chicago to “promote the development of commercial aviation, to bring together all air-minded youths, and to help them gain experience and knowledge in regard to aeronautics” (“Youth Forms Club to Teach Aeronautics”). In 1928, Harlem almost got its own aviation school. Edgar T. Rouzeau, “one of the first Negro war correspondents in World

¹⁹ As a follow-up, the *Courier* published an interview with Amelia Earhart, where the aviatrix declared her faith in the African Americans’ “ability to do the worthwhile things” (“Amelia Earhart Discusses the Negro”), which provided further encouragement for would-be pilots.

War II” (“Yesterday in Negro History”), reported that a Philadelphia-based aviator was hoping to establish “a flying school for Harlem youth” and coax “Harlem to take to the air” (“Plan Flying School for Harlem Youth”). Records indicate that Harlem did not get such a school until 1929/1930, but Hubert Julian’s incessant activities and efforts to make Harlem air-minded kept black aviation alive in New York City.

The loudest answer to the *Courier*’s call, however, came from California in February 1929, where “the first Good-will tour by Negro flyers in the history of aviation” was planned to take place in June. The flyers would start from Los Angeles and stop at “200 of the most important cities” with the object of interesting the race “in aviation in general and its possibilities” (“Girl Flyer to Head Flight”). Although the article did not specify the tour’s organizers’ names, the endeavor gained clearer contours in an early March letter in response to the *Courier*’s aforementioned editorial. William J. Powell wrote to the paper about his excitement to see “our greatest weekly paper *starting a campaign* to interest the Negro in this new field [of aviation] (emphasis mine).” He announced that it was his organization which was planning to tour the country in July, visiting 100 cities “In the Interest for Negroes in Aviation,” and hoping to open branches in each of the cities. His five planes would be piloted by students who were to be “licensed by the Department of Commerce very shortly.” Powell also explained that he was starting an advertising campaign and hoped that the *Courier* would publish an article on aviation by him every week in both local and national editions of the weekly (“Letter to the Editor”).

Powell’s letter is remarkable for several reasons. The director of the Bessie Coleman Aero Club took it upon himself to promote aviation among African Americans and was willing to invest his own money, hoping to gradually find other financial support. In this way, Powell established himself and his organization as the leader in the segregated field and gave a voice and credentials to the cause of black aviation. Furthermore, Powell, like Coleman and

Julian, understood that the black press was the most efficient way of entering black households and propagating aviation. Having noticed that the *Courier* had engaged in encouraging its readership to seize the opportunities that the field offered, Powell sought to associate himself with the medium that would give him reach into African American communities across the nation and that would connect the “imagined community” of black aviators and students wanting to take up the activity. His plan to have a weekly article appear in the black press also materialized as the *Courier* carried almost twenty articles and editorials dealing with aviation in the rest of 1929. In other words, there was to be no escape for the black readership from Powell and the *Courier*’s aviation campaign, if the new aviation crusader were to have it his way.

The *Courier* followed its challenge to black America with an editorial in March, “Wanted: Aviators and Mechanics,” which asserted that the time was ripe for the race to take up aviation like it did the auto industry. In fact, as Kathleen Franz points out, black newspapers had in the 1920s also “mounted a campaign for auto citizenship: they produced counter images of black drivers as inventive and respectable [and] as technologically skilled and socially responsible” (139). The *Courier*’s piece serves as a perfect example of the way the aviation campaign was advertising job opportunities in skilled positions as one of aviation’s main attractions. The paper pointed out that “there is unlimited opportunity for capable pilots and mechanics regardless of race, color or creed. Young Negroes should awake to this opportunity. There are plenty of schools scattered around the country where they can obtain the necessary knowledge to qualify for such positions.” Vocational education was also emphasized in the process. Echoing the early 1920s call for African Americans to take up aviation by studying at aviation schools, the text explained that now, more than ever, “the machine dominates the world today and will continue to do so.” Finally, reacting to a long-perceived technological lag on the part of the black community, the text presented the logical

argument that “the man who is skilled in handling, repairing and overhauling the machine will be an important personage so long as the machine age lasts.” If black drivers and mechanics had succeeded with cars, they should be able to learn to operate and repair planes, too, argued the text. Mastery of technology and mechanics was here highlighted as not merely a form of emulating white America’s technological prowess, but was considered a life-long benefit for the entire black community.

In the following months, the *Courier* filled its pages with reports on Powell and his aero club. It commended Powell on using a “group method” of learning aviation by establishing local branches of his organization and providing each of them with a plane, which would “open a way for the Negroes to get in on the ground floor of this promising industry” (“Opportunity to Learn Aviation”). As Coleman, Foreman, and other pilots on the pages of black newspapers had evidenced, individual effort was to be appreciated, but would often fail in bringing about advances in the field – Powell’s group method held a promise of change as it aimed to be more efficient and less costly. The paper also ran a photograph of Miss Beatrice Reeves, “the only Negro girl in America today completing her course in aeronautics” under Powell. Address and further details were provided for the readers to support Powell’s efforts (“Pilot”). In early May, Powell’s first biographic profile appeared in the black press, informing readers that the aero club director had spent a year learning to fly at the Warren School of Aeronautics, was a University of Illinois graduate, lieutenant with the 317th Engineers during WW1, and the first black man to have completed a course in aerial navigation. The text then devoted two paragraphs to spreading Powell’s goodwill message of educating pilots and mechanics (“Aero Club to Buy 100 Planes”).²⁰

²⁰ Powell’s complete profile can be found in *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science* (2002) as well as Phil Scott’s “The Blackbirds Take Wing.”

Even though coverage of Powell's endeavors now dominated the black press aviation campaign, the Pittsburgh weekly did still report on other individual educational efforts in aviation. It informed about a Jacksonville, Florida girl, who, having been inspired by Bessie Coleman, wished to pursue aviation and had recently won a city-wide competition to join the local Girls' Flying Club, but was being denied entry on account of her race ("Girl Wins Place in White Flying Club"). Another sign of nation-wide interest in aviation was an article about the National Association for Advancement of Aviation Among the Colored Race, whose purpose was "creating a better understanding between races, through a mutuality of interest in the newest science, aeronautics." The organization planned to provide scholarships for students to be sent to existing aviation schools and then take place in the budding field of aviation. It also eventually sought to establish its own school and hold exhibition flights and air-shows ("Organize Aviation Association in N.Y."). It seemed that Powell was not the only one crusading for his race in aviation and that the campaign's goodwill message with emphasis on education and subsequent entrance into the industry was reaching its objectives. More importantly, the article marked another instance of an aviation organization being established. The field and interest in it seemed to be growing.

It may thus come as no surprise that the year 1929 also brought the first attempt at establishing a black aviation school with an overtly military purpose. In June, the *Defender* published a photograph with the title "Chicago Goes Air-Minded," depicting "Major Simmons," the head of the American Aviation School on Indiana Ave, with his students. In a somewhat derisive tone, the paper added that "if learning to fly depends upon the ground work, this group ought to be expert aviators in a short while," as the group of students "is shown working on a model plane." The paper was missing an important point here, however. As Powell, Simmons, and John C. Robinson's subsequent educational activities would show, ground work – in other words, technical and mechanical skills – were a prerequisite to

becoming a successful aviator during the Jim Crow era. Black pilots could only rely on their own skills to repair and make their planes functional. It was ground work first, flying practice second what Powell had preached all along.

Despite the mocking tone, however, Simmons turned out to be a true pioneer of aviation in Chicago after Coleman's death and a follower of Coleman's deployment of overt military symbols to highlight the vital importance of aviation. According to *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science*, Major Rupert A. Simmons sponsored the first "colored" air show in August 1929 (180), because he wanted to showcase Dr. Davis from Kansas City – discussed above – and to promote his own Chicago school. The *Defender* later changed its tone when Simmons announced the proposed August air meet. The paper ran a celebratory article, likening Simmons and the black instructors at the other two aviation schools in Chicago to the crusading Bessie Coleman and declared that "never has the public shown such a keen interest in the progress of aviation as it is doing today" ("Big Aerial Meet to Draw Cream of Aces to Chicago"). The paper also carried a large photograph of Simmons's students in front of a plane, lined up as soldiers, clad in uniforms ("Plan Big Aerial Exhibit").

Simmons's American Aviation School was military in style, as the photograph in the Chicago weekly indicates. According to Enoch P. Waters, one of the *Defender's* eminent journalists, the school was part of the Illinois Air Commerce Reserves and "employed an ex-army pilot as an instructor in aviator mechanics and flying." At one point, claims Waters, "membership in the organization reached 60, and out of the group came three licensed flyers" ("Black Wings Over America"). Simmons later became an aviation promoter and helped establish Willie "Suicide" Jones as one of the best parachutists in the world. On the occasion of Jones' world-record leap in September 1939, the *Defender* ran a brief profile on Simmons with two photographs from 1929, where the Major is depicted with his students in military

uniforms of the Illinois Air Commerce Reserves, which he had founded independently of any military organization (“Pioneers Who Made Chicagoans Air-Minded”). Simmons added a strong martial aspect to his endeavors in aviation education. Given the atmosphere and events concerning aviation in 1939, the reminder that there had been a military-style aviation school in Chicago in 1929 only served to strengthen African Americans’ resolve to lobby further for inclusion in the CPTP.

In the late 1920s, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Diego were the hubs of black aviation group activities; although Hubert Julian kept Harlem interested in aviation as well. While Chicago was going air-minded – military-style – Powell was pushing forward with his proposed tour. His home branch in Los Angeles bought a new Swallow training plane in May 1929 (“Bessie Coleman Clubs Get New Training Plane”).²¹ In July, even though the proposed tour had not started, it was reported that one of the aero club’s planes would be christened “Oscar DePriest” to honor the African American congressman from Illinois. DePriest was the first African American to be elected to Congress from outside the southern states, the first in the 20th century, and the first since the Reconstruction Era (“To Christen Plane Oscar DePriest”). The *Defender*, too, picked up Powell’s proposed tour: In “Bessie Coleman Aero Club Planes to Tour,” it summarized Powell’s goodwill message, provided a profile, and listed the participating pilots. In its section “California News” from June 29, the Chicago weekly added that on July 1, Powell’s group would hold exhibition flights around San Diego and then set off on a trans-continental flight.

Powell’s endeavors, however, were not always received with and discussed in positive terms – which only added to his aura of an aviation crusader. The *Defender* published a letter by Powell in mid-September, in which the aviation campaign leader had to defend himself

²¹ In local news, the *Courier* announced that the local Bluebird Aero Club of Pittsburgh had applied to join Powell’s organization (“Bluebird Aero Club”).

against accusations that he had hoodwinked the gullible black public with his campaign when his Blackbirds did not perform at the Universal Association air meet – organized by Major Simmons – at Checkerboard Field, Chicago. Powell’s flyers, however, had never been scheduled to participate in the event, the director insisted. Similarly to Coleman, Foreman, and the black press editorials, Powell accused those who had spread false news about his aero club of “shatter[ing] the confidence of our people in the thing that is foremost before the world today, aviation.” Albeit disappointed, Powell projected confidence in his endeavors when he announced that there were only eight black aviators in the country at that moment, seven of whom belonged to his organization. Their objective was to perfect themselves in flying and quietly prepare “to carry aviation to the Negro by the Negro.” Powell was implicitly informing the readership that he did not intend to profit from the goodwill tour, but, at the same time, did not want to present an unfinished product to the public. He implored “the Negro of America not to lose confidence in the Negro’s ability to fly before they really enter the field, for aviation industry opens unlimited possibilities and jobs to the Negro” (“Eight Licensed Pilots”). He stayed on his goodwill message and presented himself and his group as toiling crusaders, who would deliver aviation to the race despite segregation, Jim Crow, and lack of support. Martyrdom, as a form of reversal of the notion that African Americans could not fly and contribute to American aviation was thus, as in Coleman’s case, part of Powell’s *modus operandi*.

The Checkerboard Field, Chicago event on August 17-18 was not without its own controversy. In an editorial, “Progress in Aviation,” the *Defender* raved about the air meet: the event proved that “the possibilities of the world’s youngest industry are unlimited with anyone with grit, wit, and determination” and that “anything can be done” in the field of aviation. However, the text never mentioned the event’s organizer, Major Rupert A. Simmons. In a letter published the following week, Lucile Childress, a reader, related her

experience at the air meet, arguing that it was not until a group of black spectators voiced their protest against the organizers for not allowing two black pilots to perform, that existing racial barriers at the event had been lifted. Dr. Davis – who had had an accident en route to the event (“Skillful Piloting Prevents Death”) – had named his plane “Inspiration,” and later performed alongside a Mr. Miller.²² Throughout her letter, Childress excoriated the black spectators who would pay money to see white pilots perform and not support their licensed compatriots (“At Checkerboard Field”).

In California, Powell’s goodwill tour still had not started – in fact, it would never materialize in the way it was advertised, nor would it be very successful – although it did help raise awareness about aviation. Powell’s group managed to christen their plane as planned and then took DePriest in the namesake plane for an air tour over Los Angeles (“DePriest Takes Ride in Airplane”). The plane was piloted by Herman Banning, one of the first licensed black aviators.²³ Optimism still prevailed in newspaper coverage of aviation, as the *Defender* reported on a licensed aviatrix in Washington, D.C. (“Girl, A Year Out of School, Is Plane Pilot”), and some on the *Courier*’s staff ventured to take their first plane rides, thereby again promoting aviation and pronouncing it safe for the readers, too (“Calvin Makes First Flight in Airplane”).

Powell’s final endeavor in 1929 came in the form of an unsuccessful and accidentally international flight. According to reports in the black press, Powell and Banning had been on a cross-country flight when they lost track of where they were flying and ended up crashing south of the Mexican border. Having spent four days without food, the two aviators wandered across the desert and beaches and finally came upon the village of San Felipe, where the villagers fed them and took them to a hospital in Mexicali. From there Powell and Banning

²² It may be assumed that, since Simmons organized the air meet, it was Robert Miller, one of Simmons’ students and later the “mayor” of Chicago’s Bronzeville (“Pioneers Who Made Chicagoans Air-Minded”), who performed alongside the intrepid doctor.

²³ The *Defender* had reported on Banning in 1928, entitling his photograph “Air Conqueror.”

made their way back home (“Pilots Wander Four Days without Food,” “Lost in Cross Country Trip”). The two men thus lost their plane, but managed to survive, registering the first, albeit unofficial, international flight by a black pilot, and gaining coverage by the black press; including their biographical information, details about the aero club, and photographs. In December, Powell added a Phoenix branch of the Bessie Coleman aero club and was to perform in San Antonio (“Experienced Rare Thrill”). He was still crusading, but his projects were becoming increasingly harder to carry out with the onset of the Great Depression.

The first year in the symbiotic aviation campaign of black aviators and the black press closed with an editorial summarizing the black community’s efforts in promoting aviation and instilling optimism in their readership, despite Powell’s unsuccessful goodwill tour. “Slowly but surely the Negroes are taking to the air,” the *Courier* announced, reminding the readers that “there are news reports of young Negroes here and there graduating from aviation schools and flying their planes about the country.” Promoting technical and mechanical education, the text argued that “those who get in the game now will be on top ten years from now, and probably sooner.” Finally, in exclaiming that “we are finally becoming air-minded” (“We’re Up in the Air”), the editorial painted a rosy picture of black aviation and its future after a year of intensive campaigning. The year’s coverage ended with a note in the *Courier* on the establishment of the Eagle Aerial Corporation and a ground training school in Baltimore (“Commercial News”), reminding the paper’s readers that 1929 had indeed been a year during which new aviation organizations as well as schools – Coleman and Foreman’s dream – had been established.²⁴

²⁴ Employment in aviation also continued to be one of the points of emphasis in aviation’s goodwill message in the black press. For example, Edward F. Smith, the parachutist, reappeared in an article about Smith’s representation of the Irwin Air Chute company at Curtiss Field, N.Y., where he demonstrated his skills to parachuting experts and a host of white journalists (“Big Air Chute Company Employs Colored Expert”). Noting that Smith was working as a salesman for an English parachute producer, the *Courier* was delighted with Smith’s comportment, and one week later added a photograph of the young parachutist with the title “Daring!” The newspaper also reported on Smith’s planned leap in October 1931 (“To Make Leap”). It seemed that there,

William J. Powell's crusade ran into trouble in the black press during 1930. In October, the *Defender*, seemingly protecting the community of its readers and giving them a voice, published a report slandering Powell's enterprise. It asserted that Powell had raised money from Los Angeles residents, having painted "gaudy pictures of quick wealth to investors and immediate fame to youngsters who took up aviation." Having crashed in Mexico, Powell had never come back to California, and allegedly founded an aviation school in Arizona, even though "it is said he cannot fly a ship himself." Now he was "somewhere in Texas" while investors were waiting and "aviation among our group in the West had suffered a serious setback" ("Los Angeles Residents Lose Money in Effort to Aid Aviation Among Our Race"). The article did not include the name of its author or its source. The fact that it was published in October 1930, almost one year after Powell's accident in Mexico, seems curious. In a letter to the editor in the *Courier* one month later, a stockholder in the Bessie Coleman organization excoriated the newspaper for publishing false and damaging information about Powell, who had flown in Los Angeles in September, 1930 in front of a crowd of "six or seven thousand" ("Letters to the Editor"). According to Powell's own account of the events, it was Thomas Allen – one of the "Flying Hobos" who would make the first transcontinental trip in 1932 – and Oliver Betts who spread a report around Los Angeles that Powell had run away with people's money and was not coming back (*Black Wings* 91).

Powell had been having a busy year in 1930 even before the *Defender* article, trying to make headway promoting black aviation nationwide. In January, he and Banning were still in Phoenix, turning the city's black school teachers and professional men air-minded ("Arizona"). In May, the *Courier* reprinted a section of the *Bessie Coleman Aero News*, a

indeed, were jobs in the aviation industry and that the hopeful goodwill message communicated in the black press had merit. Also, Smith's employment in such a dangerous position must have been a testament to his technical and mechanical skills – testing a parachute was no longer a hobby, but a serious occupation which required technical expertise.

brand new monthly edited by Powell (“Commercial News”),²⁵ titled “Who’s Who in Aviation.” In it, Powell’s club advertised its flyers as pioneers in almost every category imaginable. It also listed Bessie Coleman, Joel Foreman, Edward F. Smith, and Dr. A. Porter Davis, thus contextualizing the aero club’s achievements in black aviation history and highlighting its leading role. However, criticism of Powell’s promotional activities again caused controversy. Artis N. Ward, Joel Foreman’s mechanic from 1927, sent a letter to the *Courier* in June, in which he corrected Powell’s magazine’s statement that Bessie Coleman had been the first American woman licensed to fly. Also, it was he, rather than Foreman, who had been the first “Negro licensed airplane engine and airplane mechanic” (“Letter to the Editor”). In attacking Powell’s credentials, Ward seems to have misunderstood Powell’s attempts at promoting black aviation and may have endangered Powell’s mission.

Ignoring their critics, Powell and Banning carried on. In July, the black press informed on Powell and Banning’s flying exhibition in Abilene, Texas (“Aviators Land in Abilene, Texas,” “Race Flyers in Texas Give Exhibitions”) and, one month later, the *Defender* listed ten North Texas cities where Powell and Banning had already given exhibition flights, along with eight more where they were scheduled to perform before Labor Day (“Gives Aviation Show in Texas”). In September, Powell performed in Los Angeles and his aero club was even trying to establish a coast-to-coast Ladies’ Flying club “with the hope of interesting the fair sex in aviation,” already attracting “the names of leading society favorites in many of the large cities” (“Ladies’ Flying Club Drawing National Attention”). Not only were Powell and his branches busy – they were becoming ever more creative, hoping to seize on the popularity of aviation nationwide.

²⁵ In 1936, Powell would publish another aviation-focused magazine, the *Craftsmen Aero-News*, thus providing outlet for his obvious writing needs and to inform the public about all things aviation.

The campaign slowed down in 1931. After two years of exhibition flights and organizing efforts, but hardly any ground- or record-breaking success and with some criticism emerging, Powell and his organization did not feature in black newspapers very often as there seemed to be few achievements that the black press could transvalue. The *Defender* did announce in June that a Los Angeles branch of the Bessie Coleman Aero Club had just had its second meeting and “has a big project in view to make aviation history for the race” (“Bessie Coleman Aero Club”). And, in September, the paper did carry a short article about an air circus in Los Angeles held by Powell’s organization. It commended Powell’s organization skills, briefly described the happenings at the event, and announced that “the financial benefit [from the circus] will be used to defray the expenses of 50 young men and women who desire to become licensed aviators” (“Give Air Circus as a Tribute to Bessie Coleman”). Despite the educational objective of the event – and its unprecedented scope – neither the Chicago weekly, nor the *Courier* informed about it right before or celebrated its taking place afterwards. Powell did not celebrate the air circus very much in *Black Wings*, either. As he explains in Chapter 9, he had lost most contacts for journalists due to his disagreements with Thomas Allen and Oliver Betts, the aforementioned former members of his flying group, who had helped advertise most of Powell’s events and flights.

However, by barely reporting on the air circus, the black press had missed out on the most successful all-black flying event to that date. In Powell’s words, “on Labor Day 15,000 people turned out to see an exhibition which astonished everyone. [...] The show went off exactly as scheduled. There were no accidents and the people were well satisfied” (*Black Wings* 96). The show was a success that Powell had been waiting for. It also inspired him into organizing yet another large event in December 1931. Although the *Courier* and the *Defender*

again mostly ignored Powell himself in their reports on the upcoming air meet,²⁶ they did mention it in passing as they carried a photograph of Irvin E. Wells, a member of Powell's group, who was supposed to fly "in a gigantic air circus in the Angel City December 6 for the benefit of the city's Unemployment Relief Fund" ("Expected to Feature in Big Air Circus," "Going Up For Charity"). In other words, Powell and his student flyers were performing to help their community during a period of economic hardship and again promoted aviation as a viable employment option. According to Powell, 40,000 people came to see the show, which was also the first time "that seven Negro pilots were in the air together" (102). The show also "featured" Hubert Julian ("Col. Julian in California to Show Them How to Fly"), although Julian had lost his way during the flight, according to Powell's account. But a photograph of Julian in front of a large billboard announcing the show features in many publications on black aviation history and is part of the Black Wings exhibition at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. Despite the Great Depression, Powell was fulfilling his ambition of making black Americans air-minded without much advertising.

In 1932, the California-based aviator finally began preparations for his own long-distance flight. At first, the *Courier* incorrectly informed that Powell, along with Irvin E. Wells, was on his way to Pittsburgh in a cross-country flight that would take him from Los Angeles to New York City. It also stated that Powell was "an associate of Hubert Julian, a well-known aviator" ("Wells and Powell on Long Flight; to Visit Pittsburgh"). The situation cleared up a week later when the paper announced that Powell and Wells had, in fact, entered the prestigious Air Derby along with 56 white flyers.²⁷ The destination was Cleveland, 2,639 miles away from Los Angeles – this meant that Powell and Wells were the first black flyers ever to compete in a long flight. According to the article – corroborated in Powell's book –

²⁶ The *Courier* did publish two brief reports in its "California News" section in December 1931 and February 1932.

²⁷ The text explained that Powell had had an argument with Julian about a proposed transatlantic flight and had given the parachutist a "thorough trouncing" ("Race Aviators Flying to Cleveland").

the duo was among the race's leaders when it arrived in El Paso, Texas. Powell's flight ended in Texas, however, after he had crashed the plane due to engine trouble ("Powell Fails to Land in Cleveland," "Reporter Tells of Powell Flight," "Where Trail of Plane Ended"). The privilege of successfully finishing a long-distance flight was left to Powell's colleagues James Herman Banning and Thomas C. Allen, whose achievement is discussed in Chapter 3.6.3.

Back in California after the unsuccessful long-distance flight, Powell intensified his pioneering education efforts during 1933 and 1934, adding a new dimension – civic engagement in aviation through drama and fiction. In the summer of 1933, he put on a four-act play called "Ethiopia Spreads Her Wings," starring Cleo Desmond, "one of the outstanding dramatic stars of the early Af. Am. stage, who began her career in vaudeville and later achieved acclaim with the [Harlem-based] Lafayette Players" and through several Oscar Micheaux's films (Peterson 74). Titled by Floyd C. Covington, director of the Los Angeles branch of the Urban League and an avid aviation supporter, the play had been written by William J. Powell during a two-day-and-night writing frenzy (*Black Wings* 122). According to a review in the *Defender*, it "deals with the financial reverses of an aristocratic Columbus, Ohio, family during the depression." The family's five children lose their jobs, the father's salary is cut, and "the family loses everything." However, the four sons "decide to hobo to Los Angeles to enter a Negro aviation school. They do, and their fortunes change" ("Cleo Desmond Gets Break in Movies and Makes Good"). Per Powell's own description, one of the children even becomes "a transcontinental flyer, makes a lot of money and redeems the home" (122); he thus ultimately personifies Powell's goodwill message.

The little play was an unexpected success, at least according to Powell's own account. Even though "no one in [Powell's] group really thought the play was anything extraordinary," the opening night brought the audience to a frenzy. "Round after round of applause filled the auditorium as the members of the group unfolded their message," explains Powell in his

autobiography, “and a new inspiration was born in the breast of every Negro present that night” (122). Powell was then allegedly “besieged for dates at nearly all the large churches” in Los Angeles; and “the press got busy and heralded the story from coast to coast” (122). It is unclear how popular the play actually became, as it seems that only the *Defender* reviewed the piece. Nevertheless, the paper called it “true to Negro life of the better class, giving an intimate glimpse of the reaction to the economic dilemma in which the technically trained Negro finds himself today.” Most importantly, the play sought to draw attention to aviation, “the only field of industry offering the Race untold commercial opportunities,” explained the *Defender* (“Cleo Desmond Gets Break in Movies and Makes Good”). Powell claims that the play’s success spread nationwide and “gave new impetus [to] Negro aviation” (122).

In the early 1930s, Los Angeles was experiencing its own New Negro Renaissance. According to Douglas Flamming, “as the Renaissance faltered in Harlem, Los Angeles became a refuge for black westerners who had ventured to New York; they hoped to keep the spirit of Harlem alive on the West Coast” (58). Powell’s play and flying performances were attended by this Renaissance’s figures. Urban League officials promoted and supported Powell’s group and the play’s staging. In fact, claims the aviator, Urban League’s Floyd Covington asserted that “the play told the Urban League story better than he could tell it” (124). Among other “prominent persons” (124), Clarence Muse, one of black America’s premier Hollywood actors, and formerly a member of the famous Harlem-based Lincoln Players and the Lafayette Players, appeared at various events held by Powell’s group. As did Paul Williams, a sought-after architect, who designed major buildings in black Los Angeles and later built mansions for numerous white elites, such as Frank Sinatra, on L.A.’s West Side. “It became a status symbol,” explains Flamming, “to have a PRW home, especially in the rarefied confines of Bel Air and Beverly Hills” (63). Furthermore, Duke Ellington and his orchestra “lent their names as sponsors to Powell’s endeavors,” claims Von Hardesty, and Joe

Louis, the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, “toured Powell’s workshop in 1937 and inspected the flying club’s airplane.” Louis’s name was even employed in a promotional campaign – “Joke’s Good Luck Key Chain.” Finally, Powell mobilized active support on the part of black clergy as well.

Overall, then, Powell took part in and contributed to the New Negro Renaissance taking place in California and Los Angeles. Through his letters to the editor, incessant promotional work, and publishing of his own monthly newsletter, Powell participated in the era’s print and popular culture. His play featured and his air shows attracted prominent black actors and figures of the era. Thinking of the general public, too, Powell utilized drama in order to pinpoint actual, real-life issues plaguing black America, as well as to promote black aviation and its goodwill message as a means of escaping unemployment. Through art, and perhaps inspired by the flourishing of black art and music around him, Powell formulated and expressed on stage aviation’s contribution towards alleviating the dire economic situation of the African American community and its technically-skilled members.

Having finished work on the play and securing a copyright on it in November 1933, Powell devoted his time to expanding his educational activities beyond the Bessie Coleman Aero Club. In February 1934, the *Courier* announced that under the National Recovery Administration and the Emergency Education program, a number of African American teachers “have been employed to teach in district high and junior high schools” in Los Angeles. Among them, William Powell opened “aviation classes” at the Jefferson High School (“NRA Gives Teachers Break”). The *Defender* then informed in April that 86 students of aviation, “comprising two classes in theory of flight and aerodynamics” were preparing for their final examinations in evening classes led by Powell. Those who would pass, explained the paper, would advance to a class on aerial navigation. Also, “another beginners class will be conducted along with the two advanced classes” and the *Defender* was urging those who

were interested to apply soon (“California News”). In July, Powell was asked to expand his classes and the Board of Education at Jefferson High was even considering incorporating aviation classes into its traditional curriculum (“Lieut. Powell to Teach L.A. School Children to Fly”). Powell was thus allowed to continue teaching aviation classes to both black and white students.

The highlight of Powell’s exposure of black aviation in the black press came in late 1934, upon the release of his thinly-veiled autobiography, *Black Wings*. The *Courier* reviewed the book in October, calling it “a source of inspiration to every American, young or old, black or white.” The review underscored Powell’s argument that “there is a better future for the Negro as a whole in aviation than in any other industry” (“Book Review”). The *Defender* highlighted the same theme across three of its November issues when it reprinted a large section of Chapter 13, the final chapter of *Black Wings*, subtitling it “Race Neglects Its Opportunities in Aviation: Engineer Tells Why We Should Become Air-Minded.” In essence, the chapter was aviation’s goodwill message distilled. Powell listed all the existing and potential utilizations of airplanes and reminded his readers that aviation was open to all races and exhorted them to “get into aviation now while we have a chance to have black airplane designers, black airplane distributors, owners of black air transport lines, and have thousands of black boys and black girls profitably employed in a great paying industry.” The *Defender* devoted three separate issues of its feature page to *Black Wings*, including an appendix with a list of licensed black aviators from the United States Department of Commerce. In the *NYAN*, H.L. Mencken, under whose editorship the *American Mercury* published numerous Harlem Renaissance authors, reviewed Powell’s text positively and summarized its main tenets (“About Books: Wings of Ethiopia”).

Most importantly, George S. Schuyler, Mencken’s protégé and an influential reviewer of a number of Harlem Renaissance texts, weighed in with his review of *Black Wings* and

opinions on William J. Powell. In his text, Schuyler stated that the autobiography “kept me awake long past my time of retiring;” Schuyler felt “actually stirred” by it. He called the book “the whole story of the Negro (American brand) in aviation from Bessie Coleman to Anderson and Forsythe.” In praising Powell and other pioneer aviators, Schuyler asserted that they “deserve to rank alongside Sojourner Truth and Aunt Harriet Tubman.” He also reiterated the opinion he had voiced in several of his previous columns and which he shared with Powell: that there were opportunities for the African Americans in aviation and that they should seize them. Finally, the columnist pointed out that “it is clearly indicated that every one [black pioneer flyer] from the author down was actuated as much by racial as personal motives. They wanted to put THE NEGRO in aviation rather than NEGROES in aviation” (“Views and Reviews”). As before, Schuyler thus depicted Powell and his colleagues as crusaders and martyrs for the good of the race, who make the best out of – revalue – segregated aviation. Along with Powell’s text, Schuyler’s review, interspersed with personal commentary, provides the perfect example of a coherently expressed goodwill message of aviation. It also indicates Schuyler’s genuine interest in the field and in the race’s role New Negro models and leaders such as Powell. As the research conducted for this project reveals, Schuyler may have even received an inscribed copy of the text from Powell himself (see Figure 1).

Black Wings is a thinly veiled autobiography, a racial uplift text, and a model example of how black aviators and journalists employed the strategies of transvaluation and recontextualization in their campaign. The text tells the story of Bill Brown: from his first glimpse of aviation in Paris at the Bourget Field, which Lindbergh had used for his historic non-stop flight in 1927, through his rejection at several Illinois aviation schools due to Jim Crow, to his journey to California where Bill is finally accepted at a school and begins to learn to fly. The text provides racially uplifting inspiration to young African Americans and a

path to emulate as Bill, segregation notwithstanding, becomes a well-trained aviator who accepts segregation as a fact of life only to prove that African Americans can learn to fly without much white institutional support.

After he graduates, Bill opens a school for black flyers where he succeeds in raising an entire generation of black pilots – thus reversing the values attached to segregation as a barrier to the development of aviation among African Americans. His call, quoted above, for African Americans to utilize black aviation as business opportunity and a means of segregated yet independent transportation across the country serves as a recontextualization of the alleged deficiency of black America to succeed in operating and employing to its benefit the science and technology of the day and of the future. To further elaborate on his educational and inspirational efforts, Powell even devotes the longest, 21-page chapter in the middle of the text to in-depth, manual-like descriptions of how one operates a plane. At the end of the autobiography, Powell expresses his wish – against segregation, but also to prove his point that no restrictions may stop the development of black aviation – to “fill the air with ‘Black Wings’” (147). In this way, Powell provides inspiration for George S. Schuyler’s novellas, published a few years later, in which African Americans, with the help of other peoples of color, build an all-black air force and a black empire of the air.

Even though Powell’s leadership in the black press’s aviation campaign gradually passed to John C. Robinson’s activities and his mission in Ethiopia – discussed in detail in Chapter 3.7 – the Californian aviator still regularly promoted his goodwill message of aviation in the black press in the second half of the 1930s. Powell remained closely connected with the *Courier*. Having written a play, an autobiography, and numerous letters to the paper, he did not change his *modus operandi* in 1936. In January, he commended the Pittsburgh weekly on its ongoing aviation campaign and the coverage of his classes in Los Angeles during 1934.

To
my favorite
George S. Schuyler

DEDICATION

To the memory of Bessie Coleman, the first Negro to fly an aeroplane successfully, who, although possessed of all the feminine charms that man admires in the opposite sex, also displayed courage equal to that of the most daring men, this volume is humbly dedicated.

No. 72
William J. Powell

Figure 1 Special Collections & University Archives, University of California, Riverside

He informed that he had 125 students enrolled at that moment, many of whom had applied in reaction to the articles in the *Courier* (“Lauds Courier for Part in Boosting Aviation to Race”). In July, he again thanked the paper on behalf of his organization, the Craftsmen of Black Wings, “for its wonderful support in publicizing the need of the Negroes’ entry into the aviation industry [and for] letting Negroes know that thousands of jobs await them if they only get into the aviation industry now” (“California Aviators Make Rapid Progress”).

Powell was increasingly depicted in black newspapers as the best educator of prospective aviation students and his long-term position as black aviation education’s leading figure was acknowledged even among Harlem Renaissance figures. In November 1935, Dr. Henry Binga Dismond declared in “Negroes, Despite Handicaps, Make Rapid Progress in Various Fields of Aviation” written for the *NYAN* that even though Bessie Coleman “first drew public acclaim [...] the real pioneer in Negro aeronautics is Capt. William J. Powell who gave up his well-established and lucrative business of chain gas stations and garages to venture into aviation.” His classes are so popular around Los Angeles, noted the author, that both black and white students are on a “large waiting list.” Binga was a well-known figure during the Harlem Renaissance: his wife wrote the aforementioned social column for the *NYAN* and he “was one of the first African-American physicians to be permitted to join the outpatient department at Harlem Hospital” where he later “rose to the long-term position of Chief of Physical Therapy” (Oestreich 498-9).

Like Powell, Binga was a WW1 veteran, having served in France with the former Eighth Illinois Regiment of the National Guard – a unit which Bessie Coleman repeatedly celebrated during her Chicago performances. In 1943, Binga even published a collection of poems titled *We Who Die and Other Poems*, illustrated by Elmer Simms Campbell, the illustrator for Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps’s *Popo and Fifina* (1932), Sterling Brown’s *Southern Road* (1932), and the author of the oft-reprinted “Night-Club Map of

Harlem” (1932) (Wintz and Finkelman 210). Given Powell’s popularity in Los Angeles, Harlem, as well as his reception and influence in the black press, Binga’s praise in his historical overview of black aviation history indicates that Powell was a well-regarded figure on both coasts and featured in and contributed to the nationwide phenomenon known as the Harlem Renaissance.

Indeed, Powell’s reputation in the mid-1930s was impeccable. In May 1936, black newspapers recontextualized the alleged lack of black flyers in the United States, informed about a study by the Division of Negro Affairs, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, which indicated that there were 55 licensed black pilots in the United States. Only two of which, however, were exclusively employed in aviation – Powell teaching aeronautics in California and John C. Robinson fighting in Ethiopia (“55 Hold U.S. Air Licenses,” “Number 55 of Race as Holding Pilot Licenses from U.S.”). Since Robinson’s career was being closely monitored mainly in the *Defender*, the *Courier* devoted much space in 1936 to covering Powell’s school and aviation group. It provided a detailed biography of Powell and his school’s graduation statistics in “Aviation Boom Sweeps West,” highlighting the progress that black aviation was making in California under Powell’s tutelage. The paper later published a photograph of students at work in one of Powell’s classes and the *Defender*, too, carried a photo collage celebrating Powell’s success (“Californians Take Lead in Aviation,” “Craftsmen of Black Wings at Work”). The photo, inscribed by Powell, served as a demonstration of the technical and mechanical expertise that successful aviators had to learn to possess. Overall, then, the black press was recontextualizing, owing to Powell’s successes and achievements, the widespread notion, advocated, for example, by Kenneth Brown Collings’s text “America Will Never Fly” for the *American Mercury* in July 1936, that African Americans lacked an innate ability to fly airplanes.

Most importantly, Powell introduced a new incentive into the aviation campaign; one that the black press had on several previous occasions called for – an aviation scholarship. In November 1935, the *Courier* informed that Powell had taken members of the Alpha Delta chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity for an air trip over Los Angeles. Upon landing, the chapter's leader opined that "the Negro should get into aviation now while there is a chance to get in on the ground floor," thus echoing one of the key phrases in Powell's *Black Wings* ("Alphas in Air"). Powell announced in September that his Craftsmen of Black Wings organization had completed plans to "give 100 free scholarships in aviation to Negro students," including "six months of practical experience in building of planes, 50 hours of flying and ground courses in aerodynamics etc." Powell hoped to create "One million jobs for Negroes in aviation" ("100 Scholarships to Be Given Race Aviation Students"). In January 1938, he even secured the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity's promise to "give him moral and financial support and offer scholarships in his school for worthy Negro boys" ("Alphas to Temper Initiations," "Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Expands Progressive Program"). Powell thus advanced the aviation campaign and his wish to fill the skies with black pilots another step further.

Despite his continuous success and diligence, however, frustration was still perceptible in Powell's writing. Although a reader sent a letter to the *Courier* in 1936, commending Powell and stating that his organization "should receive the serious attention and earnest support of all black Americans, whether they are now air-minded or not [because] the time and day for Negroes to be skeptical towards scientific progress has gone forever," Powell did not feel satisfied. As in the early years of his aviation campaign, he criticized in a November 1936 letter the lack of support on the part of the African American community. Borrowing a statement from his autobiography, Powell suggested that black leaders should inform the community that "NEGROES WILL NEVER RIDE BELOW THE MASON AND

DIXON LINE AS FREE MEN AND WOMEN UNTIL THEY RIDE IN AIRPLANES, OWNED AND OPERATED BY NEGROES.” Specifically, Powell targeted W.E.B. DuBois, declaring that the famous race leader should impress upon his readers that “today THE SECURITY OF ANY NATION OR RACE LIES IN ITS AVIATION INDUSTRY” (“Leaders Should Encourage Field of Aviation, Says”). The all-caps lines do not suggest only Powell’s frustration with a historical problem in making black aviation relevant, but also points to the fact that black aviation pioneers such as Powell, Robinson, and Coleman had had to promote a field essential to the race’s survival without much help from the race’s leaders. Not only was aviation being ignored financially, but also politically. Despite its clear connection to the race’s representation and perception vis-à-vis white America – the issue at the center of the Harlem Renaissance phenomenon – black aviators were ignored by the movement’s leaders.

In 1937, Powell began publishing a monthly magazine called “Craftsmen Aero-News” for the purpose of keeping “the public informed of the activities of Negroes in aviation” (“The Social Institute”). According to Von Hardesty, “no issue [of the magazine] spared black leaders who [...] bore great responsibility for black unemployment during the Great Depression era. Each issue, in a sort of preamble, printed a brief statement by Powell accusing black leaders of continually begging the white people for jobs” (xxii). Powell’s criticism was noticed by Schuyler. At the time of writing his first air-minded novella, *The Black Internationale, Story of Black Genius Against the World*, the *Courier* columnist, who had gradually become the most vocal advocate for aviation in the black press, devoted an entire column in January 1937 to Powell, his school, and its new magazine; the column is even further analyzed alongside Schuyler’s novellas in Chapter 4. Schuyler noted the “immortal Bessie Coleman” and the scores of licensed aviators, as well as the goodwill flights across the country and abroad, and remarked that “considering the opposition to Negroes entering

aviation or getting any instruction in it at all, this is little short of miraculous.” The columnist then singled out Powell, whose students had built “the first Department of Commerce licensed airplane” by African Americans, in saying that this was a new field which African Americans had created for themselves. The text added details about Powell’s school, its new equipment as well as the opportunities that awaited African Americans in the field. In an April column, Schuyler further remarked that young black men, according to a New York engineer, were reluctant to enter aviation education and urged them to start reading Powell’s magazine and/or apply for his school so that black America could reach 100 “trained Negro aviators and mechanics [who] might get a unit in the Army Air Corps or secure work in airplane factories” (“Views and Reviews,” “Views and Reviews”). As with his novellas – discussed later in this dissertation – Schuyler was envisioning and supporting activities which could lead to the inclusion of black aviators as fighters into the United States Air Corps, increasingly one of the most modern air forces in the world.

Schuyler’s two columns are notable for several reasons. He not only continued spreading Powell’s goodwill message of aviation, but also increasingly began to tie demonstration of prowess in the technical and mechanical aspect of aviation to African Americans’ potential acceptance in the US military. In this way, Schuyler’s texts can be considered a crucial element in the *Courier*’s ongoing campaign to secure a place for black soldiers in the country’s army as well as a stepping stone for the intensified campaign that the paper launched in 1938. In highlighting Powell’s new equipment, instruction skills, and his students’ ability to construct a government-approved airplane from ground up, Schuyler pointed at African Americans’ technical and mechanical skills – lack of which had been used by the government for decades as an excuse for barring black applicants from the military air service (Broadnax 23) – that thrived despite segregation and lack of institutional support. Schuyler again emphasized the racial technological gap, which Powell had sought to bridge.

Finally – before the campaign for the inclusion of black pilots in the CPTP consumed the black press – Powell made headlines in August 1937 with one more technological advancement. A Cuban official contacted Powell “in regards to the establishment of air lines between the U.S. and Cuba, and furnishing airplane pilots for these lines, because the Cubans desire to make all conveniences to entertain and cater to the colored tourists who have never had the opportunity of visiting” Cuba. Furthermore, the paper noted that there were “two and a half million Negroes in Cuba and that they are interested in aviation progress among Negroes.” Powell was interested in Cuba’s offer and remarked for the paper that he hoped to start an air service in the US solely for black passengers, because “Negroes will never ride as free men and women below the Mason and Dixon line until they ride in airplanes owned and operated by Negroes;” echoing his own words from the *Black Wings* and numerous letters to the *Courier* (“Craftsmen of Black Wings Designing New Planes”). In the end, Powell did not live to see his plans materialize – he died in 1942 at a veteran hospital in Wyoming due to complications from his WW1 injuries. After more than a decade of vigorously campaigning for black aviation and teaching an entire generation of black pilots and mechanics, Powell did manage to see, however, the opening of the Tuskegee Airmen program in 1941.

3.2 Educating Harlem: Black Aviation in New York and the South

Indeed, black aviation was taking off also outside of Powell’s Los Angeles base during the early 1930s. For example, an aviation school was being opened in San Diego (“San Diego to Get Aviation School”) and at least four new aviators appeared in the black press: Billy Donaldson, who claimed Bessie Coleman as her inspiration (“Aviatrix?”), Thomas Perry Jones from Kansas City with more 120 hours of solo flying to his credit (“Kansas City Boy in Solo Flight”),²⁸ Thomas R. Ross (“Breaks Record”), and Rollins Ross, a former student at MIT on a Guggenheim Fellowship, who earned a commercial pilot license in September 1930

²⁸ The aviator, the great grandson of Frederick Douglass, however, died in an airplane accident in January 1932 (“Aviator Dies in Crash,” “Daring Kansas City Aviator”).

(“Gets Pilot’s License”). However, it was mainly New York City and Chicago that were becoming the major black aviation hubs at this time. This section discusses aviation education efforts in New York City and their spread to the South as part of the *New York Amsterdam News*’s aviation education campaign.

Harlem had been air-minded during the 1920s ever since Garvey’s *Negro World* discussed aviation as a matter of survival and Hubert Julian’s numerous proposed transcontinental and pan-African flights filled the pages of various black newspapers. But other aviation figures appeared in Harlem and the black press as well. In October 1929, for example, Harlemites were invited to attend a fundraiser at the Rockland Palace – an event hall which held numerous political rallies, sporting events, and concerts during the Harlem Renaissance – for Granville Martin, born in Kingston, Jamaica, who was attempting to build a monoplane. The British Pro-Consul was in attendance, and the attorney overseeing the fundraiser was Vernon C. Riddick, a well-known Harlem political figure (“Attempt to Raise Funds for Young Aviator”).

As editorials in the black press urged its readers to take up aviation and make use of the economic opportunities offered in the field, Marie Daughtry and Charles E. James showed to Harlem how aviation education could land someone a job. In April 1930, the American Aviation School opened and began to advertise in the black press its branch in Harlem, where it was located in the center of Harlem Renaissance happenings, mere blocks from the Abyssinian Baptist Church, the UNIA headquarters, the Urban League offices, and the apartments of James Weldon Johnson or Charles S. Johnson. The school promised “no discrimination in its classes” and affordable rates (“The American Aviation School”) and stated that its objective was to provide for black Americans an opportunity to “enter aviation as well as any other race [as] they have had no chance to undertake aviation.” The school also planned “for the creation of a factory and of airports where graduates of the institution will be

employed” (“Aviation School’s Branch Instituted,” “Inaugurate School”). The branch’s director was Mr. William Daughtry, who reportedly “saw flying service in the Army” and whose wife was “the only race woman in the world now flying” (“Want Race Students to Learn Flying,” “The American Aviation School”). Daughtry’s military experience must have been an alluring piece of information, tying aviation education to potential involvement in the US aviation service, because, as the *Courier* covered the gala opening of the Harlem branch in mid-May, it reported that 40 students had enrolled in classes (“Aviation School Opens”). The newspaper also ran an advertisement for the school in its sports section (“Negro Aviation School”), while the *NYAN* advertised the school in almost every issue during the year 1930.

As in the case of William J. Powell, the Daughtrys organized promotional aviation events to raise awareness among the Harlem populace. Mrs. Daughtry charmed Harlemites in May with a parachute jump – having reportedly performed many times around the country – and announced that the school was planning to buy its own field as white air fields did not let black students practice at them (“Woman Dives 2,000 Feet From Plane”). In July, she jumped from 3,000 feet – setting a new record for a delayed drop – at an event sponsored by the West African Industrial and Commercial Bank, Ltd., headed by Winfred Tete Ansa, a Gold Coast businessman and a “pivotal figure in establishing pan-African businesses” during the Harlem Renaissance era (Howison 43, “Makes 3,000-Foot Leap with Chute”).²⁹ Since aviation education was tied in the aviation campaign with economic opportunities and employment, Daughtry also attended and spoke at a meeting held by the Harlem Tenants’ League (“Speakers Offer Solutions for Unemployment and Housing Ills”). In July, however, the Daughtrys quit the aviation school (“Parachute Jumper Quits Uptown Aviation School”).³⁰

²⁹ In the 1920s, for example, Ansa proposed a “great co-operative company to provide integrated credit and marketing facilities for West African produce farmers, with America as their market” (Howison 43).

³⁰ The school’s advertisements no longer appeared in black newspapers after the summer of 1930.

Still, Mary Daughtry kept promoting aviation and helped introduce new aviators to Harlem and other black communities. In September 1930, she performed another parachute jump in Detroit from a plane piloted by Charles E. James. As in Bessie Coleman's case in the early 1920s, Daughtry and James's performances during the summer were caught on film in 1930 by Bilmore Studio, which showed the footage around the country, "providing a program of educational value and of racial interest" ("History-Making is Seen in Newsreel"). In October 1931, Daughtry took part in an air circus, "with perhaps the largest number of Negro aviators assembled at any time in history," attended by 2,000 Harlemites. Charles E. James flew a *NYAN*-owned plane to the event. Leon Paris, a Haitian aviator whose historic flight in 1932 is discussed in Chapter 3.6.2, piloted the plane from which Daughtry and later Alexander Nelson, James's future partner, parachuted. John W. Greene, Boston-based black aviation pioneer, aforementioned Rollins Ross, Edison McVey, Garvey's first black pilot from the early 1920s, and Marie Dickerson, one of Powell's pioneering student pilots, all participated in the event as well ("2,000 View Circus Staged at Airport"). The legendary Harlem Hellfighters' famous band played during and added a military tone to the event. Despite the Great Depression, black aviation in New York City was alive and well.

Charles E. James would turn out to be a new rising star in the aviation campaign. In the summer of 1930, he became the official pilot for the *New York Amsterdam News* ("Aviatrix Thrills Elks"), which had bought a plane with the objective of opening "the door of aviation to [black] people" ("Amsterdam News Purchases Plane"). The 24-year old pilot had made headlines in the black press back in May, when he flew his newly-bought "Miss Harlem" plane. According to a *NYAN* article, "a score or more Harlemites made short flights" during the afternoon ("Plane Given Name of Miss Harlem"), inspired by James's skills. The plane was christened by Bessye J. Bearden, mother of Romare Bearden, a cartoonist for various black newspapers between 1935 and 1937 and later a renowned collagist. Bearden

herself was an influential figure during the Harlem Renaissance: a civic activist with the Urban League and a NYC correspondent for the *Defender*, whose apartment functioned as a meeting place for intellectuals and artists (McKenzie). According to Timkins, Bearden was a “a political force in Harlem [...] someone you came to when you wanted to cut through red tape and get action (227). James presented himself as another crusading aviator at the May event. When asked by Bearden why he wanted to be a pilot, he answered that he wanted “to teach my people to fly” (“Aviator James Has Sunday Air Circus”). The *NYAN* – participating in the aviation campaign – backed his educational efforts as did other Harlem Renaissance figures.

James’s goals were aligned with that of the aviation campaign and its leader, William J. Powell. In September 1931, along with publishing three editorials on segregation in the military, the *Courier* and the *NYAN* reported that “as there are no units in the Air Corps composed of colored men, no provision has been made for their enlistment or training at the present time,” directly quoting from a letter from the War Department. Units in the army composed of soldiers of color were being dismantled, too, and their members were being “distributed” into other units (“War Department Bars Negroes from Air Corps,” “Discrimination in Air Corps Bared”). This was a setback to the aviation campaign’s ultimate objective, but also another reason for black newspapers’ continuous employment of transvaluation as a strategy to promote black aviation, a segregated endeavor. Next to the articles and their large headlines, however, the two papers carried a photograph of James, announcing that he had become “the second Negro to qualify for a pilot’s license.” The *Courier*, the *NYAN*, and the *Defender* also informed that the aviator was planning an air tour of “the Negro camps, colleges, and fairs in the South” to “encourage the flying art among young college students” (“Second to Get Pilot’s License,” “To Make Air Tour,” “Airman Gets His Wings”).

Similarly to Powell's proposed goodwill tour, James's "educational tour" captured the black press' attention. Articles about the aviator's plans filled the papers. James wanted to tour the South and give an exhibition in Knoxville, Tn., Atlanta, Ga. Birmingham, Al., Jacksonville, Fl., and New Orleans, La. ("Negro Aviator to Fly over Atlanta," "Florida Aviator to Tour Southland," "Harlemites Take Hop on Air Tour of Dixie," "James Goes to Atlanta Today to Give Air Show," "). He fit the profile of an aviation crusader who wanted to inform, educate, and was not interested in self-promotion and fame. He seemed to be ideal for what the black press was advertising and promoting in its campaign as his show in Atlanta in 1931 was designed to raise funds for the jobless, much like William J. Powell's air circus. To add the advertised educational tone to James's exhibition, the flight was being sponsored by Mrs. John Hope, who was also taken for a short plane ride ("James Goes to Atlanta Today to Give Air Show"). Her husband helped found the Niagara Movement, the NAACP, was active in the National Urban League, and the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools. Hope received the NAACP's Spingarn Medal in 1936 and became Atlanta University's first African American president (Yenser 218). Once again, influential race leaders of the era were supporting James's educational and crusading aviation activities.

Even George S. Schuyler noticed and admired James's participation in the aviation campaign. In 1930, the columnist had observed that "this is the age of aeronautics," arguing that "there are probably any number of wealthy men now beginning to buy private planes who would not be averse to employing Negro aviators." He believed that "any Negro who knows how to condition and repair an airplane motor will not remain long among the unemployed" ("Views and Reviews"). In espousing technical and mechanical education, employment in the growing industry, and honest work, Schuyler could not have missed James's strong presence in Harlem during the early 1930s. In a column from October 1931, Schuyler mocked Hubert Julian's repeated claims that he would fly to India and compared Julian's posturing with

James's recent achievements. He commended James's efforts to raise money through lecturing at schools in the South and giving exhibition flights. He criticized Julian for refusing to "start at the bottom (like Lindbergh) and work slowly to the top" like James. Targeting the black press's penchant for yellow journalism, Schuyler ended his column with asserting that "Julian will make a better newspaper copy and get more notoriety than James, but I'll wager the latter goes farther in aviation" ("Views and Reviews"). The columnist thus denounced yellow journalism and espoused hard work represented by James. Schuyler was becoming a voice of reason in the aviation coverage still burdened with Julian's incessant self-promotion.

In 1932, James held some of the most successful flying events in early black aviation history. In January, the *Courier* announced that James was back in Harlem from his tour around the South and that he was planning an aviation show in Atlanta ("Negro Aviator Returns to Atlanta," "Plan Big Aviation Carnival in Atlanta"). The show took place on two consecutive Sundays in January, drawing a crowd as large as 12,000 spectators. As with James's previous exhibition in New York with Mary Daughtry, the event had been captured on film, which was to be screened in movie theaters around the country ("Mrs. John Hope is Taken for a Ride"). James was thus using print and visual media to send out the goodwill message of aviation. The *Defender* later reported that he had even opened an aviation school in Atlanta, but no other articles – not even in the *Atlanta Daily World* which informed its readers about James regularly – corroborate the claim ("Flyer Burns to Death in Plane Crash").

The *Daily World* reported on another exhibition in Macon, Georgia, where James performed in front of 18,000 spectators ("18,000 See Two Aces of the Air in Flying Show"). After performing in Augusta, Georgia, and around South Carolina in April 1932, James and Nelson told the *NYAN* that their last ten shows had been attended by as many as 100,000 spectators and had been well-received even by the local white press ("Airmen's Shows Prove

Features”). In May, James received a new plane with help from William H. Davis, the owner of the *New York Amsterdam News*, to perform at exhibitions in Florida (“Aviator James Gets New Plane”) and in June took the plane to perform in Brunswick, Georgia in front of 2,000 people (“N.Y. Aviators Give Stunt Exhibition”). He was also reported to be planning a transcontinental flight from NYC to California (“James and Nelson Purchase Biplane”). James was touring the country, educating the black community in the South about aviation – in other words, he was fulfilling Schuyler’s prophecy and vision.

James also attempted an international flight, it seems, which would have made him the first black aviator to have done so. The *Atlanta Daily World* reported on James’s flight to Cuba in July 1932, explaining to its readers that James and Nelson were missing, probably having lost their way. There do not seem to be any further reports on James’s flight to Cuba in the Atlanta paper or the major papers analyzed here – but the article in the *Daily World* was written in Key West, Florida, from where the two flyers had reportedly taken off towards Cuba. The trip was supposed to have been a “climax” to James’s Southern tour and Havana had already been preparing a gala reception for the flyers (“Believe Plane of Negro Flyers was Fixed before Hop for Cuba”). In the end, James decided to fly in Gary, Indiana in August, mere weeks after his unsuccessful flight to Cuba, which is where his pioneering career came to a tragic end. In front of a mixed crowd of 2,000, James died in a burning plane after having fallen from 800 feet (“Aviator Dies in Crash,” “Aviator James Buried”).

The black press’s reaction to James’s death was comparable to the passing of Bessie Coleman – it was presented as a national tragedy, impacting the entire black America, which must have known and followed James’ career from the numerous newspaper texts and film material distributed across the nation. An editorial in the *Daily World* proclaimed James a “self-appointed martyr of a cause,” reminded its readers that the late aviator “dreamed of aviation as a cure for the Negro economic plight,” and explained the myriad of possibilities

that aviation was offering (“Charles James: Pioneer). The *Courier* commended James’s skills which attracted both black and white spectators to his shows and thus represented black America’s technical capabilities (“Aviator Dies in Crash”). The *Defender* devoted much space on its front page to the report on and photographs of James’s fatal accident, calling him the “soundest of all Race flyers” (“Flyer Burns to Death in Plane Crash”). Finally, the front page of the *NYAN* provided a long eulogy for James, his biographical information, and a detailed description of the accident. According to the text, James, who had reportedly been planning a transcontinental and a transatlantic flight, sacrificed “his life for the science of flying [and] ended in tragedy his quest for more knowledge. His name will be written as a trailblazer on the pages of history.” The voice of Harlem thus mourned the passing of James as that of not merely another aviator, but an aviation crusader whose expertise had been gained during his engineering studies at Columbia University, his work at the Ford plant in Detroit, and the Curtiss airfield in Long Island where he received his license and flew the Miss Harlem plane (“James, Harlem Aviator, Killed”). The paper was pointing out that Black America lost one of its best technically-skilled figures willing to crusade for, promote, and represent black aviation’s progress nationwide.

3.3 Black Aviation Education in Chicago: John C. Robinson, Female

Aviators, and Military Displays

The tragic passing of Charles E. James incidentally brought to the forefront another crucial figure in the history of black aviation and its coverage in the black press: John C. Robinson, the representative of black aviation in Chicago, later dubbed the “Father of the Tuskegee Airmen.” This section of the dissertation traces Robinson’s educational and promotional activities, including his intention to open an aviation school at the Tuskegee Institute as early as 1934. The section also discusses the emergence and the rise of talented and influential women flyers under Robinson’s tutelage, and highlights hitherto overlooked military aspects

of Robinson's crusade in Chicago. Robinson appeared in the black press as early as 1930,³¹ when the *Courier* carried a report on a youthful aviator from Chicago named Johnnie Robinson, who ended up in hospital with his arms and legs frozen after flying over Chicago's South Side ("Youthful Aviator Makes Flight"). With support from the *Defender* and its owner, Robert S. Abbott – Bessie Coleman's benefactor and mentor – Robinson had flown, despite the freezing weather, over the *Defender's* offices, dropping down flyers advertising his organization's fundraising event (Tucker 31-2). Later, between 1935 and 1938, Robinson became the most visible and inspiring black aviation figure in the black press due to his role as the head of the Ethiopian Imperial Air Force and subsequent crusading activities. This section deals primarily with Robinson's contribution to the educational feature of the aviation campaign, while Chapter 3.7 addresses his military mission in Ethiopia and Chapter 3.8 highlights his previously unknown mission in flood-stricken Memphis, both of which may have served as motivation for George S. Schuyler's aviation-inspired novellas.

On the occasion of James's death in 1932, the *Atlanta Daily World* interviewed Robinson to discuss black aviation and James's contribution to it. Robinson explained to the paper that James had been unique in his plans to spread the goodwill message of aviation: unlike Hubert Julian, James had toiled and rented a plane for many of his exhibitions, paying back from the exhibitions' returns. Robinson showed off his technical expertise in the article, which introduced him as "the Tuskegee graduate who broke the color line at Curtiss Wright school" in Chicago ("James, Dead Flyer, Had Nerve"). Robinson was, in fact, the only instructor of color at the Curtis Wright school and had his own group of students of color, who would later become some of the leading figures in black aviation in the late 1930s.

³¹ According to Robinson's student and colleague, Janet Waterford, Robinson's flight took place in late 1929.

Robinson's expertise as a pilot, aviation instructor, and a new inspiring pioneer was on full display in the *Defender* throughout 1932. In January, the paper carried a photograph of Robinson and one of his students in front of a plane ("Just Landed") and an accompanying article titled "Seamstress Gives up Her Duties to Become Aviatrix," thus echoing the first major article on Bessie Coleman in the same paper in 1922. The school in which Robinson worked as an instructor, the article explained, was the first "school of its grade to open complete courses as required by the United States government to all persons, regardless of color." According to Janet Waterford, Robinson had "canvassed the neighborhoods of the South Side to urge blacks to get into aviation, whether as airplane mechanics or pilots" in the early 1930s, but "the citizens of Bronzeville knew the Curtiss-Wright Aeronautical School was reserved for whites only." Robinson therefore chose to advertise his classes in the *Defender* – and in 1931, he ended up succeeding in opening and teaching as a faculty member the first all-black aviation class at the Chicago branch of "the most prestigious aeronautical school in the United States." The class consisted of 35 students, including 6 women ("Robinson Organizes Brown Eagle Aero Club," "Robinson Arouses Race Interest in Aviation"). Robinson's success and position, the very existence of his all-black class, and the *Defender's* reports thus suggested – and recontextualized the alleged lack of black aviation leaders – to Chicago's South Side and other communities of color throughout the country that not only was there an experienced African American educator working at a previously segregated institution, but also that the school was open to students of color. It must be also pointed out that by having become an instructor at a branch of one of the leading aviation schools in the country, Robinson was following Coleman, Foreman, and James's vision, educating black aviation students and spreading the goodwill message of aviation.

The year 1932 also saw the emergence of black aviatrices. William J. Powell, based on his book and newspaper articles, instructed several female flyers in his group – including

Marie Dickerson, who featured at the extremely successful air circus for Harlem in October 1931 alongside Daughtry, James, Paris, McVey, and others. Dickerson's photo was featured in the *Defender* in April 1932 when the paper announced that the aviatrix, having been inspired by Bessie Coleman, had obtained her full license ("Licensed Air Pilot"). The *Courier* published an interview with Dickerson in May, in which the pilot explained how aviation had become her hobby but complained about the high price of flying, especially during the Great Depression ("Costs of Flying Has Reached High Altitude, Says California Aviatrix").

Robinson's group in Chicago also included female students. In fact, the Challenger Aero Club, Robinson's independent aviation club and the precursor to the Cornelius Coffey School of Aeronautics, the only non-college school providing aviation courses within the CPTP between 1939 and 1941, was established by Janet Harmon Waterford, one of Robinson's students in the historic class of 1931-32 at Curtis Wright. Waterford penned an autobiography, *Soaring above Setbacks* (1996), along with Marjorie M. Kriz, which serves as one of the essential sources of black aviation history. Thanks to Waterford's ownership of a plane and leadership, Robinson's group of students had been able to rent a flying field in an "all-Negro town" of Robbins, Illinois, and train there. This was the first Department of Commerce-accredited black airfield in the United States (Tucker xiv).³²

Waterford was the face of the Challenger Aero Club in its initial stages. The *Courier* carried a photograph of Waterford with the headline "Queen of the Air," signifying on a title used by the *Defender* in 1921 upon the emergence of Bessie Coleman as black America's first female aviator; and explaining that the aviatrix had purchased a three-passenger airplane, which was being used by the Challenger club. In June 1932, Waterford gave a speech at Bessie Coleman's grave in Chicago, while Robinson dropped a bouquet of roses from

³² Previously, Robinson had established the Aero Study Club, later called the Brown Eagle Aero Club in 1927 (Tucker 31).

Waterford's plane ("Future Aces at Grave of Bess Coleman"). The group, led by an aviation educator and a woman pilot, was thus making a name for itself by honoring Coleman's legacy of female leadership in black aviation. Later in the summer, the *Defender* featured a photograph of Waterford and Dorothy Darby, another one of Robinson's students, and announced that the two were preparing to give an exhibition flight in Cleveland ("Air Exhibition Planned"). Darby later injured herself during a parachute jump in October ("Girl Flyer is Injured as She Leaps from Plane," "Aviatrix Hurt").³³ In September, Waterford and Robinson flew to Cleveland to show off in front of Oscar DePriest, who had already been initiated into aviation by Powell's group in California the year prior ("Trio Fly to Cleveland to Attend Air Races"). In December, the organization held its second annual bridge and dance party for aviation students of all races, having promoted it heavily among the South Side inhabitants ("Beautiful Dancing Party of Challenger Aero Club," Tucker 42). New aviation leaders were emerging in Chicago, spreading the goodwill of aviation through traditional newspaper channels, but also through community efforts, emulating Powell's campaign.

It was not a coincidence that black aviation was flourishing in Chicago in the 1930s. As Darlene Clark Hine explains, "all who contributed to the literary, cinematic, intellectual, and dance and music performance arts community in Chicago were at once captive and yet purveyors of Great Migration fever. The shifting terrain of black bodies fostered new urban geographies and aspirations" in the form of assertive and confident New Negroes, "while molding self-affirming agency (or resistance) to white racial and political domination" (xvi-vii). Chicago's pioneering aviators were products of the Great Migration: Robinson had come from Mississippi, Waterford from Georgia, Willa Brown from Kentucky, and Cornelius Coffey from Arkansas. Their objective was to represent and make a name for African Americans in an utterly modern, highly-skilled field and to contribute to the general

³³ Darby recovered in 1933, when she planned a series of parachute jumps ("Ready to Fly Again") and eventually performed in Hillside, Illinois in September ("Plenty of Thrills Here").

advancement of black America. Robinson and company shared this objective with other Black Chicago Renaissance figures in that they, too, “led the way in forcefully representing the humanity, work, and political agency of black citizens who moved from farms to factories and across regions better to seize greater freedom and equality of opportunity” (xvii). Still, black aviators blazed a trail not only for black migrants from the South, but also for all African Americans aspiring to the New Negro mentality and demeanor. Their struggle was political, artistic, representative, and aspirational.

Indeed, black aviation was flourishing outside of Chicago as well. Along with reports on Robinson and his student aviatrices making headway during 1932, the *Courier* and the *Defender* did not fail to inform their readers about other news in aviation education outside of Los Angeles and the Windy City. They reported ceremoniously on plans for the establishment of one of the “best and largest [aviation] schools of its kind in the world” near Washington, which would be equipped with a large library of aviation texts, dormitories, and would be able to teach and house up to 500 students. Most importantly, the school would have its own employment department so that, upon completing their degree, students would “find a position [...] in aviation” (“Work Started on Big Aviation School in East”). The establishment of such an aviation institute would have been a crucial step in the advancement of black aviation, but the newspaper never reported on the school again. However, the *Courier* did inform on the inconspicuous Alfred Anderson, “the only authorized Negro transport pilot in the country,” who was teaching aviation to students of color in Atlantic City. Anderson had passed the transport pilot’s license test in February 1932 (“Philly’s First Transport Pilot,” “Teaches Air-Minded”). He would later carry out historic transcontinental and international flights and instruct the Tuskegee Airmen.

Despite a widely reported gruesome airplane accident of a black student pilot and his wife on their solo flight in Detroit (“Airman and Wife Die in Crash,” “Young Aviator, Pretty

Wife Dead in Plane Crash”), black America was clearly becoming increasingly interested in aviation education. In Washington, D.C., for example, the “first Negro school of aviation” was established in early January 1933 – the program involved students between 12 and 21 and was carried out in association with the Dunbar High School, the city’s leading academic school for students of color. The high school had graduated such figures as Sterling Brown or Benjamin O. Davis, and its faculty had included the likes of Anna Julia Cooper and Carter G. Woodson. In 1933, the school also began operating its own airport in Forestville, Maryland – only the second airport in the nation to be fully operated by African Americans (“Aviators School Opens,” “To Open Airport Near Washington,” “Dunbar Stars Class in Aviation”). Jesse McCoy Hanson, the school’s organizer, instructed some of those who would later join the ranks of the Tuskegee Airmen (“Retired Mortician Buried in District”). In Indianapolis, the Capitol Airport had announced that “its airlines of opportunity had been opened to all air-minded persons, regardless of race or color” (“Business Men Inspect Modern Airports”) – a local group of African American businessmen and professionals inspected the airport soon after the announcement, prompting the *Courier* to claim in its headline that this is “Another Evidence of the Race’s Soaring Interest in Aviation.” And, as was usual in the aviation campaign in the black press, another outstanding aviation student emerged – Austin Mount in Erie, Pennsylvania. (“Flyer”).

Black aviation was flourishing – based on the content of the newspaper articles in the black press – at an unprecedented rate between 1932 and 1935. This trend may be surprising, given the economic conditions of African Americans during the height of the Great Depression. As Raymond Wolters explains in *Negroes and the Great Depression*, in March 1933, “the economic life of the nation was at a standstill. Agricultural prices were less than half what they had been four years earlier, industrial production had declined by more than half, and more than twelve million workers were unemployed” (ix). In late 1933, the Federal

Emergency Relief Administration reported that 26.7% of African American citizens in cities – compared to 9.6% of whites – were on relief, and the Urban League informed that in some cities the conditions were much worse (91). One of the reasons for high black unemployment was the fact that they were employed as marginal, unskilled workers and thus when depression hit or new innovations came, these workers were laid off first; many complained that they were “last hired, first fired” (Wolters 92, Greenberg 27). Moreover, as Cheryl Lynn Greenberg points out, “there were no longer any purely black occupations [as] there were no jobs white workers refused to do.” African Americans thus could not rely on access to even the worst menial jobs (29). The black middle class did not fare very well either. Although white-collar job opportunities did open in the government sector, black businesses lost the “hard-won gains from the past twenty years” when the Great Migration had brought about a rise in the number of business opportunities and clientele. The number of African Americans entering professional ranks was also stagnant (Greenberg 29-32).

Despite this economic climate, however, black aviation not only survived, but began to thrive, because aviation clubs attracted professions which were in demand even during the Depression. As Scott and Womack observe, the Chicago aero clubs founded by Robinson were joined by doctors, dentists, nurses, lawyers, and educators; and some student aviators were employed by the Works Progress Administration (61). Many of the aviation pioneers in the early 1930s also worked as car mechanics and were employed by or owned businesses predicated on manual, technically-skilled labor. The aviation campaign’s message of economic opportunities in aviation was thus clearly on point: mechanical and technical education evidently led to sustainable work no matter the economic climate, and black aviation represented a visible example of this. More importantly, while, as Huggins explains, “all Harlem – the entertainer, the artist, and the writer – was in some way, at one time or another, obliged to the white patron,” the black aviators’ artistry, technical as well as

commercial ingenuity, and their cultural production flourished exactly when the Harlem Renaissance is often said to have fizzled out as the Depression hit and white patronage disappeared. Indeed, black aviation's ascendancy during 1932-35 indicates that Powell, Robinson, James, and others kept inventing and finding new ways of representing the race in a positive light, excelling, despite obstacles, in a field meant, according to Lindbergh and others, only for the most civilized of peoples.

It is perhaps no coincidence that Robinson, Albert E. Forsythe – one of the most prominent black aviators during the early 1930s, discussed in Chapter 3.6.4 – and Doris Murphy, one of Robinson's female students, had all attended the Tuskegee Institute, where vocational and industrial training were the primary focus of education. Also, William J. Powell had fought in the trenches of WW1 and later graduated with a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Illinois; he, too, preached self-help as he argued that integration “would come with black economic power” (Hardesty xxii). However, what distinguishes aviation from being merely another technical field in which African Americans could have prospered as mechanics and maintenance workers upon receiving their training – espousing the self-help doctrine of Booker T. Washington, Tuskegee's founder and main ideologue – was the fact that black pioneer aviators wanted to fly, not merely repair.

More importantly, they elevated black aviation into a social force in the fight for economic and civil rights. Powell, writes Hardesty, assumed “the role of civil rights advocate” in his magazine, appealing to his audience, for example, to “get together. Your future depends upon your own education, production, and employment of your own sons and daughters” (xxii). Robinson's lobbying for the Curtiss-Wright school to open its doors to black students and his and his students' subsequent educational successes (in)directly led to the establishment and participation in the CPTP, a historic civil rights achievement. The efforts to transform a campaign for access to the United States' progress in aviation into a civil right

campaign – given aviation’s essential economic and military role in the era of increasing modernization – may have been another factor why aviation and its black representatives persevered despite the harsh economic conditions of the early 1930s. Representation and survival were their driving force.

In Chicago, by 1933, John C. Robinson was formulating his own strategy of trailblazing black aviation: through a military organization and an aviation school at Tuskegee. As Tucker points out, “more than anyone else, Robinson had played a key role in making Chicago an influential center of black aviation that not only rivaled, but also surpassed Los Angeles” (60) and William J. Powell’s leadership. In May 1933, Robinson’s Challenger Aero Club lost its airport in Robbins and its airplanes due to a storm (“Tornado Plays Prank with Airplane”). The aero club moved to the Harlem Airport on Harlem Avenue where it remained for the next few years as the *Defender* noted in its aptly titled article “The Other Harlem.” In July, Robinson scared baseball players in Douglas Park when his plane stalled and he had to perform an emergency landing (“Stalled Plane Landed Safely in Chi Park”). Despite these unfortunate events, however, 1933 was a successful one for the aviator and his group’s educational efforts.

To celebrate Chicago’s centennial, the city held “A Century of Progress International Exposition” from 1933 to 1934. As aviation featured heavily during the exposition, the event was visited by Italy’s Minister of the Air Force, Italo Balbo. The future Governor-General of Libya and Mussolini’s right hand arrived as part of a 24-seaplane fleet, showcasing Italy’s powerful airforce, the *Regia Aeronautica*. America fell in love with Balbo – president Roosevelt presented him with the Distinguished Flying Cross, Chicago named a street after him, and the Sioux tribe adopted the Italian as “Chief Flying Eagle” (Segre 21-3). Meanwhile, although neither monographs on the exposition nor articles discussing African Americans’ participation at the event mention Robinson’s group’s presence, in the Transport and Travel

Building, the Curtiss-Wright Aeronautical University held its exhibition, including engines “assembled by Negro students” attending the institution (“Sepia Air Pilots Thrill World’s Fair Visitors”).

The *Courier* used the opportunity of the Chicago World Fair to promote Robinson’s all-black class of 1931-32 and the Challenger Aero Club, accompanying their detailed report on Robinson and his students/co-aviators with a large photograph of the major members of the aero club (“Sepia Air Pilots Thrill World’s Fair Visitors”). Even though Harold Hurd, the club’s manager, had promised after the destructive storm in May to have the club’s hangars rebuilt “by the time of the opening of the World’s Fair” (“Storm Destroys Airport”), it is unclear whether the black aviators actually demonstrated their mechanical skills along with their flying abilities at the exposition. At any rate, Robinson as an instructor was making a name for Chicago’s black aviators at the event. Italo Balbo’s and the *Regia Aeronautica*’s participation and display of strength at the same exposition as Robinson and his group also foreshadowed Italy’s powerful air force’s clash with Robinson in Ethiopia in 1935-36.

More importantly, however, the *Courier*’s coverage indicates that by the time of the exposition, Robinson had transformed his aero club – which included a number of students from his university class – into a paramilitary organization. The photograph of Robinson’s students printed on the occasion of the World Fair featured military ranks in front of the students’ names: Col. Robinson, Second Lieut. Grover C. Nash, and Lieut. Dale L. White. In fact, although there are eleven people captured in the photo, only those with military rank are mentioned by name, while the accompanying article on the fair features several other Robinson’s students – without ranks. As Scott and Womack explain, Robinson’s group had “sought membership as an Air Reserve squadron within the Illinois National Guard.” Despite initial rejection, the group was eventually awarded a state charter as “a Military Order of Guard, Aviation Squadron,” thereby acquiring similar status to the state militia; though it had

no administrative connection with the National Guard. Robinson was allowed to label one of the club's planes with MOG insignia and members were given quasi-military positions (49). This would explain the military ranks published in the *Courier*.

In essence, those belonging to the club served "as members of the first all-black military aviation unit," having established a "volunteer para-military aviation organization," explains Tucker (61). Whereas Hubert Julian had presented himself in military uniforms ever since 1922 without advancing black aviation, John C. Robinson and his group actually founded and formed a technically educated, skilled, and government-sanctioned New Negro para-military organization predicated upon serving its community in case of emergency. In fact, Robinson had been connected to military aviation as an instructor even prior to this event. In his second class at the Curtiss-Wright School, he had taught not only black students, but also white and Asian ones. Although the Chinese students in his class did crash his own plane early in their training, they eventually became "the nucleus of the Chinese Royal Air Force in China's defense against Japanese aggression" in Manchuria (Scott and Womack 45, Tucker 44). After more than a decade after the Tulsa riot and Major Simmons's first black aviation school in Chicago absent from the pages of the black press, it was Robinson who managed to considerably narrow the racial gap in aviation by adding a clearly military aspect to his educational efforts and crusade for black aviation.

Others were attempting to imbue their educational efforts with a military purpose as well: Irvin E. Wells, William J. Powell's co-pilot in the Air Derby of 1932, established his aviation school at the Dycer airport in Los Angeles in early 1934 ("California Women Become Airminded"). Later in the year, Wells was reported to be preparing to "affiliate himself with the Pioneer Aero Club of Chula Vista," a neighborhood in San Diego. The aero club had been established, per the *Defender*, to "prepare and train Race students of American for commercial aviation and *government reserve and offensive emergencies*" ("California

News,” emphasis mine). The paper later carried a photograph of Gilbert Williams, the club’s founder, with his wife, Mary Daughtry – the parachute jumper who had helped organize an aviation school in Harlem with her former husband, a war veteran (“Found Aviation School”).

In May 1934, Robinson took another crucial step in his educational efforts – he carried out a goodwill flight from Chicago to Tuskegee in Alabama. The *Courier* announced Robinson’s plan in a brief report, stating that “Col. J.C. Robinson, of the local Military Order of Guards,” along with “Captain C.R. Coffey,” are planning a “mass formation trip to Tuskegee Institute” on May 18 (“Chicago Aviators Planning Goodwill Flight to Tuskegee”). The phrasing of the short text suggested a military purpose for the flight, presenting it as a demonstration of military-level aviation skills and capability. Although Robert Jakeman, as well as Scott and Womack, date the Challenger Aero Club’s designation as an air squadron *after* the Tuskegee trip in May 1934 – in order to fit the narrative that Robinson had been inspired to fight in Ethiopia by Tuskegee’s refusal and tensions escalating between Italians and Ethiopians in preparation for war – it is clear that Robinson’s group had by then been operating as an MOG unit for at least a year and that the black press had taken notice, beginning to use the designation in its coverage of Robinson.

The objective of Robinson’s goodwill flight was to propose the formation of an aviation school at Tuskegee, his *alma mater*. As Scott and Womack explain, Robinson believed that “they could recreate the Curtiss-Wright experience at a Negro College that owned huge acres of land and a vocational program featuring automobile engine mechanics and welding. With Chicago as the hub, they believed a Negro flight service company could prosper in the Midwest and the South” (46). As early as 1934 then, Robinson was formulating plans to establish an all-black airline – a vision which he would again attempt to carry out between 1936 and 1938. Robinson had planned his Tuskegee trip in time with the graduation of the senior class of 1934, so that his landing would be a homecoming one and would thus

have a stronger effect on Robert Russa Moton, the Institute's president (46-7). Although Robinson crashed his plane en route to Alabama, he eventually managed to land at Tuskegee on commencement day. As a result, per the *Defender*, "the establishing of an airport at Tuskegee and an annual air show is now being considered ("Good Will Flyers Crash," "Aviators Drop in on Commencement at Tuskegee Inst.>"). In proposing an airport and an air show in order to promote black aviation education, Robinson was, in fact, utilizing aviation's goodwill message in practice. As Tucker observes, "he convinced some of Tuskegee's top officials to see the future of black aviation by emphasizing that the institute could benefit from this vast untapped potential of African American students, the same argument he successfully employed at Curtiss-Wright" (57).

Robinson probably saw Tuskegee's reputation for and history of vocational training as the perfect conduit for spreading aviation's goodwill message: proper training in aviation mechanics and other subjects would lead to job opportunities, which were clearly opening in the ever-growing field. After all, he had received a degree in mechanics from Tuskegee himself (Tucker 22). Like William J. Powell, who had decided to teach aeronautics at a government-funded high school in Los Angeles, Robinson sought to expand black aviation education among more students – first, he had pressured the Curtiss-Wright school in Chicago to allow him to study, then instruct, and finally open his own class of students of color. Next, he wanted to teach and showcase black aviation at one of the most renowned black vocational schools. In this way, Powell and Robinson were hoping not only to provide job opportunities for skilled black workers and highlight black aviation's potential to white America, but they were probably attempting to enlarge the pool of potential black pilots and mechanics in case of a war, too. Tuskegee had held courses in military science since 1919 and by 1934 it had its own military department, headed by Col. Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. Indeed, Robinson, a Tuskegee alum, must have been aware of the potential Tuskegee had in terms of preparing its

future aviation students for military service. Thus, as Jakeman claims, Robinson's goodwill flight "marked the beginning of Tuskegee's first attempt to enter the air age (1).

Unfortunately for Robinson and his group, Tuskegee did not approve plans for an aviation school until 1939/40. Still, the *Defender* carried a photograph of Robinson in his plane at Tuskegee, being greeted by Captain A.J. Neeley, the Institute's registrar for whom Robinson had worked as a student-chauffer during his studies. The paper later reported on Tuskegee's General Alumni Association Convention in August 1934, at which Robinson gave a speech entitled "Opportunities in the Field of Aviation" ("Biddng [sic] the Eagle Good Luck," "Tuskegee Alumni Map \$10,000 Endowment Plan," Jakeman 1). Despite his goodwill efforts, however, Robinson had to return to Chicago without prospects of an aviation school at Tuskegee materializing. Although he failed in this project, Robinson would break a different barrier in black aviation in 1935 and 1936: he would become the head of Ethiopia's Imperial Air Force and be the first African American pilot since Eugene Bullard to engage in military action abroad. Also, he would shift and expand the visions for black aviation in the black press towards internationalism and militarism – this development is discussed in Chapter 3.7.

Before this turn of events, however, the main focus of the aviation campaign in black press in 1935 remained on Robinson and his students' and colleague's educational activities in Chicago. For example, Doris H. Murphy, Robinson's student and the first woman Tuskegee graduate to enter the field of aviation, was planning to attend Tuskegee's commencement exercises in May 1935 ("To Fly Soon"). In May, Murphy – who also worked as the Chicago-Tuskegee Club's recording secretary – was invited by Marie Daughtry, the aforementioned aviatrix and educator, to perform at the California-Pacific International Exposition in San Diego ("Invite Girl Flier to San Diego Expo"). Dr. Earl Renfroe, an African American pioneer in dentistry and another one of Robinson's aviation students at the Aeronautical University, was awarded a limited commercial pilot's license in September

(“Dr. Renfroe Passes Air Examination”). Evidently, Robinson’s classes were producing successful aviators, who continued with aviation as a hobby or a second occupation. And the black press, typically announcing individual achievements in aviation throughout the years, was publicizing Robinson’s students’ successes, thereby promoting black aviation and recontextualizing the alleged inability of African Americans to operate airplanes.

More importantly, Janet Waterford, one of Chicago’s first aviatrixes under Robinson’s tutelage, was making a name for herself and black aviation in the *Defender* – directly participating in the aviation campaign in the black press. In April 1935, the *Defender* began a series of articles authored by Waterford, intended to teach young African Americans about aviation and its importance for the community and its progress (“Noted Aviatrix to Teach Kiddies How to Fly Planes”). In a text subtitled “History of Aviation,” the aviatrix presented a short overview of pre-modern theories of and attempts at flying, while her following piece discussed the development of aerial warfare around the time of WWI. The ability to attack from the air via machine guns attached to planes was one of the “most outstanding achievements” of the period, claimed Waterford. Given the fact that the other texts in the series addressed technical, rather than practical aspects of aviation, it is striking that Waterford used the utilization of aviation in warfare as her point of emphasis. Even though her texts were published in the “Defender Junior” section of the Chicago weekly, it may be assumed that adults, as well as their children, were the intended audience. It is thus possible that Waterford – a close friend of Robinson’s – was using the *Defender* as a useful channel to convey her instructor’s increasingly militarized vision for aviation. After all, Robinson’s club, of which Waterford was a valuable member, and its airport were now the headquarters of an official paramilitary air squadron.

In fact, from 1932 on, Robinson borrowed strategies of campaigning for black aviation from Bessie Coleman. The late aviatrix had often presented herself around Chicago in

military regalia and celebrated African American veterans' organizations – the black press advertised Coleman's endeavors in hopes that she could one day teach black pilots how to defend their communities against potential attack by a technologically more advanced white population. John C. Robinson signified on Coleman's style, to borrow Henry Louis Gates's term from *The Signifying Monkey*, for he, too, did not hesitate to demonstrate the connection between his aviation instructorship at the Aeronautical University and the Military Order of Guards, which his club was now a member of. He organized promotional events and canvassed the South Side neighborhoods dressed in uniform, creating an image similar to Coleman's, but with tangible developments to his name.

As Waterford's articles in the *Defender* point out, the black press and its aviation campaign was the ideal vehicle for Robinson's demonstrations. In March 1935, Nettie George Speedy – “one of the early African American women journalists to cover sports, courts, police, and the theater,” also sometimes referred to as the “Dean of Women Journalists” (“George Nettie Speedy”) – published a piece about Robinson's students' graduation ceremony at the Curtiss-Wright school. The school's assembly hall was, according to Speedy, filled with “persons, whose names have become famous in the civic affairs of the nation,” including Oscar DePriest, Dr. A. Wilberforce Williams, famous physician, and Fred Ingram, president of the Chicago Tuskegee Club. As they were being awarded their degrees, Doris Murphy, Dale L. White, Edward C. Anderson, and Clyde B. Hampton stepped up in their uniforms to Mr. Churbuck, the Aeronautical University's progressive president, in “soldier-like fashion.” David E. Taylor, editor of the *California News*, recited Paul Laurence Dunbar's “The Colored Soldier” (“One Girl and Three Men Graduated from Chicago Aeronautical College”).

The military-style presentation in front of the audience's “deafening” applause seems to have been no coincidence. As Speedy's article informed, the Aeronautical University in

Chicago was “known as one of the best equipped in the country” (“One Girl and Three Men Graduated from Chicago Aeronautical College”). Therefore, there could not have been a more ideal place for Robinson to carry out his educational-military mission. With the room filled with dignitaries and even some military personnel, Robinson was showcasing his instructorship in numerous ways. Not only had he trained skilled pilots and mechanics and had proved that a qualified African American instructor was capable of teaching students of various nations in a subject as complex as aeronautics; but, most importantly, he demonstrated that his students had been trained in both civil *and* military aviation. Having been rejected by the Tuskegee administration in his plans to found an aviation school at an institute with an established military department, Robinson’s ambition was to educate a generation of black pilots in military aviation at his place of work and club. In the end, Robinson’s credentials and willingness to promote and advance black aviation’s military dimension led to his appointment in August 1935 as the head of the Ethiopian Imperial Air Force. Robinson was to train actual war pilots and engage in aerial warfare himself. The black press seized the opportunity and turned Robinson into an aerial warfare hero with unprecedented technical and technological expertise – his mission is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.7.

When Italy’s *Regia Aeronautica* destroyed the Ethiopian air force’s few remaining aircraft in a massive bombing campaign at the end of April 1936, Robinson was granted permission by the emperor to leave the country; even Selassie himself was about to flee to London (Tucker 183). But the Chicago that Robinson returned to in May 1936 was unlike the one he had left in April of the previous year. The city’s black aviation and main newspaper had changed and would change even more because of Robinson in two important ways. First, in Robinson’s absence, his club’s members had shifted their allegiance to Cornelius Coffey, and Willa Brown – originally Robinson’s protégé – was gradually becoming the face of

Chicago's aviation. Their group, which eventually stepped out of Robinson's shadow in 1938, would become the main aviation organization advocating participation in the CPTP from 1938 on.

Secondly, the *Defender* had decided to capitalize upon its city's aviation hero and had expanded – and would expand even further in 1937 – its aviation campaign, supporting Robinson in establishing a network of schools around the country. Consequently, and thirdly, through the *Defender's* newly-expanded campaign, Robinson came to be perceived as a military aviation instructor – the only African American one in the country. Given his status as a war hero and a famed educator, articles on his educational endeavors flooded black newspapers beyond the three papers analyzed here. Between May 1936 and the fall of 1938, Robinson appeared in the *Atlanta Daily World*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, the *Cleveland Gazette* and the *Plain Dealer*, Chicago's *Metropolitan Post*, the *Kansas Whip*, Kansas's *Negro Star*, or the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He became one of the most widely discussed figures in the black press, rivaled only by Haile Selassie and Joe Louis. His popularity also gave new, military-focused impetus to black aviation and its campaign in the black press and would serve as a precursor to the drive for CPTP which would begin in 1938, unfortunately without Robinson in any leading role.

In early 1936, the *Defender* asked Janet Waterford, who had been reported in the *Courier* just two weeks prior to be planning a new all-women aero club in Chicago (“Sponsor”), to write for the paper about Robinson. The series of articles which ran from late March until Robinson's return to Chicago at the end of May 1936, serves as another indication of the increasing symbiosis between the black press and black pioneer aviators. Also, it is another instance of black pilots directly writing their own (hi)story. The Chicago weekly ran an advertisement for Waterford's story on Robinson in the form of the aviatrix's photograph on March 28, 1936 with the title “Let's Go!” In the first installment, Waterford

began with acknowledging Bessie Coleman's crusading role,³⁴ thus indirectly associating Robinson and herself with the most celebrated black flyer, and noted that Hubert Julian's theatrics had overshadowed every black flyer's accomplishments, including those of Robinson ("Race Interest in Aviation"). Waterford's article was accompanied by a small photograph of the author in a nursing uniform, for as the aviatrix herself explains in *Soaring above Setbacks*, she was sometimes referred to as "the Flying Nurse."

The articles by "Janet" covered all the highlights of Robinson's career. On April 4, the *Defender* carried a large portrait of Robinson, dubbing him "Brown Condor," and Waterford wrote about Robinson's beginnings in Gulfport, Tuskegee, and his early days in Chicago ("The Real Story of Col. John Robinson"). The series continued with Robinson's first efforts to establish an aero club in Chicago, noting that the flyer and his friends lacked funds – a recurring trope in black press's aviation coverage ("Robinson Organizes Brown Eagle Aero Club"). Next came the story of Robinson's persistence in gaining admission at Curtis-Wright, his subsequent employment there, and opening of a small airport for his group of flyers ("Robinson Arouses Race Interest in Aviation"). Waterford also described the aviator's teaching style ("Robinson Excelled as an Instructor") and related the episode during which the Challenger club's airport had been destroyed by a storm and reopened elsewhere owing to the members' desire to make it in aviation ("First Race Airport"). The series concluded with the story of Robinson's goodwill flight to Tuskegee and recruitment by Claude A. Barnett and Haile Selassie to become the head of Ethiopia's air force ("John Robinson Wings His Way Down to Tuskegee"). On the day of Robinson's arrival in Chicago, Waterford added an exclusive piece about the Challengers association ("The Race and Aviation"). Her texts functioned as a distilled version of the black press' goodwill message of aviation: perseverance, training in mechanical, technical, and flying skills were highlighted; and

³⁴ Coleman was remembered in a separate article in the *Defender* in early May ("Recalls Exploits of Brave Bessie Coleman").

Robinson's success despite lack of funding and support by the larger black community in Chicago and nationwide was celebrated.

Waterford, however, was not the only aviator associated with Robinson who was making headlines in 1936.³⁵ Dorothy Darby had recovered from her injuries in 1934 and was becoming successful as a parachutist. She was studying at the Pontiac civic airport and school of aviation and gave exhibitions in Michigan, where she was also honored by the Michigan air forces ("Dorothy Darby to Make Leap," "Pontiac, Mich."). The Harlem airport, operated by the Challengers, witnessed a fatal crash in July, when two people died flying Dr. Earl Renfroe's airplane ("Sister Sees Pilot Die in Crash"). The Aeronautical University in Chicago produced another African American student, Frank S. Reed, Jr., who graduated with a double degree ("Wins Degrees").

Most importantly, Willa Beatrice Brown emerged as a new active promoter of Chicago aviation. Graduate of Robinson's first class at Curtiss-Wright, Brown is mentioned by Enoch P. Waters, a renowned *Defender* journalist, in the seminal *American Diary: A Personal History of the Black Press* as the one who revitalized the paper's aviation campaign in 1936 (195-99). Although Waters' account is incomplete and its timeline seems incorrect by two years, Brown did feature in the black press on numerous occasions in 1936. In January, for example, she featured in flying gear on the front pages of the *Courier* next to Robinson's photo with J.A. Rogers ("Wants to Fight Italian Bombers"). Crucially, Robert A. Hill credits this photograph with inspiring George S. Schuyler to write the female chief pilot of the Black International, Patricia Givens, into the novella *Black Internationale* (268); this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.3. Brown also became member of the Challengers' advisory board

³⁵ In other aviation news, Lincoln Payne, an aviator, aviation advocate, and a barn stormer, died in October 1936 ("Lincoln Payne, Flying Mail Carrier Dead"). Brazil purchased 30 American planes for its air force to be able to suppress future revolts more easily ("Brazil Buys 30 American Planes"). Allen Moton, son of former Tuskegee president, announced his plan for a transatlantic flight with Hubert Julian ("Son of Tuskegee President Plans to Fly Atlantic"). "Flying High," an air-minded musical made its premiere in Chicago in May ("Fulton Alexander's Flying High").

when the organization voted Cornelius Coffey as its stand-in president for Robinson in January 1936 (“Robinson’s Chi-Air”). In May, as Robinson was on his return to the US, Brown featured on the pages of the *Defender Junior* section – as Waterford did the year before. The paper announced that Brown had consented to establishing an aviation club in Chicago – she was going to teach children about the history of aviation as well as take them to field trips to airports (“To Organized Junior Birdmen,” “To Help Us”). The *Defender* was thus targeting its young readers again, promoting black aviation in all its sections.

Robinson needed a few weeks after his return from Ethiopia to pursue new educational opportunities opening up for him as his own club had elected Coffey to be its new president. In the articles documenting Robinson’s return, the black press did not fail to mention that the aviator was going to become an aviation instructor at Tuskegee in the fall of 1936 (“Col. Robinson, Ethiopian Air Ace, Returning,” “Defender Scribe Greet Robinson,” “Twenty Thousand Greet Brown Condor”). Claude A. Barnett, a Tuskegee graduate like Robinson, had been discussing the flyer’s potential employment at the Institute with Robinson for some time – and he had issued press releases for black and white newspapers announcing Robinson’s future employment and organized, in cooperation with Frederick Douglass Patterson, an aviation event upon Robinson’s arrival at Tuskegee (Tucker 202, Jakeman 29). The exciting news inspired Chicago citizens to donate money for the Col. John C. Robinson aviation fund, which was intended to purchase a plane for Robinson before his departure to teach at the institute (“Rally to Buy Col. Robinson a New Plane”).

According to reports in the *NYAN*, Harlem supporters also contributed as an air circus starring Robinson was held at Roosevelt Field and a fundraising ball at the Savoy Ball Room in June 1936 (“All Colored Air Show,” “Robinson Plane Fund Increases,” “Col. Robinson Fund Plans Benefit Ball,” “Robinson Fund Asks Support on Benefit,” “Robinson Fund Sets More Cash As Goal,” “\$800 Pledged for Air Hero”). In July, Robinson visited Tuskegee,

where Patterson announced to Robinson and the press in attendance that “a course in aeronautics would probably be started at the Institute next year” (“Brown Condor at Tuskegee Institute”). As Jakeman and Tucker concur, Tuskegee, along with Barnett, was hoping to use the considerable amount of money donated to Robinson’s fund to sponsor not only its aviation program, but other departments as well. In fact, Barnett was reportedly withholding the fund’s money from Robinson until late summer 1936, which prompted the aviator to take his educational plans in another direction (Tucker 208-11, Jakeman 30-32). Despite the setback, Robinson is still credited with having initiated what would later become the Tuskegee Airmen program.

Along with debating whether to accept Tuskegee’s offer, Robinson spent the summer of 1936 giving lectures about aviation, Ethiopia, and visiting his home town as he stopped in Gulfport, Mississippi on his way to Tuskegee in July (“Home Folks Honor Flyer”). In early June, Robinson visited the Poro College, a beauty college in Chicago, operated by Anna Turnbo Malone, the first African American female millionaire (“Col. Robinson is Feted at Poro College”). At a lecture at Chicago’s Du Sable High School in June, Robinson explained how Italy had employed its black Muslim troops to fight Ethiopian Christians, thus pitting troops of color against each other while the white Italian troops barely engaged in battle (“How Black Troops Won War for Italians”). The highlight of Robinson’s lecture tour, however, came in late June when he visited New York: twenty two black pilots, including Alfred Anderson, from Pennsylvania and other neighboring states welcomed Robinson and escorted him to Roosevelt Field, where over seven hundred people had been waiting, and performed a short air show. During his visit to New York, Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh, Robinson also discussed his idea of a “chartered air service in the South [...] which would aid the entire section as well as give qualified pilots regular jobs.” The potential success of this service would in turn convince other companies to hire black pilots, claimed Robinson (“Col.

Robinson, Ethiopian Air Hero”). Two years after his initial proposal to Tuskegee, the idea of establishing a segregated airline apparently still dwelled in the aviator’s mind.

In fact, since Robinson’s Tuskegee plans had fallen through, the aviator put his idea of an air service into practice in Chicago between 1936 and 1937. As Tucker claims, Robinson owned a four-seat Curtiss Robin plane marked “John Robinson Airlines” (213). As an article in the *Courier* suggests, Robinson had indeed established a “flying service” in Chicago by the end of September. Willa Brown, along with Lola Jones, served as hostesses at the Harlem airport, or as the paper called it, the “Colonel J.C. Robinson’s Flying Field” (“The Brown and Jones Girls”). The air service was apparently a business adjacent to Robinson’s new school, which opened in late September 1936 (Tucker 213).

The John C. Robinson’s National Air College and School of Automotive Engineering, informed articles in the *Courier*, the *Defender*, and the *NYAN*, was Robinson’s “life dream.” The school, located on the Poro College’s campus, offered 15 mechanical courses and owned equipment which were all “above the Government regulations as outlined by the Department of Commerce.” The school employed experienced and government-licensed instructors, including Cornelius Coffey and Captain Homer Lewis, who taught Spanish and French, which were among compulsory subjects. Most importantly, the school was under “military discipline, directed by an army reserve officer” (“Col. John Robinson Opens Aviation College,” “Col. Robinson’s National Air College,” “Aviation College is Opened,” “Col. Robinson Starts Own Aviation College”). When the black press remarked that Chicago “now boasts of the only Race aviation college and automotive school in the world,” it was not exaggerating (“Aviation College is Opened”). Rather, it was highlighting the fact that Robinson’s college offered a unique opportunity for African Americans to bridge the racial technological gap, which had been slowly narrowing in the automotive and aviation industries. Robinson’s college had government-approved equipment, staff, and used a nearby

airport to teach its students to fly. Although the institution was segregated, it more than equaled white schools, Robinson seemed to project through the black press.

Black aviators' education efforts were showing that technology could be the African Americans' domain as well, even though it had been long determined to belong only to the allegedly 'civilized' peoples. While Powell's classes at Jefferson High and his Craftsmen of Black Wings club also offered several courses and used the Dycer airport in Los Angeles for exercise, Powell was working mostly on his own – as far as the reports in black newspapers indicate – and did not teach automotive engineering. More importantly, Powell did not provide on-campus accommodation coupled with strict military discipline. Since the Tuskegee aviation school proposed by Robinson did not materialize, the aviator transposed his plan to Chicago and imbued it with as much military instruction as he was allowed at a civilian institution. Despite obstacles, Robinson – no longer an unfortunate crusader – repeatedly found ways to offer military-like technical education and training for his students. First at Curtiss-Wright, where his best students came to form the nucleus of the Military Order of Guard, Aviation Squadron, and then at his own college. The year 1937 would expand Robinson's vision beyond Chicago and his college.

In the *Courier* in 1937, the aviation campaign reverted to its old form before Robinson's mission in Ethiopia. The paper announced in brief notes new student fliers from around the country: in Arkansas, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Maryland (“Makes First Solo Flight,” “Aided by Father of His White School Chum,” “Young Oklahoman Wins Flying Permit,” “All Ready”). It also published two short texts about Haitian military officers coming to the United States to study aviation. Lieut. Edouard Roy – later the first head of the Haitian Air Force in the early 1940s – was reportedly studying at an aviation school at the Roosevelt Field in New York. Although Roy and his colleague later made headlines with a love story gone wrong, it is important to note that Capt. Duly Lamothe was studying aviation “with the U.S.

army,” unlike black Americans (“To Study,” “Haitian Army Officer”). In October, the *Courier* announced that there were, according to the Department of Commerce, “103 Negroes, 10 women and 93 men, [who] have qualified as aviators,” 70 of whom, including 6 women, had active licenses (“10 Race Women, 93 Men Qualify as Aviators”).

The *Defender* did not lag far behind the *Courier* in its routine aviation coverage. The paper covered Julian’s escapades (“Black Eagle Hurts Arm,” “In U.S. Again”) as it did Josephine Baker’s marriage to a French aviator (“Josephine Baker Marries French Broker and Aviator”). More importantly, the *Courier* and the *Defender* continued in promoting aviation through letters and editorials. The Pittsburgh weekly urged its readers in its “The World This Week” column to “Watch aviation, young man! Study it. Learn to fly. The bars are up now. Changing conditions will lower them. [...] Aviation is girdling the globe. [...] Everywhere young men are training. What about you?” The *Defender* published a short letter to the editor, which asserted that “Race males should be trained at once in aviation, so that when the inevitable war comes the Race will be able to do their part in helping to save the nation” (“Train for Aviation”). The letter thus reminded the black press’s readers that black aviation still had the ultimate objective of preparing black America for the upcoming race war which would be fought in the air.

Robinson, the war hero educator, appeared in the news repeatedly during 1937, touring the country and promoting his college. In May, he reportedly piloted a renowned Chicago card player to a bridge tournament in Cleveland (“To Fly to Bridge Tourney”). It is possible that this trip was carried out by Robinson’s charter service. In early July, per the *Courier*, he took Mrs. Malone, owner of the Poro College, for a trip over Chicago’s South Side – the *Defender* printed two photographs from the event later in the month (“Mme. Malone, Poro Head, Takes to Air”). In the middle of July, Robinson flew Malone to Kansas City and continued to Topeka to give a speech (“Air-Minded!). According to Tucker, after

Topeka, Robinson with Mrs. Malone visited Mound Bayou, Mississippi, for the 50th anniversary “as a self-governing 100% Negro community.” And in early August, the aviator flew to Jackson,³⁶ where he gave an interview to a *Clarion Ledger* reporter, gave a speech, and then visited Meridian for a speaking engagement at a black high school (Tucker 217-19).

What Tucker’s detailed list of activities after Topeka leaves out, however, is that Robinson apparently also made a speech in St. Louis, Charles Lindbergh’s long-time hometown. As the *Courier’s* St. Louis column from July 17, 1937 indicates, Robinson was planning to open a school in the city, perhaps because of its considerable black population and aviation infrastructure. Per the *Courier*, Robinson “set up a tentative program for a local aviation school which would be an important unit of the Col. John C. Robinson Aviation Activities.” This program had been formed to “stimulate and promote aviation among our race; To create positions and connections for jobs for qualified members of our race in all lines of aviation and automotive mechanics.” Robinson was reportedly planning to open a branch of his college in St. Louis as well as set up airports in cities where there was a sizeable black population and connect these via a charter service operated by black pilots. He also sought to promote goodwill among pilots regardless of nationality. Most importantly, Robinson’s objective was to “try to get a place in the army corps for members of our race who desire such placement” (“Chatting with Lue Swarz”). In other words, Robinson was launching a plan to create a network of colleges, airports, and qualified mechanics and pilots so that black America could travel by plane, be offered technical and mechanical jobs, and, in turn, produce viable candidates for service in the country’s military. Robinson’s network of colleges would have a clear purpose to educate black students for service in skilled positions in the military.

³⁶ The *Defender* informed about Robinson’s visit to the city and subsequent exhibition flight at the end of August in “Mississippian Flies Here with Colonel.”

The *Defender's* coverage of Robinson's activities during August and September 1937 provides a map of the areas where the aviator was hoping to set up his network of colleges – like Powell, Robinson was targeting the segregated South. According to Von Hardesty, Powell, too, in his *Craftsmen Aero-News*, regularly displayed an “elaborate organizational chart for his proposed national aviation network [which] called for interlocking black-owned and -operated commercial airlines, training schools, and aircraft manufacturing firms.” However, while Powell's vision was “utopian in scope” (xix), Robinson travelled daily during July and August 1937 between Dallas, New Orleans, and Jackson, attempting to initiate his network. In New Orleans, he was the American Legion of Honor's guest of honor. He also spoke to, among others, members of the local Poro club (“Col. Robinson Pays Visit to New Orleans”). An article on another dinner remarked the “Colonel's intention to establish an aviation school in the Crescent City” (“Col. Robinson is Guest of Hartmans”) and another text noted that Robinson was planning to set up a “Primary Flying School” in Jackson³⁷ and was mulling the possibility of connecting his proposed college in New Orleans with Xavier University (“May Open Flying School at Xavier”).

In Dallas, Robinson and Mrs. Malone visited the local Poro branch, which was, among others, teaching a plane modeling class. Robinson reportedly suggested “the formation of other clubs to promote interest in aviation among the older boys and the adult members” (“Texas State News”). Finally, per the *Courier*, Robinson dropped “a football to open the annual gridiron classic between Wiley College and Prairie View Normal”³⁸ at the Cotton Bowl and was making arrangements “for his stunt on Negro participation day” at the Pan-American Exposition (“To Stunt at Texas Exposition”). The *Defender* later confirmed Robinson's stunt flying (“Robinson Flies a New Plane to City”) and both black newspapers

³⁷ Robinson visited Jackson again in October to give exhibition flights at the Annual Mississippi Negro State Fair (“...Jackson, Mississippi...”).

³⁸ Prairie View's newspaper reports on the game do not mention Robinson's flyover.

informed that the aviator visited vocational schools in Tennessee in September (“Col. J. Robinson Makes Flight to Sommerville,” Col. John C. Robinson Honored at Luncheon,” “Noted Flyer on Southern Lecture Tour”).

Indeed, Robinson’s tour of the South was not intended to promote his aviation education and business vision only. The articles in the *Courier* and the *Defender* report that the aviator spoke as much about Ethiopia and Italy as he did about aviation (“Tells of Italy’s Efforts,” “Col. Robinson, Mrs. Malone, Speakers”). Not only was he thus promoting aviation as a field and a means of acquiring a technical degree, but he was also spreading the spirit of Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism around the segregated South. It may be assumed that Robinson’s audience – high school and college students as well as other adults – listened to the aviator’s inspiring narrative that coupled military aviation and heroism with necessary technical and mechanical expertise and juxtaposed Robinson’s skills with that of the allegedly overpowering technological superiority of Italy’s colonial power.

It is also necessary to note that Robinson had spent the summer travelling around the South with Mrs. Malone aboard his plane, visiting numerous Poro college campuses. According to Bettye Collier-Thomas writing in *Black Heroes*, by 1926 Poro claimed to have graduated around 75,000 black cosmetology agents around the U.S., the Caribbean, and elsewhere. The Poro college employed up to 175 people. Although Malone’s business reportedly suffered due to her divorce in the mid-1930s (461), the entrepreneur must have still had a considerable network of colleges around the country, as the articles on Robinson’s tour indicate. Given the fact that Robinson’s Chicago college with around 40 students (Tucker 217) was housed on the Poro campus and that Malone was “the nation’s first black philanthropist” and was perceived as “overgenerous” (Collier-Thomas 462), she was probably the primary sponsor of Robinson’s efforts to establish a network of aviation colleges and was perhaps willing to provide space on her various campuses.

Progressively, however, Robinson's presence in the black press diminished as his network of aviation education institutions failed to materialize. Still, in 1939, the *Defender* reported that Robinson had been "selected by the National Youth Administration as aviation consultant for the air mechanics schools now in operation and to be established at various points throughout Illinois." Robinson's school at Poro had been reportedly taken over by the NYA, but the aviator remained the institution's director; it is possible that Malone's financial trouble hit Robinson as well. Still, the NYA invited Robinson as the only African American to attend the institute of nationally prominent civil instructors held at the Air Corps Technical, Chanute Field, and was furnishing the college with \$250,000 worth of Army and Navy surplus equipment. NYA's aid came with a caveat, though: "this equipment will be used to give instruction of a purely industrial nature and the commercial aspects of the aviation picture will be stressed rather than the military" ("Col. Robinson Named Aviation Consultant," "Negro Pilot Earns 'Wings'"). Although Robinson could attend the Air Corps institute, thereby entering the military environment he had so long sought for black America and himself, the NYA rolled back Robinson's school's initial emphasis on military aviation. At any rate, Robinson was still allowed to teach his students using military equipment.

After 1937, Robinson virtually disappeared from the aviation coverage in the black press. Between 1938 and 1940, his name would only be mentioned in passing as his former protégés were completing their mission to secure a government-funded civilian pilot training program in case of a war and, in turn, to include an African American division in the U.S. Air Force. But between the summer of 1935 and December 1937, Robinson had been the face of the aviation campaign in the black press. Owing to his military displays in Chicago in the first half of the 1930s and later his missions in Ethiopia and the South, the black press had been able to double its aviation coverage. Effectively, Robinson's activities – as well as those of

William J. Powell and, for a brief period, of Charles E. James – paved the way for aviation news and editorials to become a common feature in black newspapers by 1938.

Cornelius Coffey and Willa Beatrice Brown replaced Robinson as the most visible and vocal representatives of black aviation in Chicago and nationwide from 1938 onwards.³⁹ Brown headed the Chicago Girls Flight Club which flew daily at Harlem airport and included Robinson's other female students such as Janet Waterford, Dolores Jackson, Doris Murphy, Lola Jackson – formerly a member of the Harlem-based Black Squadron from 1935 – and Lola Jones (“Chicago Aviation Enthusiasts”). Brown truly took the torch from Robinson when the *Courier*, the *Defender*, and the *NYAN* all vigorously reported on the aviatrix successfully passing her private pilot's license exam in July 1938. Brown became the first black woman in history to hold the license allowing her to transport passengers; Bessie Coleman held an international license only. Besides mentioning her instructor, Cornelius Coffey, the black press especially highlighted the fact that Brown had passed the exam with the highest mark among fourteen other students, all of them white men. Brown's attractive face accompanied the celebratory reports on the cover pages of black newspapers to promote black aviation. The aviatrix even acknowledged and praised the support in an August letter to the *Courier*, thus emulating Powell's active collaboration with the black press (“Congratulations!,” “Young Woman Flyer Gets Pilot's License,” “Our Women Advancing in Aviation,” “Plans Coast to Coast Flight,” “Overcome with Joy,” “Solo Licenses Go to 2 Women,” “Woman Flyer Is Awarded Pilot License in Chi”). In fact, at that point, Brown openly and officially cooperated with the *Defender*, particularly with Enoch P. Waters, according to the journalist's autobiography, *American Diary: A Personal History of the Black Press* (195-210).

³⁹ The trio's relationship has been recently treated in fiction by Severo Perez in *The Challengers Aero Club* (2012) and *Willa Brown & the Challengers* (2016).

In September 1938, Brown and Coffey organized a large air circus at which Willie ‘Suicide’ Jones established a new world record in a parachute jump when he leaped from 29,400 feet and opened his ‘chute’ mere 2,400 feet above the ground (“‘Cuts Capers’ in Air”). Later in the month, the two aviators and their colleagues from the Challenger’s group participated in a large aviation competition. To advertise the event, the *Defender* introduced Coffey as the most experienced black participant for he was the only “Race man in the country holding a combination of commercial pilot’s license, instructor’s rating, and airplane and engine mechanic’s license” (“12 Race Pilots Invited”). At the event, Chauncey Spencer, another one of the Challengers and later a goodwill aviator who flew to Washington, D.C. to lobby for the Civilian Pilot Training Program, parachuted from two miles in the air (“Spencer Thrills Huge Crowd”). Brown and Coffey thus entertained Chicagoans with air events and their stunts – in April 1939, for example, Brown gave an airplane ride to Horace R. Cayton, a prominent sociologist and co-author of the seminal study *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945) (“Free Flights Make Chicago Air Conscious”). Unfortunately, neither Cayton’s autobiography, *Long Old Road* (1965), nor *Black Metropolis* mention the phenomenon that black aviation was during the 1930s in Chicago and nationwide.

During their campaigning, Brown and Coffey never forgot to continue in the military displays which Bessie Coleman had started in the 1920s and Robinson took up in the first half of the 1930s. On November 11, 1938, at 11am, Brown and Coffey flew across Chicago’s South Side on behalf of the Inter-racial Business Council to drop leaflets in commemoration of World War I veterans. Importantly, the aviators again strengthened the bond between black aviation and the black press as they undertook their ‘bombing mission’ in a *Chicago Defender* goodwill airplane. The newspaper ran a picture of the duo in front of the machine on its cover page the following week, highlighting its participation in the aviation campaign and

celebrating the two most recognizable faces of black aviation (“Community Crusaders and Fliers Spread Goodwill Message,” “Fliers Who Scattered Leaflets on Chicagoans”).

In 1939, Brown and Coffey further intensified their promotion of black aviation and eventually achieved what almost two decades of campaigning in the black press ultimately sought: the acceptance of black aviators to be trained at government-funded facilities in case of a potential armed conflict. After Robinson’s historic mission in Ethiopia and his subsequent educational and organizational efforts, black newspapers ran dozens of editorials between 1936 and 1939 which lobbied for the inclusion of African Americans in the Air Corps. That is why, in a text accompanying another photograph of Brown and Coffey testing an airplane for another license test in January 1939, the *Defender* informed its readers that President Roosevelt would soon “name a Negro college as one of the several schools selected to train 20,000 pilots annually” (“Aviatrix in ‘Tail Spins’ Test Flight”). A lengthy editorial in February announced that, perhaps owing to Robinson’s inspirational activities, “we may finally see Race men wearing the uniforms of the officers in the United States Air Corps [since] they have demonstrated once and for all that Race citizens want to fly and can fly, and intelligent people can no longer dispute this” (“U.S. Air Corps May Soon Admit Race Applicants”). The black press’ strategy of recontextualizing and providing emotional, logical, and ethical arguments and evidence to advocate for black aviation would no longer be necessary.

To that purpose, the Challengers and Waters decided to form a nationwide organization which would lobby Congress on behalf of black aviators. Coffey was voted its chairman and Brown its secretary. The newly-established National Airmen’s Association invited black aviators across the country to attend a conference in the summer of 1939 (“Study Plans for National Air Meet in Chicago,” “Local Fliers Organize to Foster Meet,” “Coffey Named Chairman for National Air Meet”). The goal of the national meet in Chicago

was to “acquaint the pilots with each other socially [and] map a permanent program for the advancement of aviation among the Race.” In the end, the conference brought together most of the living black aviators who had appeared in celebratory reports and photographs in black newspapers during the previous decade. The imagined community, connected through the black press for more than a decade, finally formed an actual community. Having made considerable headway in the field and having made black America air-minded through the black press, the aviators, under the leadership of Brown and Coffey finally founded an all-black aviation organization which represented the community’s needs and goals to the public in a unified voice and effort. Although Robinson, Powell, and Julian did not attend the event as they were being replaced by younger fliers, the N.A.A. did award Dr. Porter A. Davis from Kansas City for his 11-year long contribution to the development of black aviation (“To Honor Outstanding Pilot at Air Meet,” “Doctor Wins Aviation Award”).

After Chauncey Spencer and Dale L. White carried out their goodwill flight from Chicago to cities along the East Coast in May 1939 – discussed at the very beginning of this chapter – and after her vigorous activity in establish the N.A.A. and lobbying the Mayor of Chicago and the Congress on behalf of black aviators, Willa Brown appeared in the *Time* magazine as the first black aviatrix ever (“Aviatrix is Cited in ‘Time,’” “City Fliers Make Appeal to Mayor Kelly”). After thousands of people welcomed Brown in her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, in August 1939, the aviatrix and Cornelius Coffey could celebrate in October when the United States Civil Aeronautics Authority named the Coffey School of Aeronautics at the Harlem Airport near Chicago as one of the non-college facilities to train black aviators within the framework of the Civilian Pilot Training Program (“Louisville Hails Chicago Aviatrix,” “Airport for Pilots Named”). When the program at Coffey’s school proved successful during the next year and a half, the Air Corps agreed to send the Chicago students

to be taught at the newly-established military facility at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama (Scott and Womack 98).

The duo of Chicago aviators – along with John C. Robinson – have been rightfully hailed as the aviation educators, whose erudition, ingenious promotional and organizational activities, as well as flying, technical, and mechanical skills ensured the success of the initial stages of the Civilian Pilot Training Program which then opened the door for Tuskegee to emerge as an incubator for black combat pilots, the Tuskegee Airmen. What Brown and Coffey did and achieved, however, was simply the next logical evolutionary step in the black aviation campaign launched by the black press back in the 1920s during the heyday of Bessie Coleman and then her successors. Although the *Courier* and the *Defender* have been celebrated for their contribution during the late 1930s to the establishment of the Tuskegee flying program, their interest in and propagation of black aviation, as is shown in this dissertation, reaches much further into history.

At any rate, Chicago – along with California and New York – paved the way for Tuskegee and it was ingenious New Negro Chicago aviators who saw the aviation campaign through to its culmination in 1941 in the constitution of the 99th Pursuit Squadron, an all-black flying unit in the United States Army Air Corps. The development of black aviation of Chicago throughout the 1930s then stands in clear contrast to what Bigger Thomas and his friend Gus declare in Richard Wright's 1940 novel *Native Son*. "I *could* fly a plane if I had a chance," says Bigger to Gus. "If you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you *could* fly a plane," replies Gus (14). Robinson, his colleagues and students flew freely over Chicago at the time Wright wrote his famous novel as they, unlike Bigger and Gus, created and pursued as New Negro aviators their own opportunities in black aviation.

3.5 Aviation as African American Celebrities' Hobby

The aviation campaign in black newspapers lasted almost two decades, during which black aviation became increasingly popular. Indeed, the black press promoted a goodwill message of aviation education and consequent economic opportunities as a way of persuading race members to enter the field and represent black America during the golden age of aviation. However, the newspapers did not rely merely on reports on and celebrations of new schools opening and pioneer aviators teaching – they popularized aviation also by way of informing on flights taken by various local figures and businessmen, celebrities such as Harlem Renaissance artists, journalists, and political figures; as well as community leaders such as members of the clergy. Combined with successful transcontinental and international flights by black pilots from 1932 on, aviation became a common feature in any given section of black newspapers – it appeared in entertainment, serious reporting, local news, and the children's sections. This section briefly records some of the popularization articles in the black press, while the next one traces and analyzes the coverage of long-distance flights and explores the rarely discussed immigrant participation in early black aviation.

Although local individual new students or newly-licensed aviators appeared in black newspaper regularly, the reports were usually brief; they included perhaps a photograph and a soundbite. But there were exceptions, of course. One such special report was published in the *Courier* in March 1930, when the paper informed about a local youth, Irvin Lee McEnheimer, who had just received a private pilot's license in California, where he had studied under T.C. Ryan, the constructor of Lindbergh's "Spirit of St. Louis" plane. The young pilot claimed that he had been inspired by Bessie Coleman and wanted to pursue aviation in Pittsburgh, but was denied because of his skin color ("Local Youth Wins Pilot's License"). The newspaper

carried an advertisement for McEnheimer's upcoming show as well, and on October 18 published an article, along with a photograph of McEnheimer in full gear, in which it invited its readers to the "brown-skinned Lindy's" show and the "youth to enter aviation field" ("McEnhimer [sic] to Stage Air Show at Butler Airport Oct. 30"). In a report on the show itself, the *Courier* quoted the air field's white commandant as saying that "McEnheimer is a credit to aviation and his people should be doubly proud of him, considering the handicaps he had to overcome to secure his training and credentials." Over 300 spectators came to see the show on a fair-weather day and the paper had reportedly received dozens of letters expressing pride in the pilot ("McEnheimer's Air Show Proves Big Thriller, Gay Crowd"). Pittsburgh, too, was becoming air-minded, no doubt owing to the aviation coverage provided by the *Courier*.

There were also the odd reports on aviation events and flights in local news. In 1929, the black press celebrated the first flight by a "colored passenger over the Transcontinental Airlines" between Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio. The passenger was a local businessman and his arrival was reportedly attended by over two hundred African American spectators ("Flies from Business League Meeting"). Another two brave souls were highlighted when they flew from Chicago to Detroit via the Stout Aviation Company. The brief report exclaimed that "colored Chicago is becoming more and more air-minded" ("Chicagoans Fly to Detroit"). In 1930, the *Courier's* children section told the story of a black child experiencing his first plane ride ("Junior Club Member Reports Airplane Ride"). In 1931, the *Defender*, for example, reported on a San Diego ex-slave, who took the first plane ride of her life at the age of 103, thereby fulfilling her birthday wish ("Ex-Slave, 103, Takes Joyride in Plane"). And Harlem's business figures were also reported to have been taking airplane rides: C. B. Powell and Dr. Philip H.M. Savory enjoyed riding up in the air in 1928, 1931, and in later years ("Along the Rialto," "New Yorkers Make Trip to Chicago by Plane"). Powell and

Savory would purchase the *NYAN* in 1935/36 and gradually turn it into the second most influential black paper in the nation. The two would also become major organizers of pro-Ethiopian clubs and charities during the Italo-Ethiopian war (“C.B. Powell”).

Popular black clergymen could not escape the call of the heavens either. In 1931, for example, Hubert Julian took Junius Caesar Austin, the renowned Garveyite pastor of the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago’s Bronzeville, for a short airplane ride, after which the preacher explained that “Heaven, so much farther away, must be the place of pure joy that he had been preaching about” (“Rev. Austin, in Plane, Sees Way to Pearly Gates”). At Easter 1934, Julian rode “a twelve-passenger monoplane” over Harlem with Reverend Major Jealous Divine, Harlem’s legendary spiritual leader and civil rights activist, on board (“Chanting Throng Parades in Harlem”). Another Garveyite pastor, Brooklyn’s Rev. Dr. Thomas Samuel Harten, began to fly regularly to church meetings and conferences from 1934 on, branding himself the “first flying minister.” His arrivals at various locations on the East Coast, in the Midwest, and the South were attended by hundreds of spectators (“Harten Uses Plane to Speed His Work,” “Pastor Flies to Capital Revival,” “Harten Says He’s First Flying Parson,” “Flying Minister Disappoints Delegation of Greeters”). Still, Harten was not New York’s only flying man of God: Harlem’s infamous “Black Hitler” and the “Führer of Harlem,” Bishop Amiru Al-Minin Sufi Abdul Hamid, the founder of the Universal Holy Temple of Tranquility, a street leader of numerous protests and boycotts during the Harlem Renaissance era (Lewis 300-1), and a heavily featured figure in the *NYAN*, owned a private plane in the mid-1930s, routinely flying it over Harlem and Brooklyn. In June 1938, his plane ran out of gas and crashed in Wantagh, N.Y. According to graphic descriptions in the black press, Sufi and his white pilot expired in the plane’s flames (“Harlem ‘Hitler’ Killed,” “Died in Crash”).

Along with businessmen and clergymen, aviation was also registering as a popular hobby with African American celebrities: in 1930, Noble Sissle, Harlem’s favorite jazz

composer and playwright performed at the American Club in Paris in honor of the French transatlantic flyers, Coste and Belonte. His band then took a plane ride to London (“Sissle and Band Fly to England”). Josephine Baker, a renowned dancer and a friend of Bessie Coleman’s from their early days in Chicago, announced to the *Defender* in August 1935 that she was “planning to enter the field of aviation” and that she believed “her race should develop its own aviators.” In October, Baker was already flying every day before breakfast to work up an appetite (“Josephine Baker to Attempt Aviation,” “Pretty Jo Baker, Home Again,” “Jo Baker Takes Daily Trips in Her Own Plane”). Meanwhile, Stepin Fetchit, a popular comedian, was being considered by Fox Studio for a lead in an “aviation story depicting the aspirations of a young colored man, ambitious to put his race on a par with the white race in air achievements” (“Fox May Shelve Air Story”). Although the film did not materialize, the *Courier* did note in its profile of Fetchit in April 1936 that the movie star was “a veteran plane fan and flying is his hobby” (“Stepin Fetchit Made Over \$62,000 Last Year”).

Louis Armstrong began to routinely fly to performances across the country in the late 1930s (“Ol Satchmo Flies to Hollywood Friday”). Duke Ellington sponsored Powell’s club in California and Oscar DePriest attended numerous aviation events. Finally, Joe Louis, the world heavyweight champion also routinely rode the skies to fights – and was connected to popular black aviators. He visited with William J. Powell in Los Angeles and was celebrated by Dorothy Darby, one of Robinson’s students, when she flew over his camp in the summer of 1938 (“Louis Rushes to Detroit to See Big Fight,” “Flier is Ready for Hop to Joe Louis Camp”).

Popular black journalists also demonstrated that their reports on aviation were not mere words. In 1927, Joel Augustus Rogers, a Jamaican-American and Harlem Renaissance journalist, historian, and a close friend of George S. Schuyler’s, visited the flying field of Le Bourget, Lindbergh’s non-stop flights destination, and took a plane flight. The essay on his

experience ran in the *Courier* and the *NYAN*: in it, Rogers admitted to having the “highest respect [...] for the law of gravitation” as well as newly-found appreciation of “the feats of Lindbergh and the other aviators” (“J.A. Rogers Goes Up in the Air in Paris,” “Up in the Clouds”). In 1929, Rogers reminded the *Courier* readers of Eugene Bullard, the famed black aviator living in France (“The Paris Pepper-Pot”), and between 1935-37, he covered John C. Robinson’s mission in Ethiopia and his educational tour across the country after his return.

Another famous journalist working for the *Courier*, Floyd J. Calvin, the first ever radio program host sponsored by a black newspaper, often reported on Hubert Julian, and went up in a plane in 1929 (“Calvin Makes First Flight in Airplane”). In April 1930, the *Courier* published a column by Alice Dunbar Nelson, a Harlem Renaissance poet and journalist, which described her first experience with flying aboard a plane (“Alice Takes to the Air,” “So It Seems”). William Pickens, a long-time NAACP officer, author of *The Heir of Slaves* (1911) and *Bursting Bonds* (1923), and a *NYAN* contributor, wrote about his experiences with flying for the Harlem-based paper in 1928 and 1932. In *Bursting Bonds*, Pickens famously refuses to ride in a Jim Crow car in Arkansas, and so it comes as no surprise in his short writings about aviation that he viewed this means of transport as a way to “avoid day and night in Jim Crow” (“Reflections: Up in the Air”). Overall, Pickens, an influential writer and orator during the Harlem Renaissance, proclaimed in 1928 that “with reasonable human care the air is as safe as the land or the water, and a great deal more thrilling” (“Lindberghing from Los Angeles to San Diego”). Finally, even George S. Schuyler wrote in 1935 about his own experiences with being an airplane passenger, telling his readers enthusiastically that “if you haven’t seen the earth from the air you haven’t seen it” (“Views and Reviews”).

Among its many popularizing texts, the black press also published occasional cartoons and poems celebrating black aviation. In June 1930, the *Courier* printed a cartoon – a genre

which it had last used for aviation purposes in 1922 to celebrate Bessie Coleman's achievements – accompanied with a poem. Entitled “Where There's A Will,” the cartoon depicted a black male student with a parachute labeled “Training,” running towards an airplane labeled “Pluck” and “Brains.” In the distance, a large cloud in the form of a beautiful white woman labeled “Success” was looming. The black student is depicted as saying “Huh - can't I? Watch *me*.” And the accompanying poem reads:

With bold resolve and heads held high

The youngsters leave their classes;

To them Success seems very nigh

Without the aid of glasses.

Old folks may smile but Youth is right,

Training makes their chances greater;

With Pluck and Brains to aid their flight

They'll surely overtake her.

The poem's message showcased the *Courier's* commitment to the aviation cause by expressing encouragement, especially for the paper's younger readership, to pursue technical and mechanical education. The fact that the student's parachute, rather than the plane, is defined as “training” points to the aviation campaign's continuous emphasis on ground work and education first, flying second. After all, as both the cartoon and the poem indicate, classes do come before practical flying exercise. In 1931, the paper published another poem on aviation called “Call of the Wings,” in which Harry Levette, a California-based journalist for the Associated Negro Press and later a Hollywood actor, implored readers to “listen to the call of the wings,” and reminded them that “A mere girl pioneered for the Race // But our men let

her sacrifice fail.” The poem prompted a response in the form of a letter, whose author proposed setting up an aviation fund under the auspices of the Tuskegee Institute (“Call of the Wings - letter”).

Along with experimenting with new genres and providing space for renowned and respected public figures to relate their flying experiences, the black papers were also adding new expert voices to speak on aviation. In August 1930, the *Courier* advertised an upcoming column by James Lincoln Holt Peck (“Air-Minded”) to be serialized during September. Peck’s texts offered personal musings on the nature of aviation, piloting, as well as on discrimination in the field and the hard work that was required to succeed. The essays provided space for an actual aviator to relate his experiences with and observations on aviation outside of the traditional and constricted genre of articles, reports, editorials, and letters to the editor. Crucially, Peck’s last essay asserted that “a flyer is a free man, with unlimited territory” (“Aviation”). Until 1932, no black flyer would succeed in crossing US borders in a plane, but, at least, Peck suggested in his writings that such an opportunity existed and that aviation offered not only economic opportunities and military use, but also connection with foreign lands.

Peck was studying aviation on the side, but eventually transformed his studies into a prolific career, embodying the aviation campaign’s message. He would later join the Republican side in the Spanish Civil war as a pilot, write a series of essays on aviation in 1938 and 1939 as the *Courier*’s campaign for inclusion in the CPTP was culminating, author two acclaimed books on aviation – *Armies with Wings* (1939) and *So You’re Going to Fly?* (1941) – and numerous magazine articles on aeronautics in the 1940 and the 50s for magazines such as *Popular Science*, *Harper’s Magazine*, *Scientific American*, *Science Digest*,

Popular Aviation, or *Air Trails*.⁴⁰ In his first writings for the *Courier*, however, Peck demonstrated that the newspaper and a few individual crusaders were taking the aviation campaign seriously, would devote time and resources to its success, and that aviation opened up black America's opportunities to connect with other nations and peoples of color. The *Courier* would run several similar essay articles by Herman Banning, Powell's colleague, in 1932 to celebrate his successful transcontinental flight.

Popularization through articles, photographs, and teasing the black press's readership could last only so long, however – by 1932, the black American public was still awaiting a historic achievement by a black aviator. Indeed, Powell and James had organized and participated in popular circuses around the country, new aviation schools were being opened, but nothing remotely similar to Lindbergh's goodwill tours and non-stop flights had been carried out by pilots of color. It was high time a black aviator had flown across the continent or abroad. Such a feat would represent the literal breaking of another geographical and racial barrier as the black aviation community would prove its humanity, technical ingenuity, and recontextualize the fact that it allegedly could not participate in and contribute to the United States' aviation progress. Also, such a feat would considerably narrow the racial technological gap between white and black aviation.

3.6 Flying the Distance: Breaking Geographical and Racial Barriers

Between 1932 and 1935, the dreams of Bessie Coleman, Joel Foreman, Hubert Julian, and James Holt Peck to cross arbitrary political boundaries and explore unlimited territories as well as connect with other nations and peoples came true in the form of historic first transcontinental and international flights. These efforts then culminated with John C. Robinson's military mission in Ethiopia; they also paved way for the black press and black

⁴⁰ *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science* has a profile on Peck as does George Edward Barbour's "Early Black Flyers of Western Pennsylvania, 1906-1945."

aviators to symbiotically lobby for the establishment of the CPTP. Crucially, some of these pioneering and groundbreaking aviators were not black Americans, but rather black migrants from the West Indies. The history of early black aviation and the aviation campaign in the black press may thus be read as thoroughly inter- and trans-national: African American aviators dreamed of flying abroad and spreading the gospel of aviation, while black migrants to the United States wished to participate in the larger project of pan-Africanism and black inter- and trans-nationalism and prove their humanity and technical aptitude along with black Americans. The black press, too, was developing an increasingly international perspective after WWI – on display in its aviation campaign – as it sought to foster connections between “imagined [diasporic] communities” of Africa-descended peoples across the globe.

New York in general and Harlem in particular were at the forefront of black aviators’ attempts to cross the country coast to coast and to fly abroad. During the larger Harlem Renaissance, Harlem became, according to Huggins, “a capital for an international black race” where DuBois and Garvey ushered black America onto “an international stage, placing the Afro-American behind the Pan-African movement” (22-30). During the first half of the twentieth century, Harlem transformed into an “urban crossroads [which] acquainted black Americans with their international brotherhood of blood and color” (302) with the help of various organizations, clubs, protests, boycotts, print culture, and other activities. In its centripetal dimension, explains Fabre and Feith, the Harlem Renaissance and its metropolis served “as an antidote to black diasporic dispersion: people of African descent, who had been kept separate by a history beyond their control, were now able to unite again into a new [inter- and trans-national] entity.” Harlem’s centrifugal dimension existed in the form of numerous international capitals such as Paris, London, or Marseilles playing a role in articulating “a transnational [black] consciousness” and exuding the vitality of “the very diaspora that [Harlem] recenter[ed]” (3).

Aviation emerged as one such potential means of connecting and bringing together black Americans with the rest of the world; as well as a means of placing African Americans in the leading position among Africa-descended peoples and nations. Black aviation in the 1930s demonstrated and embodied Harlem and its Renaissance's push and pull forces – Harlem became the locus of long-distance flights by virtue of its concentration of immigrants, businesses and finance, media, and geography. Harlem became a starting point as well as a destination. Nationally, it was connected via aviation with Chicago's black aviation boom and a budding Chicago Black Renaissance, as well as Los Angeles's offshoot of the Harlem Renaissance and William J. Powell's endeavors. An informal national network of and cooperation between black aviators, with the vigorous help from the black press, can be traced in the black press throughout the 1930s – well before the establishment of the Tuskegee Airmen program, which has long been the center of attention of black aviation's scholars.

Internationally, immigrant aviators, inspired and supported by pioneers from Chicago and Los Angeles, set off from Harlem to return to their homelands, particularly Haiti and the Bahamas, but also to visit and bring the gospel of aviation to other countries such as Cuba, Trinidad, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. And when black America's attention turned to Ethiopia's war against colonial Italy in the mid-1930s, an African American aviator emerged as the only one to fight in person against Italy in Africa, capturing his countrymen's imagination and adding a new dimension to Harlem and Chicago's Renaissance's centrifugal tendencies; as well as materializing Alain Locke's vision of African Americans leading Africa into the twentieth century. The immigrant and African American aviators employed aviation's goodwill message to communicate anti-colonial and anti-imperial sentiments, thereby bolstering local resistance movements and promoting interracial understanding. Some of them fought in the skies for a foreign black nation or peoples in the name of Pan-Africanism, black internationalism, and transnational black consciousness. In short, black aviators in the 1930s

embodied the inter- and trans-national dimensions of the New Negro – these developments can best be traced via the aviation campaign in the black press.

3.6.1 The Loudest Voice of Black Aviation: Hubert Julian

Hubert Julian, having started his career in Harlem in the early 1920s, remained the loudest voice in black aviation until the late 1930s – non-aviation articles about and interviews with Julian continued until the 1960s – and the only representative of a black immigrant aviator until 1932. Black as well as white newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, often reported on Julian’s bold plans and brash words. Julian’s tall tales even made it as far as the Czechoslovak press – his sojourn in Ethiopia, for example, was discussed with admiration in *Brněnské Noviny* in August 1930 (“Kariéra Černého Letce”).

Unfortunately, as throughout the 1920s, Julian’s bombastic style would overshadow other black aviators’ achievements. For example, because of Julian, even John C. Robinson’s widely covered and celebrated mission in Ethiopia is a mere footnote in seminal period texts such as Roi Ottley’s *New World A-Coming* (1943) and the newly discovered *Amiable with Big Teeth* (1941) by Claude McKay, both of which address black America’s reaction to the Italo-Ethiopian war. Ottley does devote considerable space in his oft-cited history of Harlem to mocking Julian as “a race missionary of individual persuasion [whose] profitable love of his race encompassed the whole world of black folk” (107-8). Yet little space is then left to celebrate Robinson, who is briefly referred to as Selassie’s “personal aviator” (107). McKay’s “piquant burlesque of political machinations in Harlem during the mid-1930s in response to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia” (Cloutier and Hayes Edwards x) is also preoccupied with satire of Julian and omits Robinson’s name completely. McKay, with his typical sharp wit, writes that, upon his return from Ethiopia in 1936, Julian’s “views were widely publicized and inwardly the Aframericans were dismayed, for they knew that the picaresque Colonel Hubert Fauntleroy Julian was not the type that would desert a good ship, if it were not in danger of

sinking” (176). As a cartoon in the *Courier* in February 1935 aptly put it, “Julian [Was] Always a Good Copy.” In essence, Julian was a foil to successful black aviators depicted in the black press.

In July 1931, the *New Yorker* ran a two-part profile on Julian based on the Trinidadian’s own account of events. The lively text explained that with Julian “to dream was to do – or at least make a mighty try at it” (“The Black Eagle- II”). Indeed, try he did. In 1928, for example, the *Courier* reminded its readers of Bessie Coleman’s message and achievements in a series of articles about Reverend Junius Caesar Austin of the Pilgrim Baptist Church in the heart of Chicago’s Bronzeville, who devoted his sermons, among other things, to collecting funds to erect a monument for the intrepid aviatrix. The monument was eventually unveiled in June 1928, with several thousand Chicagoans in attendance. Hubert Julian had been scheduled to parachute over Coleman’s grave, but he never made his appearance (“Throngs Hear Rev. Austin in Brilliant Sermon,” “Monument to Bessie Coleman Unveiled in Chicago”). Despite Julian’s unreliability, Austin took a plane ride with the parachutist in 1931, cementing his position as one of the most vocal supporters of black aviation in Chicago (“Rev. Austin Takes Airplane Ride with Col. Hubert Julian”). Julian would pilot many a clergyman’s plane in the following years when he finally received a license.

In 1930, Julian seemed to advance black aviation and its campaign’s objective to become international when he travelled to Ethiopia to perform at Haile Selassie’s coronation as the newly-named colonel in the Imperial Air Force. However, he allegedly crashed Selassie’s favorite French Gipsy Moth monoplane and was immediately banished from the country. Still, Julian returned to the United States in an Ethiopian-army uniform, claiming that he was to raise funds to buy airplanes for Ethiopia. His assertions were then refuted by Malaku E. Bayen – the emperor’s relative, who had recruited Julian to come to Ethiopia and

would later recommend John C. Robinson to Selassie. Despite this failure, Julian was honored in Harlem by the Brotherhood of Sleeping-Car Porters and other supporters (“All Harlem in Tribute to Julian”) and kept appearing in the black press. In November 1930, for example, the *Courier* published a half-page interview with Julian, along with several large photographs of the parachutist and his brand-new plane. Despite its somewhat sarcastic tone, the article provided much-needed publicity for the Trinidadian (“Ethiopia Banishes Julian After Plane Crash”).

George S. Schuyler, however, found only critical words for Julian. In his November 8, 1930 column, Schuyler called Julian’s career a “sad commentary on the gullibility of most people,” as the parachutist’s name had been nowhere to be found on the recently-released lists of licensed pilots. Dubbing Julian the “Garvey of the air” and hinting at William J. Powell’s efforts in California, Schuyler lamented that “people like him can get applause and money while worthier individuals are practically starving to death” (“Views and Reviews”). In his column, Schuyler identified one of the main issues plaguing the black press’s coverage of black aviation. His assessment of Julian and the publicity he had garnered contextualizes Powell and his group’s valiant efforts which had been criticized and denigrated in the newspapers by jealous colleagues. Occasionally, the black press would not differentiate between honest, yet failed efforts to promote black aviation and con artists such as Julian. Harsh, critical, if not sarcastic tone would sometimes accompany reports, thereby casting a negative light on aviation crusaders, despite existing evidence of their honesty; whereas Julian’s dishonesty would bring him constant access to journalists.

As the aviation campaign was transformed into a full-fledged one by 1931 – with Powell, Julian, James, Peck, and other aviation crusaders filling the black newspapers’ pages – attention seemed to have turned to discussing who should be the role-model aviator to represent the African American community in recontextualizing existing stereotypes of black

America's alleged technological ineptitude and inability to fly. As a result, Julian's flamboyant style and rhetoric gradually came under scrutiny. He dominated the newspapers in 1931 as he travelled the country, giving parachuting and flying exhibitions to raise money for several of his proposed transatlantic flights. Powell was still planning to organize an air circus to show off the flyers from his Los Angeles-based group. Gradually, James also became black aviation's rising star and black journalists as well as readers of the black press could not but compare the three pilots and voice their opinions on who should represent the race.

Hubert Julian's activities and rhetoric were the exact opposite of Powell and James's humility – but they brought him much attention. In 1931, the *Courier* and the *Defender* published at least 15 articles on Julian combined, with the *NYAN* tallying 10 texts. The aviator planned another transatlantic flight to Ethiopia (“Black Eagle to Make Ocean Try Again, is Claim,” “If Hubert Julian Can Hop Three Ifs Then He'll Hop Ocean,” “3,000 See Julian in Stunt Flying”), India (“Julian Starts First of His Exhibition Flights”), or Rome, Italy (“Plans Long Air Voyage”). He was touring the country, fundraising for these flights (“Julian Seeks Funds for Fine Plane”), but never buying any plane as he was never able to raise enough money. But not only did he never raise enough funds – Julian also forfeited the money he had raised as a deposit for the numerous planes he had hoped to buy over the years. Although Julian did perform several exhibitions in front of considerable crowds, he neither bought a plane, nor flew outside of the United States; let alone across the ocean. And in seeking funds, Julian exploited the power of the black press when he took a *Courier* writer, and a supporter of his, Floyd J. Calvin, up in the air (“Calvin Taken for a Ride”). He did not hesitate to ask churchgoers for money, either, exploiting Chicago's reverend J.C. Austin's goodwill and interest in aviation (“Rev. Austin Takes Airplane Ride with Col. Hubert Julian”).

Although the tone of the newspaper coverage was somewhat mocking towards Julian, the black press constantly reported on Julian and his plans. Perhaps, journalists were hoping

to finally have a black pilot who would lead and represent the race's aviation progress as well as bridge the racial technological gap. But also, Julian had mastered the goodwill message of aviation. In August 1931, he received a commercial pilot license ("Col. Julian Passes Test for Pilot Rank"), having allegedly been a holder of an international pilot's license since 1924 ("Lieut. Herbert Julian Finally Receives His U.S. Aviator's License," "Julian Secures Pilot's License"). He was thus allowed to fly over and drop flowers during A'Lelia Walker's funeral rites ("Julian Drops Flowers from Airplane"). Walker had been one of Harlem's most influential figures and a patron of the Harlem Renaissance arts. Her salon, the Dark Tower, effectively functioned as a gathering place where Harlem's artists socialized with royalty as well as their Greenwich Village counterparts" (Hughes 177-8). Julian thereby associated himself with a beloved Harlem figure to boost his reputation, a tactic he had used with J.C. Austin in Chicago and would use with Powell in Los Angeles.

Julian even used Haile Selassie's name to promote his own flights and activities. On the occasion of his solo flight in Harlem to receive his new license in 1931, sponsored by the *NYAN* (Black Eagle in Air Carnival"), Julian provided an explanation – one of many – of what had happened in Ethiopia, from which he had been banished. Julian claimed that he had been asked to protect Selassie against rebellious tribes, even though he had allegedly "assured [Malaku E. Bayen, the emperor's envoy] that he had no compunctions about bombing anybody." Selassie, however, did not need Julian to protect him and rather employed aviation in an attempt to overpower opposition forces ("Col. Julian Passes Test for Pilot Rank," Tucker 184) Still, in presenting himself as the emperor's protector – and thereby a protector of the race that Ras Tafari represented – Julian, an immigrant, was trying to thrill the black public and its desire for an internationally-minded and -connected black pilot. A pilot skilled in combat. A pilot, who would finally erase the technological gap in aerial warfare.

In this way, Julian reminded the black press's readership that any black pilot's achievements had military connotations. One week after having received his license, he added that he wanted to "bring to the Negroes of the world the importance of aviation. [...] In time of war, we proved our worth in every branch of fighting except in aviation." Therefore, "in case of another war I should like to see them prepared for the emergency" ("Julian Starts First of His Exhibition Flights"). Julian's message was a combination of the Garveyite rhetoric of a race war and the racial technological gap, typical of the early aviation coverage in the black press. It was also decidedly transnational. Given his travels and experience in Ethiopia, Julian presented himself in black newspapers as the one pilot who had his race's best interests at heart, and who was willing to take his skills abroad and teach other people of color to fly and defend themselves. The fact that he was willing to bomb other people of color – as the colonial powers had been doing since the Great War – did not contradict his message of spreading the military gospel of aviation, but may have rather strengthened Julian's position as an aviator on par with white pilots skilled in combat. After all, it was the Ethiopian emperor himself, who had chosen him as an aerial bodyguard.

Although having Hubert Julian on the front pages of black newspapers may have been attractive for most readers, the reactions that the *Courier* received from some of its readers in 1931 suggest that Julian's message, as well as the newspaper's coverage of aviation, was not always received in kind and was considered unprofessional, verging on yellow journalism, by some. For example, John W. Greene, a Boston-based pilot, wrote a letter to the editor in October 1931. Greene later became Cornelius Coffey's National Airmen's Association's vice-president, opened in 1940 a widely successful aviation school at the Phelps Vocational School in Washington, D.C., and, after WWII, operated the Columbia Air Center, the nation's largest airfield owned and operated by African Americans (Gubert, Sawyer, Fannin 141-2). In his letter, Greene expressed doubts about Julian's claims, made in his interviews since 1924, that

the Trinidadian had been the first to receive a pilot's license. Greene also added that when the *Courier* had reported on Charles E. James as the second pilot to receive a license, the newspaper had not clarified what kind of license it was. Greene challenged the way that the *Courier* was reporting its aviation news and also tried to protect his own reputation as a pioneering aviator for it had been him – not Julian or James – who had become only the second black pilot to have received his commercial and transport pilot's license. To rectify the situation, he suggested that the newspaper carry a regular aviation column “with the senior pilot as editor” (“On Negro Pilots”). Although Greene⁴¹ thus acknowledged that the *Courier* was trying to run an aviation campaign, he sought for the paper to find a more accurate and effective way.

Other readers of the *Courier* also took issue with the way the newspaper had been informing on aviation, and on Hubert Julian in particular. An unidentified “transport pilot” wrote a letter to the editor in November 1931, in which he directly attacked Floyd J. Calvin, one of the newspaper's most famous journalists, for being biased in favor of Julian. Calvin had written a number of articles about Julian since 1924 and was perhaps the only journalist who had always promoted, rather than mocked, Julian's piloting skills and bold claims. The transport pilot explained in his letter that Julian's skills, as reported by Calvin, were negligible compared to many other black pilots who had not received as much attention as Julian. The letter called Julian a “ground flyer” and asserted that Calvin's preference for the inept Julian is an “injustice to the other pilots of your race, who are making the grade.” Let's hear of this guy,” ended the letter, “when he learns how!” (“On Julian”). A reaction to the letter came the following week, in which another reader opined that Julian had been “deceiving race folks by the simple expedient of taking advantage of our ignorance of things connected with aviation.” He also suggested that “it behooves us to rid ourselves, once and for all, of this unnecessary

⁴¹ In June, Greene sent another letter to the editor enumerating the initial investment he had had to put into learning to fly (“High Cost of Flying”).

evil, and this reflection of our intelligence” and asked for a senior pilot of color to write to the paper and explain how much of an impostor Julian was (“Another on Julian”). It seems that while the black public was willing to learn more about aviation and to celebrate black aviator’s achievements, it also desired its newspapers to be more conscientious and serious about the way they reported on the field. Finally, black aviators such as Greene and the mysterious transport pilot were taking it upon themselves – as had Powell – to address the black press directly and shape aviation’s goodwill message.

The *Courier*’s annoyed readers-aviators were joined by George S. Schuyler. In reaction to the news that Julian had finally received a pilot’s license, Schuyler quipped that “Julian should have done this years ago instead of going around fooling Negroes and white folks into backing him with coin of the republic.” Schuyler also reminded his readers that he had exposed Julian’s scam in the 1920s and expressed doubts whether Julian, newly licensed, would be able to fly, as he was again proposing, to Abyssinia – over 6,000 miles away – when the world’s distance record was 5,000 miles (“Views and Reviews”). Julian never stopped promising to undertake a transatlantic flight for the sake of his race and Schuyler reprimanded him again in 1932, opining that “it will be easier to believe this fledgling pilot can hop to the distant African country [of Ethiopia] if he will first fly from New York to Chicago or across the continent” (“Views and Reviews”).

Schuyler’s latter comment came on the heels of two long-distance flights announced by Julian in 1932. Julian had attended William Powell’s air circus in December 1931 and, perhaps realizing how much attention Powell was still receiving from the press and how much a successful transcontinental flight would mean for the propagation of black aviation and himself, the Trinidadian proposed a transcontinental flight with Powell in February (“Plan Transatlantic Flight”). In April, Julian proposed a transatlantic flight to India, with Powell as a navigator: he was hoping to bring a bale of cheese cloth with him as a gift for Mahatma

Gandhi (“Col. Julian and Partner Plan Flight to India,” “Julian Names Aids for Hop Over Sea”). The latter article provided biographical information on both flyers, stating that Powell was a “War Vet.” Julian was again proving his promotional skills: not only did he propose a flight to a people of color, but he also planned to meet a famous world leader of color – thereby presenting himself as a messenger of goodwill and aviation’s apostle – and prove that black veterans could now fly long-distance and challenge their white colleagues. Exploiting the symbiosis between black aviators and the black press, he had also christened one of his planes “Pgh. Courier” (“Julian to Name Plane Phg. Courier”). As previously with Julian, however, no flight ever took place.

Between 1932 and 1935, others ventured on historic long-distance flights – and, as before, Julian exploited their popularity in the black press. He proposed a goodwill flight to Montreal in July 1933, another non-stop flight to India, and another one to Aden in September, naming his unpaid-for plane “Abyssinia,” thus again invoking Pan-African sentiments in his audience. In another article for the *Defender*, Julian’s plane was named “The Haile Selassie, King of Kings” (“Christens Julian’s Plane,” “Col. Julian to Make Good-will Flight,” “Colonel Hubert Julian Prepares for His Sea Flight,” “Colonel Julian May Fly the Atlantic,” “Julian Back from Boston Flight,” “Christens Julian’s Plane”). As can be gleaned from the newspaper headlines, Julian was also invoking his military credentials as a “colonel” from his alleged service as “air minister” under Ethiopia’s Haile Selassie. In May 1934, the *Courier* announced another one of Julian’s proposed flights with the mocking title “Chanting His Annual Song!” and in June it carried a brief text informing that Julian was, once again, raising funds for his flight (“Black Eagle Appeals for Donations of 5 Gallons of Gas”). As others were filling the pages of black newspapers with their successful goodwill trips, Julian, again, borrowed from his successful colleagues and was making Schuyler’s criticism and mockery ring true.

Despite never delivering on his bold promises, Julian's escapades had been constantly reported in the black press, because – as he proved with Bessie Coleman's goodwill message – Julian could package and market other flyers' words better than their original authors. When Albert E. Forsythe and Charles A. Anderson announced in 1934 that they were bringing goodwill letters to the people in Pan-American countries, Julian pounced on the idea. He proposed to “carry several hundred pounds of mail aboard his large black and gold monoplane [...] on his flight to Ethiopia this summer.” The letters would “be sent by his people here in America to the kingdom of Abyssinia as a message of good will and friendship.” Finally, the letters would be backstamped in Ethiopia and “each piece of mail will be handsomely engraved and will bear the autograph of the famous Black Eagle,” effectively serving the function of “souvenirs of Colonel Julian's flight” (“Colonel Hubert Julian to Carry Good Will Letters on Hop to Abyssinia”). Julian's “annual song,” to borrow the *Courier's* phrase, kept black aviation in the black press and his inability – or unwillingness – to turn his proposals into actions eventually highlighted the honesty, hard work, and dedication of other, less famous black pilots such as Powell, Banning, Forsythe, Anderson, and, ultimately, also John C. Robinson. Julian's role as a foil would become most apparent in his second embarrassing engagement in Ethiopia, followed by Robinson's heroics.

Since Julian had occupied the front pages of the black press since 1922 and had proposed a flight to Ethiopia or Liberia on numerous occasions, he may have become in many black readers' eyes the face of black aviation combined with Pan-African worldview. That might explain why a letter to the *Courier* in March 1935, as tensions between Italy and Ethiopia were rising, inquired if “there is a fund or committee for the purpose of raising money to build an Ethiopian air force” and proposed that “all we need is some good man to start the fund and lead an expedition to our homeland. I would say that Colonel H. Julian would be the man, for he is our greatest colored pilot” (“Italy's Greed”). By that point in

1935, Julian had been already on his way to Ethiopia (“Julian Arrives in London on Way to Ethiopia,” “Julian Not Hailed by Haile Selassie”).⁴² In April, the *Defender* even announced that Julian had escorted “the largest shipment of arms ever received in the African Empire” from Czechoslovakia (“Convoy”), while the *Courier* claimed one week later that Julian “got a cool reception” upon arrival in Addis Ababa, “carrying two bags crammed with pictures of planes he hopes to sell the government” (“Italy Ready for Peace; Africa Mobilizes Men, Women for Hostilities,” “Julian Not Hailed by Haile Selassie”). Since Czech and Slovak military historians deny the fact that a planned consignment of weapons for Ethiopia ever left the country because of France and Britain’s embargo (Chmiel 48), it may be assumed that Julian was once again merely playing to the black readership’s hopes of black American volunteers aiding Ethiopia in a meaningful way.

Despite his reputation and history in Ethiopia, however, Julian stayed in East Africa for several months, receiving positive coverage especially in the *Defender* and the *NYAN*. In July, he gained Ethiopian citizenship and thus became eligible to sign up for military duty (“Julian Becomes Ethiopian Citizen,” “Julian Reported Again in Air Corps”). As late as November 1935, the *Defender* published a photograph of “Colonel Julian, American air ace” assigned “the duty of training men for aerial service (“Ethiopia Prepares to Take to the Skies”). In mid-August, as war was in the air, Julian cabled to the *Courier* that “patriotism [is] at fever heat and Ethiopia is ready.” The country’s “military plans [are] cloaked in secrecy but American Negroes can feel assured that unpleasant surprises [are] awaiting invading army,” informed the Trinidadian. Along with acquiring an unspecified role in the Ethiopian army, then, Julian began to effectively work as a reporter for the black press, promising that “additional articles and pictures [were] on the way” (“Hubert Julian Cables the Courier”).

⁴² Despite Julian’s forced departure from Ethiopia in 1930, his wife traveled repeatedly to work as a social worker in the East African country (“Brooklyn Societies and Clubs”).

It was John C. Robinson's reporting for the Associated Negro Press and his flying skills that eventually ended Hubert Julian's sojourn in Ethiopia. Not only was Julian no longer needed as a source of information about the happenings in the country, but his inability to teach and perform flying tasks were gradually exposed by Robinson and in the black press. When Robinson "sent home a story [in August 1935] in which he had discounted Colonel Julian's activities in Ethiopia in disparaging terms," claims William R. Scott, Julian attacked Robinson and was consequently demoted and replaced by Robinson as the Commander of the Air Force (225-6). A letter in the *Courier* mocked Julian as a "runner-up to Baron Munchausen" ("On Julian"), and George S. Schuyler devoted his entire column in early September to Julian's career, noting that while the demoted Julian "is now drilling Ethiopian infantry recruits in the remote Wallaga region, [...] John C. Robinson [...] is flying over Addis Ababa every day in one of the emperor's best airplanes and electrifying the populace with his ability" ("Views and Reviews").

Although Julian later claimed in the *Defender* that he had "personally asked His Majesty to place me in an infantry command instead of aviation where I was a mere servant to a French flying expert" ("Col. Julian Restored to King's Favor"), he left Ethiopia in November 1935 in disgrace ("Julian Quits Ethiopia," "Col. Julian Leaves Ethiopia for U.S."). The *Defender* published a short fictional story on Julian entitled "Black Star," in which the Trinidadian "fights, bleeds and dies for Ethiopia, but in doing so covers himself in glory" and in December, the paper reported that Julian had written a 68-page manuscript entitled "Why I Resigned from the Abyssinian Army" in which he was ready to tell of "Ethiopian horrors" ("Colonel Julian Has Story"). The *Courier's* "The World This Week," probably authored by Schuyler, summarized Julian's brief career in Ethiopia most aptly, when it quipped that "he never succeeded in getting higher off the ground than a mule's back." Meanwhile, "Colonel John C. Robinson, a Negro who is a real aviator and a credit to his race [...] achieved high

place in the Ethiopian air force. [...] Julian will soon be back here collecting for another flight.” Julian’s more than a decade-long role as a foil set the scene for Robinson’s emergence.

While Robinson’s glory covered the pages of black newspapers in 1936, Julian was deemed “another Benedict Arnold.” It was reported that he had allegedly made a deal with the Italian consul in London to give damaging statements about Ethiopia in return for money (“Julian Sold Out for \$1,250, Alleged”). Julian was even preparing a tour around the US, in which he would make pro-Italian statements – but was barred from one such proposed event by the Boston Urban League (“Ask Hub Mayor to Bar Julian”). In late February, Schuyler reprinted a letter from Charles Diggs, an American doctor living in Paris, who claimed that “Julian is a disgrace to the color of his skin. He is here trying to sell some documents [from Ethiopia] to the highest bidder” (“Views and Reviews”). Finally, in March 1936, the *Courier*’s J.A. Rogers reported that he had “yet to hear a single Ethiopian, European or American, say a good word for Julian,” who was, along with Ras Gugsa, a defector, among the most hated men in the country (“Ethiopia Glad to be Rid of Julian”).

Increasingly ludicrous reports appeared in the black press about Julian from 1937 on – few related to aviation, however. In October 1937, the *Courier* announced that, according to the Department of Commerce and despite his numerous proposed flights, Hubert Julian was listed under a student’s license only (“10 Race Women, 93 Men Qualify as Aviators”). Despite that, Julian had appeared on NBC radio in May and in Harlem with an Egyptian princess in December, having failed to join the Chinese Air force as he had promised in October (“Negro Flier on Ripley Program,” “Dashing Colonel Julian Returns with Corpse, Princess and Monocle,” “Julian, with Monocle and Princess, Back in Harlem,” “Black Eagle Julian is Hurt,” “Black Eagle Hurts Arm,” “In U.S. Again”). After 1937, Julian turned from

an aviator crusader to a globetrotter, whose military escapades entertained black America for a few more decades. The Ethiopian fiasco effectively ended his aviation career.

Over the course of fifteen years, Julian had been instrumental in forming and loudly voicing black aviation's goodwill message – often with military overtones – and its international dimension. One can trace black America's longing for black aviators to finally fly abroad to Julian's incessant proclamations as the Trinidadian repeatedly held air circuses, exhibitions, and fundraisers to promote his proposed hops to other continents. Harlem was air-minded in the 1920s and the early 1930s in part because of Julian's omnipresence in the black press and at the borough's social events. Julian represented one of the many notorious figures of the Harlem Renaissance era as his endeavors brought fame to black aviation, but also cast doubt on there ever being a successful and earnest black aviator. Although Julian provides a perfect study in the ways in which the black press symbiotically worked with black aviators on campaigning for black aviation, it must be noted that his (in)actions overshadowed and partially hindered black aviation's progress – benefactors and patrons often sought publicity and, for a long time, Julian seemed to be the best investment for them despite his repeated failures.

3.6.2. Flying Haiti

In the end, it was a Haiti-born immigrant aviator, previously unknown to the readers of the *Courier* and the *Defender* but a well-known name in Harlem, who advanced black aviation and its goodwill message with an international long-distance flight. The *Courier* announced Leon Desire Paris's⁴³ flight from New York to Haiti in mid-March with a photograph of the pilot in full gear and an article explaining that the aviator had been hand-picked by William H. Davis, the owner of the *New York Amsterdam News*. The text by Floyd J. Calvin described

⁴³ Spelling of the name varies across newspapers and monographs – Paris, Parris, or Parrish – but Haitian newspapers confirm that the surname is Paris.

Paris's credentials, the technical details of his plane, and mentioned that Davis was insisting that Paris first undertake a test flight from New York to Washington and to Pittsburgh ("Harlem Publisher Backs Cross-Country Hop"). Davis had previously sponsored Charles E. James's career and had bought a plane for his newspaper. Since James had gone a different route – touring the country with exhibition flights and lectures – Davis had to invest in another flyer. First, he invested in Julian, but since the Trinidadian's plans failed, Davis decided to back another migrant from the West Indies. Paris began his hop on April 6 and reached Cuba probably on April 24 or 25 ("Paris Reaches Cuba in Flight to Haiti"). He then reached Port-Au-Prince at the end of the month and Haiti declared a three-day national holiday in honor of the historic accomplishment ("Aviator Arrives in Haiti"). Since Paris's journey had been planned to span 2,626 miles, the Haitian became the first successful long-distance and international black aviator in history.

Haitians were closely connected with New York, especially with Harlem and its residents of color. As Mary A. Renda points out, some of the most recognized Harlem Renaissance figures such as Arthur Schomburg, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Katherine Dunham, Jacob Lawrence, or Zora Neale Hurston "mined the riches of Haitian culture and history for their work" (20) during the Harlem Renaissance. Although little is known about the volume of Haitians' immigration to the United States prior to 1932, according to Michel S. Laguerre, "the first significant group of Haitian migrants, about 500 upper-class urban families, came to the United States in the 1920s (23). Between 1932 and 1950, only 5,544 Haitians immigrated to the US (Levinson, *Ember* 228). The Haitian community, residing mainly in New York, was thus very small, especially compared to the other groups of West Indian immigrants. By 1924, when the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act came into effect, "U.S. residents of West Indian birth or derivation numbered more than 300,000 (Parker 100). Despite their low numbers, Haitians were active in organizing clubs, groups, and businesses

such as the Haitian Afro-American Chamber of Commerce, Utilities d'Haiti, or the Haitian-American Craftsman Club, Inc. ("Haitian Treasury Secretary Honored by Harlem Leaders," "Expect Big Crowd at Paris Meeting"). Haitians thus played an integral part in the social and political life in Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s, because as the support of various Harlem-based organizations, such as the Elks, for Paris' flight indicates, the cooperation between the West Indian and African American communities was alive and well.

Ever since the establishment of the Republic of Haiti in 1804, black Americans had been fascinated by the first black republic. It became a destination for at least 7,000 black Americans in the 19th century alone and was hailed as both "a model of governance, prosperity, and refinement" (Yingling 3, *Contrary Destinies* 13-14) as well as "the keeper of liberty in the New World" (*Haitians and African Americans* 102). During the U.S. occupation of the island, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, and James Weldon Johnson, among others, railed repeatedly against U.S. colonialism. The NAACP, along with the black press, supported Stenio Vincent, the opposition leader, in his successful presidential bid in 1930 (Plummer 139, *Haitians and African Americans* 110-17, Suggs 73, Putnam 60-61). DuBois, who had familial roots in Haiti, reacted in *The Crisis* immediately after the US Marines invaded Haiti in 1915. Calling Haiti "almost the sole modern representative of a great race of men among the nations," he exhorted his readers that "American Negroes, to a much larger extent than they realize, are not only blood relatives to the West Indians but under deep obligations to them [since] without the Haitian Revolt, there would have been no emancipation in America as early as 1863." He explained that due to the U.S. intervention, "the anarchy in Hayti is no worse than the anarchy in the United States at the time of our Civil War" and that "the lynching and murder in Port-au-Prince is no worse than, if not as bad as,

the lynching in Georgia” (quoted in *Haitians and African Americans* 104).⁴⁴ African Americans, Haitian emigres, and Haitians cooperated throughout the 1920s and early 1930s on achieving the deoccupation of Haiti and the transfer of power from the Marines to the Haitians. Dantes Bellegarde, Haiti’s ambassador to the US, vowed, upon arrival to Washington in 1930, to “bring about the military and financial liberation of Haiti” (*Haitians and African Americans* 125).

Paris’s flight thus held a deeply symbolic meaning. Although the *New York Times* reported in late March 1932 that Harlem had a new flying ace planning a trip to Haiti, the article failed to highlight the significance of Paris’ flight (“Harlem’s New Ace Ready for Flight”). The black press, on the other hand, namely the *NYAN*, which sponsored Paris along with the *Negro World*, as well as the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*, informed on Paris extensively. Paris first appeared in the *NYAN* in a 1928 announcement of a play called “The Glory of Our Race” being put on by the Hayitian Progressive Club (“Haytians in the Drama Here”). In 1930, the same paper reported that there were two Haitian student pilots in New York, studying and training at Roosevelt Field in Long Island; the legendary airfield would later become the hub of black aviators in the 1930s (“Two Young Haitians Take to Air”). Afro-Caribbeans, among them Haitians, were often considered and framed as a model minority (Johnson 80), and so it was no surprise when the *NYAN* followed up on Paris’s success story in August 1930 as he earned his pilot’s license (“Gets Wings”); and one year later when Paris performed stunts at an air circus alongside more seasoned African American aviators such as James, Greene, and Daughtry (“2,000 View Circus Staged at Airport”).

While Paris never expressed his desire to fly to Haiti in the first interviews for the black press, he did propose in December 1931 a hop to his native country. Unlike Hubert

⁴⁴ DuBois here uses the traditional Taino designation for the island, indicating that the island’s history is fraught with the legacy of slavery, colonization, and imperialism even in its very name.

Julian, another West Indian pilot, Paris was serious about his flight. In March 1932, he was quoted in the *NYAN* as saying “I won’t say much; I won’t promise anything – but all I know is that you can depend on me” (“Group Lauds Paris for Proposed Hop”). According to the *Defender*, Paris’s ambition was to “establish friendly relations between this country and Haiti” and he also “wished to demonstrate the performance value of trained race pilots” (“Hail New York Flyer on Good Will Trip to Haiti”). This was especially necessary given the sensationalist and exoticizing discourse of Haiti in the U.S. due to the American occupation of the country (Renda 21).

In December 1931, Paris had helped establish the International Colored Aero Association (ICAA) along with Leon F. Desportes, who would later become member of the Committee for Ethiopia, led by Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., in 1935; thereby demonstrating the connections and cooperation between Africa-descended people in the United States (“Ethiopia Seeks Negro Doctors”). The ICAA’s objectives were to back Paris’ flight and to “encourage men and women to play a part in aviation as navigators, pilots, mechanics and instructors.” The group also planned to establish scholarships to help aviation students and Paris was hoping that with the help of the organization, “a commercial air transportation company” consisting of black staff could be eventually established (“Aero Organization Begins at Meeting”). In other words, Paris shared the aviation campaign’s emphasis on education and proposed a business and civil right vision of an all-black company later promoted by Powell and Robinson. The Haitian was thus a true aviation crusader, rectifying the reputation that Julian had given to immigrant aviators.

In March 1932, a photograph of Paris in full gear in front of his new plane appeared along with articles in several black papers, detailing the 2,452-mile long “army route” that Paris was planning to take (“Leon Paris Will Make Flight to Haiti,” “Harlem Publisher Backs Cross-Country Hop”). A social gathering in honor of Paris later in March was advertised by

the Haitian-American Craftsmen Club, Inc. and attended by the Honorable Lucien Lafontant, Haiti's consul-general to the United States ("Invitation"). Paris was also being backed by the Elks, for whom he flew over Harlem in late March ("Group Lauds Paris for Proposed Hop"). Unlike Charles Lindbergh's goodwill flight to the West Indies, Paris's hop was financially humble and low-key. Instead of a non-stop flight, Paris was planning to fly to Haiti in several short trips. He was also self-funding his adventure, although numerous black trade organizations collected almost \$50 for Paris and gifted him a parachute.

Paris's humble means notwithstanding, his flight was implicitly compared in the black press to Lindbergh's groundbreaking feats. During his allegedly goodwill flights between 1928 and 1932, Charles Lindbergh surveyed the Caribbean for Pan Am's planned expansion into the region. Also, in the context of the United States' foreign policy towards the Caribbean, Lindbergh's success and fame allowed the U.S. diplomacy and businesses to present dominance in commercial aviation in the region as progress rather than power, and "hegemony as neighborly friendship" (Van Vleck 78). However, while it is a fact that Lindbergh's goodwill flight and the subsequent rise of the Pan American Airways drove the ascendance of the United States as aerial power and the aviation craze among Americans, the Caribbean's "transportation backwardness" remained unresolved (Salvatore 680). In the case of Haiti, Lindbergh's visit only led to the modification of the Marine's military airfields into hubs for civilian air travel but had little effect on the development of aviation among the general Haitian population.

During his goodwill flight, the mainstream newspapers had likened Lindbergh to Christopher Columbus, a conqueror and discoverer of new lands. Similarly, as Paris's flight neared, black newspapers began to focus on the name of Paris's plane, Toussaint L'Ouverture, titled after Haiti's legendary anti-colonial leader. The tone of reports and articles highlighted the revolutionary act, symbolized by the plane's name, of a black Haitian pilot

flying to his still-occupied homeland and defying the United States' control over the Haitian skies ("Group Lauds Paris for Proposed Hop," "N.Y. Aviator Plans Haiti Hop," "Throng at Dedication of Airship"). In essence then, the black press designated Paris as black Lindbergh and depicted him as a liberator of the air and a conqueror of a technology previously associated with and dominated by white aviators. He was bringing to his homeland the gospel of aviation as well as its military potential. Paris's flight can thus be read as liberation of Haiti from the US aerial power. Paris arrived in Haiti accompanied by a Pan-American mail plane at a time when Pan-Am was expanding its "empire of the air" (Roorda 270) and with a white *co-pilot*. In other words, he showed that a black man could pilot a plane the same way American occupants had done. Moreover, he arrived in a plane named after a Haitian leader who, too, had previously mastered warfare, an art in which white colonizers had also been believed to have an upper hand over the colonized.

Upon arrival in Haiti, Paris – like Lindbergh before him – was received with military honors. He was welcomed by Haiti's *chef de guerre*, paraded around the statue of Jean Jacques Dessalines, one of the founding fathers of the Republic of Haiti, had a street as well as a sporting arena named after him, and was invited to the Parliament, the Presidential palace, and celebrated at numerous festive events (Bernard 156, "Fete en L'honneur de L'Aviateur Paris," "L'Aviateur Paris," "Soirée Desiré Paris," "Le Festival de Samedi Soir," "Propos Humides," "La Chambre et Desire Paris," "La Reception de L'aviateur Leon D. Paris"). Early newspaper reports also let Paris describe his flight in much detail and with technical terminology so as to showcase his expertise – his subsequent exhibition flights around Haiti then confirmed the ever-spreading legend of his skills ("Paris Survole Jacmel," "L'aviateur Paris sur Jacmel"). Along with his technical, mechanical, piloting, and navigating skills, Haitian papers also praised Paris's patriotism as he was promoting aviation across the island; as well as his race consciousness in emphasizing the importance of success in aviation

for his people's racial pride ("L'aviateur Paris sur Jacmel"). Haitian president Stenio Vincent even received a letter of congratulations from J.A. Rogers and other supporters and donors from the ICAA, in which Paris was recognized as a hero for all Africa-descended people ("Le Courrier des Etats-Unis et L'aviateur Paris").

Paris was most interested in promoting aviation in Haiti through education, echoing the black press's goodwill message and expanding it internationally. In interviews for *Le Nouvelliste* and *Le Matin*, the aviator explained that along with its anti-imperialist message, the name of his plane also symbolized Haiti's entrance into the aviation age. Paris saw his success in aviation as a sign of his country's progress, prosperity, and dignity. Consequently, he expressed hope to establish the country's first aviation school as an "indispensable" part of Haiti's future independent army and later began calling for the establishment of a full-fledged Haitian air force ("Interview de F.D. Paris," "Un Quart d'Heure," "L'aviateur Paris Nous Visite"). In reaction, *Le Nouvelliste's* editorial staff began to lobby for Paris to be promoted to the rank of Colonel; especially since Lindbergh, too, had been promoted by the US Army after his goodwill flights ("La Modestie de Desire F. Paris"). Paris thus brought black aviation's complete goodwill message with him: education, international cooperation, and military employment played a central role in Paris's vision for the Haitian revolution in aviation.

Paris's ambitions – supported financially and later at least verbally by his New York-based donors – were symbolic of as well as a reaction to the political situation in Haiti in 1932. The aviator arrived on the island at a moment when his homeland was in the process of Haitinization, or transfer of power to Haitians. Various administrative departments, including the military, were being transferred to Haitian officials, which would pave the way for Haiti to become a sovereign, self-governing nation again by August 1934. For Paris – and the opposition newspapers supporting him – to lobby for the establishment of a Haitian air force

went beyond mere transfer of power from the US colonial government to Haitian bureaucrats and elites. It was a declaration of power; an attempt at reversal of Lindbergh's demonstration of US imperial and technological dominance during his flights in the late 1920s. It was also a direct challenge to the Marines' control of Haitian airfields and air space. To confirm its radical stance towards the US occupation and its support of Paris's visions for Haitian aviation, *Le Nouvelliste* published a series of editorials in mid-May of 1932, in which it urged Vincent to establish an aviation school within the Haitian military as soon as possible. Drawing from a seventeen-year experience with the occupation and acknowledging the fact that the Dominican Republic, Haiti's neighbor, was rapidly building an air force, the newspaper stressed the crucial role of aviation for Haiti's future defense and independence ("Que Fait-on de Paris," "Ce Qu'il Faudrait Faire pour Leon D. Paris," "Il Faut des Actes").

At first, the Haitian government embraced aviation. On May 20, 1932, Paris was named first lieutenant in Garde d'Haiti and was assigned the task to organize an aviation school ("Dans le Theatre," "Le Lieutenant Desire Paris," "Desire Paris est Nommé Premier Lieutenant"). Enthusiastically, *Le Matin* then proclaimed him the first Haitian military pilot; a man in charge of Haiti's air flotilla, who will integrate an aviation unit into the country's military, and train Haiti's future pilots ("Propos Humides"). However, despite the official ceremonies of putting Paris in charge of the aviation unit of the Garde d'Haiti, the government never delivered on its promises. There was confusion whether Paris's position was even real or mere sham. Finally, in late May, Paris announced that he was leaving the country, disgusted, and disenchanted with its politics and inactivity in aviation matters ("Leon Desire Paris," "Leon Desire Paris s'en Va"). The *Courier* confirmed Paris's planned return to the US in its July 30 issue ("Aviator Paris Will Come Back"). With dreams of ushering Haiti into the aviation age crushed, Paris, on leave of absence from the Garde d'Haiti, arrived in

New York in October 1932. As the *NYAN* quipped in its report, the aviator's future plans – much like the development of Haiti's aviation – remained “uncertain” (“Airman Returns”).

In the end, Paris's plans could never take off, because he had to deal with conditions similar to those that black pilots faced in the United States. He had to rely on himself as the Haitian government was reluctant to invest in developing an aviation unit within its military despite the process of Haitinization. Although the *NYAN* reported in 1935 that Paris became a lieutenant at the local *École Militaire* and was named “director of the Haitian Military Aviation School” (“Aviator Paris Will Come Back to United States,” “Heads Flyers,” “Airman Returns”), no other sources confirm this piece of information. In fact, Paris would disappear from the Haitian and U.S. press after 1935. He died, forgotten, in New York in 1983 (Bernard, Damas, Dejoie 157).

In existing seminal monographs dealing with black aviation, Paris's flight has been relegated to a brief note; the Haitian is merely mentioned in passing and his story has never been told in detail. As this dissertation uncovers and presents here, however, Paris's flight represents not only the first successful achievement in black aviators' ambitions to fly abroad, but also functions as a tangible, but largely forgotten, example of the vigorous cultural exchange and political cooperation among black America, migrant groups in Harlem, and West Indian countries themselves during the Harlem Renaissance. The historic flight demonstrates black aviation's potential for encouraging anti-colonial and anti-imperial sentiments and promoting black inter- and trans-nationalism. Aviation helped erase or at least bridge distances between black America and other nations and peoples of color in the Americas. Finally, Paris himself is a testament to the crucial role played by West Indian migrants in the rich cultural, social, and political life of the Harlem Renaissance.

Individual Haitian flyers tried following in Leon Paris's footsteps and went to study in the United States. In 1936, the *NYAN* reported that Ernst Rey, a 19-year old son of the municipal medical director of Port-au-Prince, had earned a private pilot's license in Texas ("Gets Wings"). Then, in May 1937, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *NYAN* carried the photographs of Capt. Duly Lamothe, district military commander of the Haitian National Guard at Jeremie, and Lieut. Edouard Roy of the Haitian National Guard, who was pursuing a two-year aviation course at Roosevelt Field in Long Island; just like Leon Paris ("To Study," "When Soldiers Meet"). The two students were popular guests at Harlem parties and made headlines quarreling over a "charming Harlem widow" ("Swing Music Goes to Haiti," "Haitian Army Officer Decorated with a Black Eye"). It is unclear what happened to Lamothe, but in 1938, Edouard Roy repeated Paris's feat and flew from New York to Port-au-Prince, solo. ("Haitian Birdman Weds Rich Texan"). Upon his arrival, Roy was named the "black Lindbergh," thereby replacing the memory of a legendary white aviator with a fresh image of Haiti's very own flying ace. ("Haitian Air Force"). A few years later, Roy completed Paris's decade-old mission by becoming the first head of Haiti's air force. Finally, in 1943, the *Baltimore Afro-American* reported on two graduates of the Haitian Ecole Militaire and one former mechanic in the Haitian Air Force, who had all become part of the Tuskegee Airmen. Sgt. Raymond Cassagnol, Lieut. Philippe Celestin, Lieut. Alix Pasquet were depicted in their military uniforms and short profiles of their education were given ("3 Haitians Learning to Fly"). In the end, five Haiti-born pilots graduated from the Tuskegee program: Ludovic Audant, Cassagnol, Eberle Guilbaud, Nicolas Pelissier, and Pasquet⁴⁵ ("Tuskegee Airmen Pilot Listing").

Paris's achievement also inspired other black aviators in the United States and launched a new era in black aviation history. In covering Paris's flight, the *Defender*

⁴⁵ Pasquet died in 1958 during a coup attempt against Haiti's dictator, Francois Duvalier (Heinl 439).

introduced a new term in its aviation coverage; one that would become a catchphrase for any future *bona fide* flights by black pilots: the goodwill flight. While it was during the 1920s and the early 1930s that the goodwill message of aviation in the black press had been formed, the term goodwill flight seems to have been used first in reports on Paris; perhaps because of Paris's success. Indeed, it was not an original term, as Charles Lindbergh has used it for his cross-country tour in 1927. At any rate, black good will flights became an extension of what has been termed a good will message here – in essence, they were intended to spread the message of the importance of aviation education and job opportunities opening in the field to people of color around the United States and, possibly, abroad. Once Paris had succeeded and thus defined what a goodwill flight in terms of black aviation was and demonstrated what type of effect and reaction it may engender, the black press would consequently label all successful flights by black pilots as good will ones.

3.6.3 Writing the First Transcontinental Flight and Erasing Another Boundary

The first transcontinental flight by black aviators, carried out in late 1932, was also called a goodwill one by the black press. Coming mere months after Paris's historic success and the recent death of Charles E. James, it received considerable coverage in the black press. Especially so in the *Courier* during Robert L. Vann's mission to persuade black America to switch its allegiance to the Democratic party and its presidential candidate, Franklin Delano Roosevelt – the aviators even dropped fliers supporting Roosevelt over towns in Pennsylvania. During the fall of 1932, black newspapers brimmed with ecstatic articles and essays on African Americans' future in aviation and the promise that Roosevelt's election – or Herbert Hoover's end – would hold for African Americans. For, on September 21, 1932, James Herman Banning, pilot, and Thomas C. Allen, mechanic, took off from Los Angeles – and landed nineteen days later at Roosevelt Field, Long Island (Jakeman 665, Broadnax 18, Scott and Womack 37-8), completing the first transcontinental flight by black pilots.

The city edition of the *Courier* did not announce the beginning of the flight until October 1, when it briefly informed on page four that Banning and Allen were attempting to “scan the country in record time” (“Fliers Heads East on Record Hop”). One week later, however, in “Daring Aviators Near Goal,” the paper reported on the flight with two large photographs, all-capital headlines, and a detailed article. According to the text, the aviators were flying 75m/h and were backed by no organization. The *Courier*’s reporter accompanied by Robert L. Vann, nicknamed Banning and Allen the “sun-tanned editions of the Lindy of yesteryear” as well as the “glorious hoboies of the uncharted skies;” hence the flyers’ nickname “The Flying Hobos.” The following week’s front page included another large photograph of the two flyers and a large headline “Aviators End First Cross-Country Flight.” The *Courier* informed that the hop had spanned 3,613 miles, 41 hours and 27 minutes of actual flying time and that, upon landing, the aviators received “the conqueror’s welcome.” The flyers made history and the *Courier* was ecstatic with praise and superlatives, employing the language previously used in white newspapers’ coverage of Lindbergh’s achievements.

Banning and Allen would be featured on the pages of the *Courier* until March 1933⁴⁶ as the newspaper hoped to take advantage of the historic feat and draw in more readers than the *Defender*, which severely lagged in the coverage of the first transcontinental flight. The *Courier*’s theater and screen page, for example, provided a list of the events that Banning and Allen had attended in Harlem after their arrival, the people they had met, and the praise that had been heaped upon them. Among others, they had met Captain Edison McVey, Hubert Julian’s former pilot, member of UNIA’s flying corps, and the *Negro World*’s aviation columnist; William H. Davis of the *NYAN*, perhaps black aviation’s most generous benefactor, and Cab Calloway, a regular performer at Harlem’s legendary Cotton Club

⁴⁶ Lonnie Bunch claims that the aviators wrote their texts for the paper for nine weeks. Rather, evidence suggests that texts about the aviators *as well as* their serial featured in the *Courier* for nine weeks.

(“Newsy Newsettes”). Floyd J. Calvin celebrated the flight by exclaiming that “it is certainly wholesome and stimulating to know that we have heroes who have come to light in the very worst of times” (“Calvin’s Digest”), underscoring the fact that Banning and Allen had had to rely on other, often white people’s generosity in providing them with fuel and food on their journey because of the Great Depression.

To capitalize even more on the image of the two heroes that the paper itself had been fostering – employing the most crusading of tones during its coverage – and to provide the flyer’s old plane with a new engine for their return trip, the *Courier* invited the aviators to perform in Pittsburgh in November (“Noted Aviators in Exhibition at Bettis Airport”). The performance was successful, the refurbished airplane was named “The Spirit of the *Pittsburgh Courier*” in reference to Charles Lindbergh’s legendary plane, and some of the paper’s staff even ventured to take a plane ride in an effort to promote aviation (“Banning, Allen to Fly Courier Plane at Game,” “Coast to Coast Aviator Thrills Hundreds,” “Up in the Air”).

More importantly, though, the *Courier* saw an opportunity to bolster its sales and promote black aviation even further when it announced that on October 22, the paper would begin publishing an exclusive serialized account of the “epochal flight” (“Advertisement”). Along with giving interviews for articles about their flight, Banning and Allen would thus also become writers of aviation for a short period of time, taking the baton from Powell and Peck, and would shape the goodwill message of aviation directly. The four-part serial “Coast-to-Coast, Via the Aerial Highways” assumed a similar tone and purpose as James Holt Peck’s three essays in 1930: relating the beauty and thrill of flying to the reader. Banning and Allen began each text by welcoming its readers, inviting them into the cockpit, and then proceeded to describe individual parts of the trip in first person as if they had been explaining it to a co-passenger onboard of the plane. The four texts presented flying as a safe and enjoyable activity which required complex training. In the end, though, it was worth it, Banning and

Allen seemed to be saying. Even more importantly, the narrative showcased the flyers' technical, mechanical, as well as flying skills. Despite numerous forced landings and technical difficulties, the flyers' ingenuity and creativity allowed them to continue their flight, eventually land in New York, and relate their experience to the black public.⁴⁷ The texts served as a gripping recontextualization – written by black writers themselves – of the myth that black flyers could achieve anything ground-breaking in the field of aviation, while the overall newspaper coverage transvalued their poverty and lack of funds into a heroic tale of aviation crusaders.

The essays must have been a success – reaching perhaps more than a quarter of a million black readers (Scott and Womack 37). As a result, the *Courier* commissioned Banning to write two more pieces for the paper later in November and December, again advertising the texts' exclusivity (“The Day I Sprouted Wings Advertisement”). Banning's December essay on his early flying days was an exciting short story of trials and errors before he could fly solo (“The Day I Sprouted Wings”). His “The Negro and the Airplane,” however, assumed a much more critical tone than the essays he had co-authored with Allen. Likening his profession to African American soldiers, scientists, and laborers, Banning presented aviation as a serious endeavor and explained that aviation constituted yet another step in the rapid development of transportation. With only ten licensed pilots, Banning said, the position of the African American community “in the new industry [is] relegated to the rear.” Most importantly, he exhorted his readers to decide whether they were going to “match [black aviators'] skills with our dollars or [...] joke at the efforts.” In conclusion, he asked “Are our pilots going to fly crates or airplanes?”

⁴⁷ Jack Lynn rewrote the story into *Hallelujah Flight* (1989), based on Thomas C. Allen's personal account as well as various newspaper clippings.

In berating his readers for lack of support of their community's progress, Banning was deploying one of the oldest tropes in black press' coverage of aviation: decrying lack of funding. It also highlighted the fact that black aviators were representing the race to the rest of the world. Written at the end of November, the essay's pointed critique was perhaps the result of Banning and Allen's unfortunate end in Pittsburgh. The two flyers had crashed their refurbished plane and had had to take the bus back to California ("Flying Hoboes Start Back," "In Crash Now," Bunch 102).

It is important to note that in their coverage of Banning and Allen's flight, the *Courier* and the *Defender* did not only celebrate the two flyers and the advancement of black aviation, but also indirectly challenged Hubert Julian, his self-presentation, and, somewhat shockingly, their own yellow journalism. In an article for the *Defender*, for example, Banning explained that Allen and he had "left Los Angeles without any publicity, and we arrived in New York minus the ballyhoo. We did not name our plane, or state our intentions." Although one of the reasons why this was so had been the lack of funding on the two flyers' part and initial lack of interest on the black community's part, Banning was indirectly objecting to the fact that the black press preferred to provide space for Hubert Julian's claims and bold plans, rather than follow the everyday toiling of honest black aviators. "[T]oo often individuals tend to make announcements and then fall down. We preferred to do the stunt, and then let the others herald it," Banning added. The paper described Banning and Allen as sincere, unheralded ("Two Fly from Coast to Coast in Old Airplane").

Floyd J. Calvin, Hubert Julian's main supporter in the *Courier*, noted, too, that Banning and Allen were "of a serious and studious turn of mind. They are quiet and unobtrusive, not flashy and gay. They look like what you would expect fliers to look like" ("Calvin's Digest"). In this way, not only did Banning and Allen manage to represent aviation – in successful flying and writing – as a serious profession and transform – or reverse – the

image of black aviators, but they also disabused the black press' readership of the notion that Julian and his flamboyance represented black aviation. Unlike Julian, Banning and Allen achieved a historic feat, and were rewarded with deserved publicity.

Importantly, the aftermath of Banning and Allen's successful flight and extensive coverage had a military dimension as well – after all, the two flyers, and Leon Paris before them, had just reached a crucial milestone and thus narrowed the racial technological gap in aviation. The *Courier* published an article in January 1933 by a student from the West Virginia State College, an institution that would be among the first to participate in the CPTP in 1939. Entitled “Man Sprouts Wings,” the text was “published with the hope of advancing the cause of aviation.” The Negro youth of today is becoming air-minded,” argued the paper, “and what with the epochal cross-country flight of Banning and Allen, this article is deemed extremely timely.” In other words, the newspaper was adding yet another piece to its growing aviation campaign. Importantly, while the article provided a truncated history of aviation in the first third of the text, the rest also discussed the impact of aviation on warfare. It described the employment of planes in the Balkan war of 1911-12 and World War I, implying that the rapid progress of civil aviation that was being witnessed was accompanied with similar advancements in aerial warfare. Implicitly, then, the article and the editor's note accompanying it tied the progress in black aviation, symbolized by Banning and Allen's flight, to hopes of having black military pilots in the future.

The outlook of black aviation was thus hopeful at the end of 1932 and beginning of 1933. As Robert J. Jakeman puts it, “the Banning-Allen flight ushered in a new era in black aviation” (66). Unfortunately, as with Charles E. James, the hopes invested into Banning's future leadership in the field were short-lived. On February 5, Banning died in a plane crash when piloted by an inexperienced white student-pilot. The *Courier* devoted a large portion of its front page on February 11 to an article on Banning's successes, the description of the

accident, and an interview with two white men in charge of the Bettis airport in Pittsburgh who commended on the late flyer's skills ("Banning Dies in Air Crash," "Loses Pal," "Local Airport Officials Pay Flyer Fine Tribute"). The news, as Scott and Womack observe, was viewed as "similar in many ways to that of Bessie Coleman [...] and with a similar sense of loss" (39); especially since it came quite soon after Charles E. James's death in August 1932. As with Coleman, the *Courier* explained that Banning's death was a white pilot's fault and that Banning, like Coleman, could not have done anything to save his life ("Blame White Flier in Quiz of Banning's Death"). The news was so shocking for the African American community that the *Courier* even published a short article relating how "ill and destitute" Banning's wife was ("Mourned Aviator's Wife is Destitute"). In a report from Banning's funeral, the paper informed that the flyer's friends, led by William J. Powell, were planning to purchase a monument for the late aviator ("Plan Monument to Banning").

Although Banning had not carried or presented himself as an aviation crusader – the same way that other black aviation pioneers had before him – did not stop the black press from portraying him as one. The *Courier* printed a cartoon on February 11 entitled "May His Spirit Never Die!" in which Banning's ghost is hovering over a wrecked plane labeled "For the Advancement of Negroes in Aviation." Along with it, an editorial titled "J. Herman Banning" called the pilot's transcontinental trip a "goodwill" one and pointed out that Banning had helped distribute flyers for the Roosevelt campaign while travelling the East coast. The text portrayed Banning as fearless, intelligent, and a trailblazer. Two weeks later, Harry Levette, an Associated Negro Press reporter and author of numerous articles on aviation in California as well as the poem "Call of the Wings," wrote "Herman Banning: An Ode to a Great Aviator." In it, he described Banning's transcontinental flight as a "race against time [and] the scoffers [and] race prejudices." Banning was depicted as a martyr and Levette exhorted his readers to "put black men in the great Pullmans of the air; black men

flying the US mail; black men piloting the myriad busy ships of commerce [...] for his sake and for Bessie Coleman's sake." Finally, the *Defender* reminded its readers in an editorial that the African American community needed to provide more support for martyrs such as Banning as well as for other young men and women trying to make it as aviators. "Somehow," asserted the text, "we have not yet learned to profit by our mistakes and the mistakes of others" ("Our Duty to Aviation").

Fortunately for the future of black aviation, Banning's death – as well as the coverage of black aviation in the black press which gave space for aviators to promote their field and depicted successful aviators as crusaders – provided inspiration and impetus for new aviators. In response to the *Courier's* editorial on Banning's passing, Dr. A.E. Forsythe wrote a letter to the editor, in which he praised the paper's treatment of aviation: "I wish to highly commend your paper upon the stand it has taken on Negro aviation in the past and especially for the way your paper handled the recent unfortunate Banning incident. In both your news and editorial column you have made every aviation enthusiast [...] feel that yours is the most air-minded publication in the country." A pilot's-license holder himself, Forsythe explained that even successful flyers of the past were struggling to make ends meet during the economic crisis. It was therefore crucial that the *Courier* informed the African American community on the hardships that black aviators had to experience trying to advance black aviation ("An Ode to Banning"). Inspired by Banning's success and the *Courier's* devotion to technical progress and aviation, Forsythe would become a source of headlines in aviation coverage for the following two years.

3.6.4 Forsythe and Anderson's Goodwill Flights for Interracial Understanding

In early July 1933, the *Courier* published Forsythe's plea for funds for a transcontinental round-trip. The flight was being backed by the Atlantic City Board of Trade, as Forsythe, according to his nephew's account in *Black Flight*, wanted to engage Atlantic City's white

community in the project because he felt that “we won’t accomplish anything if only the coloreds are involved” (166). At the same time, Forsythe established the National Negro Aeronautical Society, which would sponsor the flight. The organization was asking for \$2,000, assuring the public through Forsythe that “this is nothing like that fake Harlem flight to Liberia,” thus distancing itself from Hubert Julian’s notorious efforts (“Seek Support for Airplane Project”).

Forsythe’s organization raised the necessary funds, the cross-country flight became another successful story of black aviators, and the *Defender*, probably sensing a shift in black aviation’s fortune joined the *Courier* in covering Forsythe and Anderson’s epochal hop. The *Courier* ran an ecstatic article on July 22, in which it remarked that Anderson had used to teach Forsythe how to fly and noted that the flyers were on schedule, having visited Pittsburgh and Cleveland on their way. Forsythe and Anderson landed safely in Glendale, California in 33 hours and 15 minutes (“Forsythe-Anderson Arrive on Coast after Record Flight,” “Cross-Country Flight Now On,” “Coast Flyers Leave Kansas”). The *Defender* also mentioned the name of Forsythe and Anderson’s plane, “The Pride of Atlantic City,” which the flyers had chosen in order to attract the city’s white Board of Commerce to support their flight. The name also referred back to Charles Lindbergh’s legendary plane “The Spirit of St. Louis,” and, according to *Black Flight*, it was meant to “appeal to another cities [sic] pride and turn [the flight] into a state project, not just a one-city project” (“Flyers Nearing Goal,” *Black Flight* 167). Forsythe and Anderson’s goodwill flight was, in other words, designed to invite even more publicity and interest in black aviation than ever before.

And attract it did – the flyers were given ceremonial welcomes in Los Angeles, where 2,000 people led by William J. Powell were awaiting them, as well as in Pittsburgh and

Chicago.⁴⁸ The African American community was, indeed, becoming air-minded and an editorial in the *NYAN* asserted that the two aviators “are not Lindberghs, Balbos, Mollisons or Posts, but they are heroes worthy of admiration and assistance. May their tribe increase” (“The Air Trail Blazers”). The aviators also carried a goodwill letter from the mayor of Atlantic City to the mayor of Los Angeles, thereby finishing a task that Joel Ace Foreman had not been able to complete in 1927 (“Cross-Country Flyers Stop in City,” “Westerners Joyous at Flyers’ Success,” “Chicago Gives Welcome to Coast-to-Coast Flyers,” *Black Flight* 188). The biggest welcome was given at Atlantic City and Newark, however. The mayor of Atlantic City and other white and black dignitaries, along with 2,000 spectators, presented Forsythe and Anderson with commemorative medals, organized a parade with “uniformed representatives of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the Rheims post and Kenneth Hawkins post, who constituted the guard of honor.” The flyers were later hosted by the New Jersey governor, too (“Throngs Greet Air Aces,” “Atlantic City Had Dinner for Flyers,” “Coast to Coast Flyers Feted by N.J. Governor”). Black aviation was thus being celebrated and appreciated by both white and black communities, fostering and improving interracial understanding.

It is important to note, too, that Albert Forsythe was not only changing the image of black aviation as a frivolous activity, but was also replacing Hubert Julian as the Afro-Caribbean representative of black aviation in the United States. Forsythe had arrived from the Bahamas to study at the Tuskegee Institute, where he had become a student-chauffeur for and mentee of Booker T. Washington himself. He had graduated in 1913 and subsequently earned a medical degree from McGill University in Montreal – which Julian had also claimed to be an alumnus of. Forsythe had been a fan of aviation since his childhood and so when his income had allowed him to become a pilot and purchase a plane, he asked Alfred Anderson to

⁴⁸ Forsythe and Anderson were given a special performance of Powell’s play upon their arrival.

teach him, which led to a successful partnership that would change the face of black aviation (*Black Flight* 1-120, Scott and Womack 40). In 1934, Forsythe – following in the footsteps of Leon Paris, another Afro-Caribbean pilot – continued to break barriers for black aviation when he proposed a “Latin American goodwill flight,” partially sponsored by the city of Newark (“Newark to Honor Famous Aviators”).

The cross-country flight by Forsythe and Anderson had brought considerable attention to black aviation and demonstrated the importance of goodwill tours in raising publicity and interest in the African American community’s endeavors in the field. It demonstrated what successful representation of black America – the very objective of Harlem Renaissance’s ideologues and artists – in aviation may lead to. As Anderson noted upon landing in Atlantic City, “all along the route of the flight great interest had been shown in the project” and, more importantly, “a better interracial understanding had been brought about, as well as greatly increased self-confidence and self-esteem among the members of the race, especially among the youth” (“Throngs Greet Air Aces with Tremendous Ovation”) In Atlantic City, the flyers were celebrated by a crowd of 15,000 at one event (“Coast Flyers Given Tribute”).

The flight did not only inspire young African Americans to engage in aviation – a message that the black press had been trying to convey for a decade – but it also indicated that sponsorship of black aviation events and feats was a worthwhile investment. As a result of the transcontinental flight, Forsythe’s nephew notes, Anderson established “a flying school and a charter flying service” near Philadelphia – the school was designed to “train more coloreds and create more pressures for change,” while “the charter service would show that there was an income potential” in aviation (*Black Flight* 203). Forsythe and Anderson thus embodied and spread the goodwill message that aviation education and endeavors brought about employment and advanced the community in the white population’s as well as the black community’s eyes.

“The airplane,” explained James Herman Banning in “The Negro and the Airplane” in 1932, “has made neighbors of every nation on the globe.” And it was to United States’ neighbors that Forsythe and Anderson’s sights turned in 1934. First, the two flew from Atlantic City to Montreal (Broadnax 18) and then announced in March 1934 that preparations were on the way to carry out a Pan-American flight later in the year. Black newspapers reported that Dr. Stanley Lucas, the head of the National Negro Aeronautical Society, had left for Haiti and Latin American countries to forge “another definite link [...] in the promotion of a proposed good-will flight to Pan-American countries in the interests of the Race.” The Race Aviation Promotion Society of America had started raising funds for the flight and other groups were expected to join in the effort (“Dr. Stanley Lucas Off on South American Tour,” “Good Will Hop to Pan America Budding”). The goodwill message of black aviation was about to go international, beyond Haiti and Canada.

The reason why Forsythe and Anderson, heavily supported by various organizations, decided to deploy their goodwill message in the West Indies and Latin America was to combat racial prejudice and fight for civil rights. As Jason Parker explains, the Harlem Renaissance – brought about by the migration of African Americans as well as West Indians to the American North – was a precursor of the transnational black activism of Caribbean decolonization in the 1940s and the 1950s as the two groups “were building networks for promoting black freedom” (98-100). In 1920, the West Indian population in New York comprised a quarter of the city’s black population; by 1930, it was still a fifth (Foner 4). The cultural, intellectual, and commercial exchange between various groups of people of color in New York was rich and it was perhaps here that Forsythe, himself a West Indian from the Bahamas, and Anderson learned more about the plight of people of African descent in the region.

The West Indies were dealing with a strong legacy of colonialism and slavery, as well as tensions between the Hispanic and African cultures. As Jason M. Colby explains, “slavery and Spanish colonial rule left a powerful legacy of hierarchy and inequality [as] Hispanic elites generally shared white American prejudice toward peoples of African and indigenous descent” (9). Black workers and immigrants across the region and in Central America were looked down upon and maltreated by Hispanic workers, especially in the shrinking job market of the Great Depression, and were also perceived as “inseparable from the problem of U.S. domination, [...] Yankee imperialism and racial degradation” (151). As Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor policy of non-intervention gradually returned power to the Hispanic elites in many of the region’s countries, this shift came “hand in hand with the rise of authoritarian regimes and the cresting of anti-black xenophobia” (177). Rafael Trujillo’s massacre in 1937 of approximately 12,000 Haitians living in the Dominican Republic would represent the era’s climax of such tensions and racism.

The shared plight of people of African descent in the United States and the West Indies, as well as Central and Latin America, was thus the driving force behind the proposed Pan-American goodwill flight for improved interracial understanding. As Dr. Lucas explained upon embarking to Haiti, “Many well-thinking people are beginning to realize that the difficulties confronting us as a race are due to the fact that our aims and aspirations are so little understood by other peoples.” Aviation was “a means of advancing the race [and] no other method,” asserted Lucas, “can so effectively and at such small cost change the false viewpoint and attitude that millions of people have toward the colored race as the carrying out of the goodwill program.” “Improved inter-racial relations,” added Lucas, “are as essential to us as protective legislation” (“Good Will Hop to Pan America Budding”).

George S. Schuyler concurred with Lucas when he argued that “the only way effectively to smash the inferior-Negro propaganda is to disprove it by deeds.” Indirectly

criticizing the image of black aviation that Hubert Julian had fostered, Schuyler explained that Forsythe and Anderson “are not mere parachute jumpers or men who only fly off at the mouth, but aviators with solid accomplishments behind them in the best tradition of Bessie Coleman.” Schuyler urged his readers to help the flight financially, too, arguing that “with \$100,000 or more behind them they [Forsythe and Anderson] will bring glory to the entire group” (“Views and Reviews”). In this way, Lucas and Schuyler first openly formulated the anti-racist and civil rights dimension of the goodwill message of black aviation. At the same time, they acknowledged the importance of fostering black aviation’s international and decidedly Pan-African dimension. Through aviation, African Americans were cooperating with their Afro-Caribbean counterparts in bringing about Alain Locke’s vision that black America would lead other nations and peoples of color into contact with the twentieth-century civilization.

The flight was to be, given its scope and importance, a serious undertaking. Forsythe decided to transform the National Negro Aeronautical Society into a more fittingly-named The Interracial Goodwill Aviation Committee, appointing Mary J. Washington as the publicity director and establishing a Flight Advisory Board – the newly-formed group organized a Flight Boosters Club which, among other activities, sold buttons to raise funds for the flight (*Black Flight* 205-6). To add to the project’s credibility, Forsythe asked, for example, Oscar DePriest and Eugene Kinckle Jones from the Urban League to serve as members of the Advisory Board. In adding Jones, Forsythe aligned himself with one of the most influential power brokers in the world of the Harlem Renaissance. One of the founding members of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, Jones had helped Charles S. Johnson launch the *Opportunity* magazine in 1923 and later served as a member of Roosevelt’s Black Cabinet (Gates, Higginbotham 472-3).

The black press reported in August that the West Indian Federation of America and the Caribbean Union lent their support to the flight as they hoped to make it “a fitting climax to the celebrations that are already under way to commemorate the centenary of emancipation in the British West Indies.” The emancipation was a result of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 and so it was only fitting that at a time when Hispanic and black workers clashed in the West Indies and black workers were ostracized, black aviators would fly through the region spreading their goodwill and mutual understanding. To appreciate the support of the two organizations and to underscore the importance of black aviation in improving interracial relations, Forsythe made a speech entitled “Aviation and the Destiny of Our Race” at a celebration of the emancipation’s anniversary in Harlem. Finally, the New Jersey State Federation of Colored Women’s clubs asked that the flyers relay a message from them to the “women of the West Indies and the Latin America countries” (“Race Flyers Plan South American Good Will Tour,” “Good Will Flyers to Get Royal Welcome,” “Emancipation Anniversary Observed by West Indians,” “Promise Help for 2 Airmen,” “New Deal in B.W.I. Sought”). More and more groups became invested in the goodwill message of black aviation and, as with Leon Paris’s flight to Haiti at a period of political tensions between the United States and his homeland, the flight was transformed into a serious political endeavor, too.

Perhaps as a consequence, the articles in black papers on preparations for the flight were devoid of sensationalism. Unlike Hubert Julian’s proposed flights, the Pan-American goodwill hop was gaining credibility: William H. Davis, publisher of the *NYAN* and a longtime aviation benefactor, announced his paper’s support for the flight. Congressman Isaac Bacharach of New Jersey announced that he would facilitate assistance from the director of aeronautics of the Department of Commerce and from the State Department. A World War I ace sent a recommendation letter on behalf of Forsythe and Anderson to the director of the United States Bureau of Aeronautics. Various officials from the destination countries had sent

welcome letters and assurances that they were ready to receive the flyers (“Paper to Aid Negro Flyers”). And the *NYAN* urged its readers to express financial support (“The Goodwill Flight”).

For Forsythe and Anderson needed a new plane for their long hop. They flew to St. Louis in August 1934 to pick up their new Lambert monocoupe – while waiting at the factory, the flyers met Charles Lindbergh and discussed their planned route and other details with him (“Aviators Talk to Lindy”). With the new plane, they made fundraising stops in nine eastern cities. While fundraising in Chicago, for example, they met Duke Kweisi Kuntu, who was “anxious to encourage aviation in West Africa” and suggested that “the West African Aborigines Society would aid in sponsoring [the flyers’] coming in 1935 and especially for the Great World’s Fair there in 1938” (“Aviators Pause Here to Tell Chicagoans of Flight,” “All Roads Led to Chicago,” “Cross-Country Flier Addresses Youth Meet,” “U.S. to S. America Flyers Stop at County Airport,” “Ready for Their Hop to South America,” “Goodwill Flight Program Booms as Plans Progress”). Clearly, as Samuel Broadnax puts it, “the team of Anderson and Forsythe, as much as anyone, brought worldwide recognition to the abilities and undeniable aviation skills of black pilots (18-19).

While Forsythe and Anderson were making fundraising appearances along the East Coast, Mary J. Washington, their publicity director, was writing elaborate pieces on the complexities of flying long-distance flights, highlighting the two flyers’ experience, credibility, and technical prowess. In “Aviators Map Course for Latin American Flight,” for example, Washington explained that the aviators had spent a year studying maps and charts as well as aerial navigation. They had also been preparing to deliver their goodwill message in French, English, Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese and had been trying to secure all necessary permissions from foreign governments as well as the various U.S. departments. Washington also prepared a list of “the major newspapers on the islands that would be visited and a list of

many in America to use for press releases [and] compiled a list of two ham radio operators for each island” to relay information about the departures, arrivals, and weather (*Black Flight* 214). Furthermore, the Interracial Goodwill Aviation Committee had written a letter about the proposed flight to President Roosevelt – his office encouraged the flight in its response, which, in turn, facilitated the State Department’s cooperation in granting the flyers permission to the various islands (210). The promotional campaign for the flight was thus reaping success, which, at the same time, highlights the crucial role which the black press had been playing in making black America air-minded.

The final promotional step to maximize the Pan-American flight’s impact was to engage Forsythe’s alma mater, the Tuskegee Institute, in lending its founder’s name to the flyers’ plane. According to Robert Jakeman, Forsythe’s committee had contacted Robert Moton, the Institute’s president, in early September and a plane-christening date was set up for September 15. F.D. Patterson, the future president of Tuskegee, and Col. Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. were present, along with Nettie H. Washington, Booker T. Washington’s granddaughter (9-10). Upon christening the flyers’ plane, an exhibition flight and photographs were taken – Dr. Moton with Forsythe and Anderson, in front of the freshly-christened plane appeared on the pages of black papers (“Pan-American Flyers to Name New Plane Booker T. Washington,” “R.R. Moton to Christen Plane of Noted Flyers,” “Mrs. Moton Christens Airplane,” “Booker T. Washington to Soar Over Americas”). The Institute also helped organize a fundraising committee, collecting \$350 (Jakeman 10). Finally, on November 2, Mary J. Washington announced the final list of destinations, reiterated the purpose of the goodwill flight, and provided examples of foreign dignitaries who had communicated their excitement to welcome the aviators (“U.S. Approves Flight of Goodwill Aviators”). Among them featured Marcus Garvey of Jamaica – he would finally see black aviators bridging the racial technological gap and demonstrating that black pilots, too, could fly.

The black press followed the actual goodwill flight as vigorously as its preparations. In their brief but excited reports, black newspapers did not fail to highlight that Forsythe and Anderson's flight had been sanctioned by the president of the United States, the Department of State, and the Department of Commerce, which imbued the hop with an official tone and purpose ("Aviators Hop Off This Week," "Good-Will Aviators Ready for Take-Off," "Crowd Welcomes Race Aviators in Nassau"). The flyers suffered a gas-line break in South Carolina, but were waited upon by the Miami airport officials, and were later welcomed by a crowd of 5,000 in Nassau, Bahamas, Forsythe's homeland. The papers then detailed how ceremoniously spectators and officials welcomed the flyers in Kingston, Nassau, Havana, Santiago, Port-au-Prince, Santo Domingo, San Juan, and Port of Spain ("Thousands Cheer Fliers in Nassau, Havana, and Santiago," "Winging Way to South America," "Goodwill Fliers Honored in Haiti," "Pan American Flyers Are Given Ovation").

While the black press provided little commentary in its numerous yet brief texts, Mary J. Washington continued to celebrate the flyers in her articles. She wrote a long piece on Forsythe's homecoming in Nassau ("Pan-American Fliers Complete Water Hop") and, once it had become clear that the flight was in serious trouble after a number of "close calls" in Haiti and the Dominican Republic ("Forsythe, Anderson Continue Flight," "Welcome Good Will Flyers in South America"), she began portraying the flyers as crusaders, spreading Booker T. Washington's racial uplift and their own goodwill message. As previous black aviation pioneers, Forsythe and Anderson were depicted as martyrs for the advancement of the race. The "two cool-headed, thorough, daring men," Washington observed, "travel with hope for the welfare of a race in their hearts." They believe that "They are happiest // Who do the most // For others." This Booker T. Washington's quotation, exclaimed Washington, "may guide our men on courageously through this modern quest of the silver fleece and bring them safely to the happy landing that is HOME" ("Hazards Dot Route of Good Wil Fliers"). One day

later, the flyers crashed the “Booker T. Washington” in Port of Spain, Trinidad, hopelessly damaging the plane and thus ending their flight only 4,000 miles into the 12,000 originally planned (“Plane of Forsythe, Anderson Wrecked,” “Aviators in Crash; Plane Falls in Yard,” “Crash Ends Good-Will Tour,” “Damaged in Forced Landing”).

Once black newspapers published the article on Forsythe and Anderson’s crash at the end of December 1934, coverage of Forsythe and Anderson’s endeavors almost disappeared from the Chicago and Pittsburgh weeklies, but continued in the *NYAN*. The *Defender* did carry a photograph of the two flyers with the governor of the Virgin Islands in early January 1935 (“Wing Way to Virgin Islands”) and the *Courier* published a letter to the editor, which praised the flyers for their fight for “greater accomplishments and goodwill for our people, and increased respect, so that we who follow may be a little closer toward equality of opportunity, regard and status” (“Proud of Flyers”). Despite the abrupt ending, the flight was thus still seen as an achievement by many and the image of aviation may have finally been transformed from a pastime into a civil rights cause. As Jakeman puts it, however, “embarrassed, tired, and disappointed, the Goodwill fliers quietly returned to the United States” and the abrupt ending to their visions eventually “ended Forsythe’s active involvement in aviation (19-20). Anderson remained active and would later become an instructor in the CPTP at Howard and Tuskegee.

Harlem still welcomed Forsythe and Anderson warmly in early March at a reception, which demonstrated that the Pan-American goodwill flight had accomplished its racially- uplifting objective of building inter-racial relationships despite its unfortunate ending. At the event held at the St. James Presbyterian church, Forsythe and Anderson, among other things, presented the “addresses written on scrolls of parchment to the fliers in recognition of their outstanding achievement in promoting international and interracial understanding and good will” (“New York Gives Welcome to Pan-American Flyers,” “Good-Will Aviators Honored

in Harlem”). Two editorials in the *NYAN* celebrated the flyers as well. One, titled “Aviators Who Fly,” criticized Hubert Julian and lauded Forsythe and Anderson, while the other, “They Did Not Fail,” explained to the readers that the flyers “won admiration and amity for American Negroes in some ten countries. In addition, they gained experience which will serve them in the future. There is no cause for lamentation or derision. Heroic efforts in noble causes always bring their rewards.” The *NYAN* saw the flight as a success.

As further evidence of the flyers’ achievement, in his report for the December 1934 issue of the *Tuskegee Messenger*, Forsythe noted that “this trip is proving to be of great help to the colored people of the United States and [of these West Indian countries]. Here [...] it makes the people of color feel very proud of themselves and is entirely changing their conception of the colored people of the United States.” Forsythe observed that West Indians thought of African Americans as very black because of the term “Negro” used by the Associated Press, which in Spanish means black. They also believed that African Americans were slaves or servants, could not vote, were unimportant and had never achieved anything of substance. Consequently, black Americans were considered lazy and without aspirations. Forsythe claimed that “this flight alone has immediately proven everyone of these ideas to be false,” thereby recontextualizing existing prejudices against African Americans’ technical and technological prowess. “It would have been even better if we had been both very dark,” closed Forsythe his report in a joking manner (“The Good Will Fliers in the West Indies”). Despite technical failures and an abrupt ending, the flight did achieve what in spirit it set out to do: through a historic achievement in aviation, a cutting-edge technical field historically dominated by white aviators, Forsythe and Anderson connected people of color across nations and filled them with pride. They also lived up to the omnipresent racial-uplift undertones of black aviation coverage in the press and reversed as well as recontextualized the long-standing stereotypical tropes of black Americans’ technical and technological ineptitude.

Long-distance flights carried out by black aviators had always been intended to form a building component of aviation's goodwill message. Without achievements such as these, the aviation coverage in the black press had been one-dimensional, emphasizing pioneering efforts and crusading pilots through transvaluation, while leaving the black newspaper readership somewhat disappointed. Marcus Garvey and Hubert Julian had envisioned black pilots flying to Africa to fight against colonial powers, yet Julian never took off. Bessie Coleman, too, had hoped to spread aviation's gospel in Pan-American countries, but did not get an opportunity. And William J. Powell had been planning a transcontinental race of two planes piloted by black aviators before James Herman Banning and Thomas C. Allen decided to fly it alone. The success of Paris and the first cross-country flight, however, had added a dimension to aviation coverage of achievements comparable to those of white flyers. It thus provided the black press with evidence to begin recontextualizing the existing stereotypes and tropes of people of color's innate technical and technological lack. It also brought about a sharp rise in the number of articles in the black press about aviation and its role in the civil right struggles of African Americans. The output of texts doubled.

It was the achievements of Paris, Banning-Allen and Forsythe-Anderson's long-distance flights that transformed the image of aviators in the black press, too. As newspapers carefully reported on the details of preparations for flights and informed about the interest that successful long-distance and international flights had sprung in both black and white communities, the image of aviators changed from individualistic crusaders to goodwill messengers with a political purpose, carrying out the era's inter- and trans-nationalist ambitions. They became the race's New Negro representatives to the rest of the world, emulating and complementing the achievements of other Harlem Renaissance artists. Success – technological in demonstrating the ability to fly over long distances and political in bringing about interracial understanding – did not only make black Americans increasingly air-minded,

but, more importantly, it turned aviation and the position of black aviators within the system of American civil and military aviation into a civil-rights, political issue. Through self-help, hard work, and technical ingenuity – the most essential tenets of the racial uplift ideology – African Americans and immigrants of color were finally represented in aviation. In reaction, the black press started lobbying for further representation in official military structures.

3.7 The Next War Will Be Fought In the Air: Black Aviation's Military Dimension

Between 1925 and 1937, explains Samuel L. Brodnax in *Blue Skies, Black Wings* (2007), the Army War College (AWC) carried out a dozen studies on the integration of black Americans in the U.S. military – the U.S. Air Corps relied heavily on these in its policy of no admittance to people of color. For example, in its 1925 report “The Use of Negro Manpower in War,” the AWC “began with a statement that regarded the Negro as a subspecies of the human family” and “espoused that Negro men instinctively believed they were inferior to white men.” The report did acknowledge that African Americans could perform well as “laborers but [were] inferior as technicians and fighters.” The report also concluded that “blacks were deeply superstitious and filled with a common abundance of moral and character weaknesses” such as “thieving, lying and promiscuity.” Most importantly, as Broadnax points out, the report asserted that “in physical courage, the American Negro falls well back of the white man and possibly behind all other races” and therefore held that “no Negro officer should ever command a white officer, because it believed Negro officers lacked courage and the mental capacity to command” (10). African Americans hoping to join their country's military's flying units thus faced almost insurmountable barriers.

Throughout the almost two-decade long aviation campaign in black newspapers, aviation education, economic opportunities, and the international, barrier-breaking potential offered by the increasingly popular field crystallized as the central tenets or tropes of aviation's goodwill message. However, since the events in Tulsa in 1921 and subsequent

coverage of the military employment of aviation in various African colonies as well as the Central American and Caribbean region, aviation's military aspect had also become a recurring trope in black aviation newspaper coverage. Black newspapers regularly underscored the fact that the AWC and the U.S. military in general were working on studies and rules barring black Americans' admission to, among others, the country's flying units. Consequently, the black press repeatedly ran editorials lobbying for the inclusion of black pilots in the U.S. Air Service and the Air Corps. Black aviators played their part as well: Hubert Julian often invoked the race war trope in his proclamations, and aviation schools across the nation announced their military aspirations, as the dissertation has shown so far. Although their intentions had not been stated explicitly, many a black aviation school had been established with the implicit objective of training potential war pilots in a segregated environment. This section of the dissertation discusses the evolution of black aviation's military dimension among black aviators and in the black press even further. In particular, it analyzes some of black press's editorials and John C. Robinson's mission in Ethiopia.

In 1929, while the aviation campaign was taking off especially due to the *Courier's* vigorous reporting on and cooperation with William J. Powell, the *Defender*, perhaps owing to the way aviation education was being organized in Chicago under Major Simmons, devoted its last aviation editorial of the year to the armed forces issue. One year after the paper argued that barring an officer in the Liberian Frontier Forces from a US army aviation school may lead to decreased loyalty of the nation's units consisting of soldiers of color, the November 30 editorial reiterated the *Defender's* views on the color bar in the armed forces. The text asserted that the U.S. military and naval authorities seemed to believe that African Americans "seek to serve our country on the battlefields in time of war," but it is in fact in peace time as well, the paper declared, that black soldiers want to serve and be effectively trained. That is why African Americans "must be trained in every department of military and naval science.

We must get into the aviation schools so that we can learn, experiment, sacrifice our time and resources and even die for our country.” Connecting civil rights with aviation and representation of black soldiers in the military again, the editorial finally declared that “We want all the rights or none” (“Patriotism”). As aviation was gaining traction among the black public, and as several aviators had shown their skills in Chicago, California, and elsewhere, there was no reason why army aviation schools should be only for whites, opined the paper.

The discussion of aviation and its military context appeared again in black newspapers’ editorials in 1930. As in 1929, the year ended with an editorial in the *Defender* discussing the military employment of airplanes. In “The New Order,” the Chicago weekly observed that “this is an era in which distance has begun to succumb to the repeated onslaughts of speed. A fleet of planes, flying at [182 miles/hour] can transport an army from Boston to New Orleans in less than a day; can leave St. Louis at noon and destroy Montreal before midnight, and refuel in Detroit for the return trip.” It was because of this dangerous shortening of distances through aviation, the editorial argued, that Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, which is 250 miles from the sea, “shut off by Italy and France,” had taken up aviation. Reportedly, “he owns a fleet of planes and is training young students in European schools in the latest methods of handling aircraft.” Such precautions could allow Ethiopia to prevent any foreign fleet from landing near it in case of an invasion, the text concluded. In fact, as Tucker (102) explains, Selassie was using military aviation against his local opponents, having realized aerial warfare’s potential in the late 1920s.

While reports on and from Ethiopia had appeared regularly in the black press, aviation in connection with the east-African country would be hardly ever mentioned – with the exception of Hubert Julian’s fiasco of a visit in 1930 – until 1934 and 1935, when Selassie and Malaku E. Bayen accepted John C. Robinson’s proposal to lead the empire’s fledgling air force. It is unclear from which source the *Defender* acquired its information on Selassie

investing heavily into training his troops in aviation – perhaps from Julian – but the fact that Italy and France, two colonial powers, were presented as predators preventing Ethiopia from efficiently protecting itself served as a first among many pieces that were to document Ethiopia’s fight for survival against colonial powers and their use of modern weaponry. It seems clear that the *Defender*’s reporters were painfully aware that a war was brewing in Ethiopia’s vicinity and that it would involve airplanes – as Garvey had predicted almost a decade before. This developing situation only underscored the ever-increasing racial technological gap and the need for further development and support of black aviation.

As discussed in previous chapters, Julian, Robinson, and others promoting black aviation’s goodwill message – such as Leon Paris – occasionally underscored their crusading endeavors’ importance for their race’s representation in aviation and, more importantly, for helping raise a generation of flyers technically and mentally prepared for any upcoming war or an event like Tulsa. Julian’s repeated proclamations, Robinson’s military displays in Chicago, and Paris’s overtly anti-imperialist flight to Haiti ensured that the black American public was keenly aware of the vital role black aviators’ readiness would play in case of a conflict. Although these attempts by black aviators were merely symbolic attempts to demonstrate and advertise their skills for potential military service, the successful long-distance flights by Paris, Banning-Allen and Forsythe-Anderson had by 1934 created a mood in the African American public of bewilderment over the fact that the US military would not allow black flyers to join the service.

E.L. Best, probably one of William Powell’s students at Jefferson High, wrote a letter to the *Defender* in October 1934, noting that “there are approximately 2,500 airplanes of various military types in use in America today [yet] of all the 20,000 men who go to make up the personnel of the Air Corps [...] there is not one Negro.” “Since the nations of the world are madly preparing for war [and] America is too,” Best observed, “it is up to us to make the

Government see fit to begin giving us this training right now [because] we, the younger Negroes, demand the right to efficiently and ably protect ourselves” (“The Race and Aviation”).⁴⁹ As the letter shows, since New Negro aviators’ skills improved, their frustration with being ignored grew exponentially.

The *Courier*, true to its historical reputation as a crusader for the inclusion of black troops in the military, ran an editorial in 1934 which commended “colored former army officers” on establishing an organization, reminded its readers that black soldiers were barred from “aviation, engineers, artillery, signal units, chemical warfare units and tank corps,” and called for action to be taken: “We have never made a concerted nation-wide attack on this problem. We have never let our desires be known to the legislators in Washington. It is time to get busy” (“Don’t Forget the Negro Soldiers”). Perhaps partially inspired by its very own full-fledged aviation campaign, the *Courier* called for further progress in military inclusion in general.

In the end, John C. Robinson’s military displays, career as a military-style aviation educator in Chicago, and as a vigorous proponent of establishing an aviation school at the Tuskegee Institute brought the aviator to Ethiopia and made black aviators’ and the black press’s calls for engagement in warfare true. Now a well-known figure on Chicago’s South Side, Robinson caught the attention of Claude Barnett, the director of the Associated Negro Press (ANP), who introduced Robinson to Malaku E. Bayen, Haile Selassie’s cousin and emissary to the United States. On Bayen’s recommendation, Robinson was appointed “chief of the imperial air forces of Ethiopia by Emperor Haile Selassie” in late August 1935 (“Ethiopian Air Chief”). Robinson was to train actual war pilots and engage in aerial warfare himself.

⁴⁹ The *Defender* published Best’s letter to the Federal Aviation Commission in November 1934 (“No U.S. Race Aviators”).

3.7.1 Ethiopia's Significance for Black Aviation

In early October 1935, the full-scale Italian invasion into Ethiopia began. Protests against Italy's aggression were widespread. As S.K.B. Asante explains, "the tales of the unjust war in Ethiopia were told not only in British West Africa, but also in the neighbouring East African colonies of Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika, in the vast territory of Egypt, in the far minority, white-ruled southern Africa, in the West Indies, as well as among the black communities in America, Britain, and Europe" (4). In the United States, the war in Ethiopia "became a fundamental question in Negro life," according to Roi Ottley, a journalist and historian of Harlem. "It was all but impossible for Negro leaders to remain neutral, and the position they took toward the conflict became a fundamental test. The survival of the black nation became the topic of angry debate in poolrooms, barber shops, and taverns" (109). The crisis stirred emotions in the African American community in an unprecedented way – as Magubane claims, "besides Garvey's UNIA there is no other phenomenon that stirred the rank and file of the Afro-American as did the Italo-Ethiopian war" (170). Ethiopia featured on the pages of the black press ceaselessly. Between January 1935 and December 1936, when Ras Imru finally surrendered to the Italians, the *Courier* and the *NYAN* carried over fifty each and the *Defender* thirty editorials concerning Ethiopia. Dozens of articles and photographs were being published weekly.

Tens of organizations raising funds to aid Ethiopia sprung up. In *African American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941*, Joseph E. Harris lists the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, the Committee for Ethiopia, the Friends of Ethiopia, the American Committee on the Ethiopia Crisis/American Aid for Ethiopia, the Medical Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, and the United Aid for Ethiopia Alliance as the most important fund-raising groups in New York. The influential Ethiopian Research Council was based in Washington, D.C. (49). Even though, as William R. Scott, a historian of the war,

points out, “the average black may not have joined any of the pro-Ethiopian organizations, or contributed financially to the cause, or even to have been quite certain what he stood to gain or lose by an Ethiopian victory or defeat, [...] the prime thing of importance to him was that black men were being threatened by whites” (167). There was no escape for Africa-descended people living in the United States from the news on and implications of the Ethiopian crisis.

Black aviation and the aviation campaign in the black press were also affected by the Ethiopian crisis. Robinson’s involvement as the Ethiopian Imperial Air Force’s head helped finally shift the center of black aviation from Los Angeles to Chicago. At the same time, it led to the gradual disinvestment by Robinson from the Challenger Air Pilots’ Association after the war. Most importantly, however, the crisis finally turned the scope and attention of the aviation campaign towards militarization and increased pressure by the black press on the inclusion of African American pilots in the US military. After all, as Tucker correctly observes, “the most prominent American military aviator in a high-level leadership position and in command of an independent air force in a wartime environment [in the interwar period] was John Charles Robinson” (117-8). The black press seized the opportunity and turned Robinson into an aerial warfare hero with unprecedented technical and mechanical expertise.

The Italo-Ethiopian war has been studied in the United States mostly in the context of Pan-African sentiments and organized efforts on the part of the black population in the US to aid Ethiopia. Despite John C. Robinson’s involvement, however, the black aviation aspect of the conflict has been neglected. Indeed, Robinson’s military endeavors in Ethiopia as a precursor in black aviation history to the Tuskegee Airmen have been the focus of Tucker’s *Father of the Tuskegee Airmen* (2012), Thomas E. Simmons’ *The Man Called Brown Condor* (2013), as well as portions of Jakeman’s *Divided Skies* (1992) and Scott and Womack’s *Double V* (1994). But, as this dissertation argues, Robinson’s mission was more than another step forward in black aviation history. It was a unique act of Pan-Africanism: Robinson

showcased and utilized aviation – a technology historically associated with progress, civilization, and, in the eyes of the black press and nationalist leaders, also white colonial power – to combat Italian colonialism in the name of a mythical black nation. While Bessie Coleman, Leon Paris, Forsythe and Anderson – and also, to a degree, Hubert Julian – had only hinted in their flights and rhetoric at the potential of aviation to defy boundaries, connect peoples across nations and inspire a violent struggle for their own liberation, it was Robinson who finally carried out Marcus Garvey’s vision of a black aviator fighting for sovereignty and independence of a black nation against a colonial power. Robinson’s Pan-African aviation mission was technologically and martially oriented.

The focus of this section is therefore Robinson’s resistance to Italy’s air force, which had helped colonize and would keep under control Libya, the Italian Somaliland, and Italian Eritrea. As Federico Caprotti correctly points out, “the fascist regime in Ethiopia was successful partly through aerial superiority.” Italy’s military, and later civilian aviation was “represented as progressive and as a superior technology” in Italy’s African colonies, for it served as a “metaphor for a civilized fascism that would develop the silent colonies.” In this sense, Italian dominance in aviation “juxtaposed the airplane and the aviator with the indigenous and tribal” (386-398). Robinson’s excellence in his flying missions and skirmishes in Ethiopia, however, disrupts this dichotomic narrative of black vs white as technological lag vs technological prowess with civilizing purpose. The fact of the matter is that at a time when there were no more than 60 licensed black aviators in the United States, an African American pilot demonstrated the ability to stand up against a technologically superior colonial power by utilizing its own technology against it. In short, Robinson reversed the trope of an inept black.

This fact visibly reverberated in the black press’ coverage of black aviation. In their reporting on the Italian invasion, military strategies, and Robinson’s heroics, black newspapers registered the importance of aerial warfare in the process of Italy’s gradual

colonization of Ethiopia. In other words, black America was watching how the racial technological gap in aviation facilitated Italy's advance against and submission – though never final – of the mythical Ethiopian nation. At the same time, the fact that Robinson prevailed – despite inferior technology, training, and, in the colonizer's eyes, origins – confirmed to the black public that black aviators could, if properly trained and supported, equal even the most technologically advanced air force in the world. Robinson's Pan-African mission gave the aviation campaign a new impetus as Robinson became a leader for the black press in its drive to prepare black pilots for war. After Robinson's return in 1936, and then in 1937, the *Defender* capitalized upon the aviator's popularity and engaged in the aforementioned campaign to establish a network of aviation schools under Robinson's leadership and to present the aviator as the race's role model and leader; a savior figure. Robinson's historic engagement in Ethiopia transformed the *Defender's* involvement in the aviation campaign and solidified the black press' incessant overall argument that black pilots, too, could and would fight if their nation – or people – called them to arms.

3.7.2 Black America's Fascination with Ethiopia

That black America saw itself as a stakeholder in Ethiopia's fate was not surprising, since African Americans had had numerous long-standing connections to the world's oldest Christian nation. Religious connections between the United States and Ethiopia were exemplified by the existence of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, which derived its name from the "august appearance [of Ethiopia] in the King James Bible" (Scott 21). In particular, Psalm 68, the psalm of David, prophesies that "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God." The verse depicts Ethiopia as representing "not only the ancient kingdom by that name, but all of Africa and the entire African race," explains Wilson J. Moses. Moreover, "the Bible verse was seen as a prophecy [in the 19th and early 20th century] that the great days of Africa and all her scattered children were in the future. It was

seen as a promise that a people of distinction were to come out of Egypt and that Africans were soon to witness the day of their glory” (51).

The verse thus had political significance as well. Not only did many African Americans refer to themselves as Ethiops, but Ethiopia came to be associated in the middle of the 19th century with black liberation (Scott 12-18). Based on this historical connection of Ethiopia with black power, sacredness, and liberation, African American Christians viewed modern Ethiopia with great respect, especially since Haile Selassie “traced his lineage to a liaison between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba” (Meriwether 30). Selassie’s coronation in 1930, heavily publicized in the white and black press, only strengthened the reverence of religious African Americans for the country and the emperor: “Marcus Garvey may have been regarded at one time as the Black Moses, but Haile Selassie seems to have been widely looked upon in the early thirties as the Black Messiah,” explains Scott (105). Working as a personal pilot for the emperor and heading his royal air force must have thus increased John C. Robinson’s stature in the African American public opinion – he was protecting the black messiah. This, in turn, also raised black aviation’s profile.

Finally, along with religious ties to Africa-descended people in the United States, Ethiopia served as an example of a black nation which had resisted and defeated a colonial power. In 1896, Menelik II secured Ethiopia’s sovereignty against Italy at the Battle of Adowa. As Scott points out, this military victory “established unequivocally in the minds of some Afro-Americans the belief that Ethiopia was the pre-ordained defender of all black people in the world and that it would one day lead them to freedom” (31). Symbolically, then, Ethiopia had long existed in the minds of the United States’ black population.

Still, it was not until 1919 that African Americans came into direct contact with Ethiopians. First contacts between the two groups took place on Ethiopian soil (Scott 37-68),

but in 1919, a diplomatic delegation including Dedjazmatch Nadou, one of the signatories for Ethiopia when it was admitted to the League of Nations, and Belanghetta Herouy, the Mayor of Addis-Ababa and later Minister of Foreign Affairs, came to Harlem and visited the Metropolitan Baptist Church (Ottley 106). In 1927, another mission, headed by Dr. Azaz Wahrnek Martin, invited African Americans to settle in Ethiopia (Ottley 107). However, according to Scott, no repatriation movement was launched after the 1919 mission, and only about one hundred African Americans, inspired by Selassie's coronation, migrated to the country between 1930 and 1935 (85-107).

In 1922, Malaku E. Bayen, Haile Selassie's mother's first cousin, was sent to the US and in 1928 began studying medicine at Howard University. He, too, was charged with bringing African Americans to Ethiopia: he brought Hubert Julian in 1930, Dr. John West as a Public Health Organizer in 1931, Cyril Price as an educator in 1932, and John C. Robinson in 1935 as an aviation instructor (Scott 255, Bayen 5-6). In 1936, Bayen became Selassie's representative in the United States and in January 1937 began publishing *The Voice of Ethiopia*, a weekly newspaper of the Ethiopian World Federation, Inc., which functioned as the official fund-raising organization on behalf of the emperor in Harlem (Bayen 7-8). Africa-descended people living in the United States were thus connected to Ethiopia not only in terms of history, religion, and politics, but had also established interpersonal ties prior to the outbreak of the Italo-Ethiopian War in 1935.

Given these ties between black America and Ethiopia, the black press in the United States covered the Ethiopian crisis in detail. One of the aspects of the conflict which the black press registered immediately and reported on continuously was aerial warfare. In April 1935, the *Courier* announced "the introduction of obligatory military service" in Ethiopia – Selassie's army was estimated to consist of up to one million men ("Italy Ready for Peace; Africa Mobilizes Men, Women for Hostilities"). The *Defender* and the *NYAN* then reported

on Ethiopia's mobilization in June; they showed a collage of photographs of Ethiopian soldiers, including "Flight-Lieutenant Teera, ace-pilot of the Ethiopian Air force" ("War Clouds Still Gather over Ethiopia," "Black Ruler Defies Italy"). The *Courier's* mid-July issue finally connected black Americans' interest in the Ethiopian situation with the emperor himself. The paper reported that Selassie was ready to accept US volunteers "for war service," noting that the emperor "is concentrating on developing an air force with which he hopes to compete with Italy."⁵⁰ Importantly for the aviation campaign which decried the lack of opportunities for soldiers – including aviators – to join the US military, the text informed that Ethiopia would accept World War veterans "as officers in all branches of the Army and Navy" ("Ethiopia Welcomes U.S. Volunteers").

Despite the fact that the U.S. Department of State immediately barred US nationals from enlisting in Ethiopia, the reaction to Haile Selassie's call was unprecedented – the *NYAN*, for example, ran multiple articles in every issue on events held in Harlem to support Ethiopia. One week after the emperor's cablegram virtually invited black Americans to join the Ethiopian army, the *Courier* announced the disappointing news from the State Department, but also carried a photograph of a bomber plane, entitled "Who Said Ethiopia Didn't Have Airplanes," and an article informing that "twelve [white] American flyers were [...] ready to fight for Ethiopia against Italy." Led by Hal du Berrier and aided by Major Granville Pollock of the Lafayette Escadrille, the group was hoping to "form the nucleus of the Ethiopian Air Corps" ("12 White American Aviators"). The paper then envisioned in another article how "Italy would be whipped if American Negroes and Whites get transportation to Abyssinia" ("U.S. Whites Volunteer for Ethiopian Service"). The following week, along with reiterating du Berrier's claim and confirmation that the State Department

⁵⁰ The article also informed that "unconfirmed reports hint of an alliance with Japan for buying materials of war." Etsuko Taketani discusses black America's fascination with Japan and its potential aid to Ethiopia in *The Black Pacific Narrative* (2014).

was “definitely opposed to American citizens enlisting in the armies of either Ethiopia or Italy,” the *Courier* – along with the *NYAN* – brought the news that Japan may be ready to help Ethiopia prepare for the upcoming clash (“War News...Airplanes...Japan,” “Move to Halt Recruiting for Ethiopia is Launched,” “Japan May Aid Ethiopia,” “Japan Seen Forcing Hand”). The Pan-Asiatic Association even held an event in Boston where it assured the audience that Japan and China would “come to the aid of Emperor Haile Selassie” (“Says Japan May Defend Ethiopia”).

Most importantly, however, the *Courier* published an entire page in late July with letters from volunteers from around the country, black and white.⁵¹ Among these, a group of pilots that was “decidedly in sympathy with the Ethiopian people” asked the paper if Ethiopia needed “airplane pilots, instructors and mechanics” (“In Sympathy with Ethiopian Cause, Whites Ask to Go”). An aviator from Ohio offered his services “if the price is right” (“Flyer is Ready”), while another volunteer from Detroit with “experience with aeroplanes” felt that it was his duty to “answer the call of Ethiopia” and “give all that is in me to help the just cause of the black race” (“Air-Minded”). Finally, a reader from Illinois inquired “if there is any chance of our getting into the Ethiopian air service” (“For Air Service”). It seems that the *Courier*’s readers had also registered the role that aviation was going to play in the upcoming conflict. Especially since the Pittsburgh weekly titillated its audience with incessant news about potential Japanese involvement – thus entertaining the notion that two sovereign nations of color could form an alliance against a colonial power – as well as the wish of white experienced flyers, led by du Berrier, to engage in aerial warfare against Italy’s vaunted *Regia Aeronautica*.

⁵¹ Meriwether estimates that there were letters from at least thirty eight states (45). The *NYAN* also regularly ran letters from volunteers for Ethiopia.

Even though the black press provided space for its readers' expression of Pan-African sympathy with Ethiopia, the *Courier* along with the *Defender*, also initially discouraged African Americans from direct engagement in Africa. As Meriwether points out, the *Defender* carried a rare front-page editorial in July 1935 as letters from volunteers flooded the *Courier's* and the *NYAN's* offices, in which it asked its readers: "Go to Ethiopia? Why not fight at home? Is there not enough here to fight for? Why don't you fight lynchings, peonage, bastardy, discrimination, segregation? Why don't you fight for jobs to which you are entitled? Why don't you fight for your own independence?" In its conclusion, the text asserted that "Yes, you MUST think of Ethiopia. You MUST be world minded. You MUST realize that you have kinship with all peoples of the world – but above all you MUST FIGHT to correct evils at home" (40).

The *Courier* addressed its readers in a similar way, when its July editorial asserted that "black America needed to keep money and resources at home" (Meriwether 39). In its discouraging message, the text, titled "Helping Ethiopia," noted that "the purchase and equipment of a Douglas bomber will build 1,000 playgrounds with swimming pools [and that] the price of one good-sized airplane bomb will win a school segregation case in the courts or snatch some innocent Negro from the shadow of the electric chair." Although the paper thus registered that an air force – or lack thereof – would play a crucial role in the conflict, it encouraged its readers to invest in its community at home. In this way, the *Courier* also rejected its readers' aspirations to fly and fight for Ethiopia. The *NYAN* urged its readers to offer aid in the fields of medicine and even warfare but noted solemnly that "Negroes in America face an economic situation no less grave than the political one facing [Ethiopia]" ("Aid for Ethiopia").

Despite the initial isolationism and encouragement to develop and advance black communities nationally, rather than inter- and trans-nationally, however, the black press

eventually changed its tone and message. Perhaps it was because the *Defender's* readers rejected the paper's stance and sent numerous letters to the editor to voice their disagreement with the logic expressed in the paper's July editorial. One reader, for instance, expressed her view thusly: "Let every heart within a black man's body be with Ethiopia, the country which is ours. Ethiopia hasn't been the uncivilized place the U.S. is, with lynching, rape and murder. [...] I really feel that everyone should love Ethiopia the way we love Joe Louis. One of the greatest, proudest loves in the world" ("Why Go to Ethiopia – Letter to the Editor"). Another reader opined that "the so-called Negro should think internationally rather than nationally if he is to triumph over his conditions" ("Why Go to Ethiopia – Letter to the Editor"). Finally, another letter criticized the paper's hypocrisy: "Had you written such an article advising our boys against the enlistment in the World War to save a Democracy of which they then and now have no part, I would have agreed with you. And now, you invoke a respect for the laws which you continually assure your readers do not guarantee the Race the protection to which they are entitled." The authors concluded their argument by asking "will you not admit that with the American Negro contributing to a victorious Ethiopia the reaction would be beneficial to those of us remaining here" ("Why Go to Ethiopia"). As Meriwether observes, the black press then "quickly shifted from urging caution and a focus on America to offering a more pan-African view" (44).

The fact that the State Department forbade recruitment for Ethiopia and the black press was initially non-committal did not deter Harlemites from active preparations for war. As Victor A. Berch points out, "black nationalists generally believed that the indifference on the part of Western nations [...] was nothing short of an act of racism" and that the upcoming invasion of Ethiopia "was merely the first skirmish in what they viewed as a worldwide race war" (25). This may explain why "one militant group in Harlem boasted of two thousand volunteers and discussed plans to buy or charter a freighter and sail for Ethiopia," explains

Scott, and why another group, the Black Legion “reportedly three thousand strong, inaugurated a training camp in up-state New York with instructors for five hundred aviation students and for two full regiments of infantry” (192).

The case of Black Legion’s preparations for war – especially its aviation squadron – was reported in the black press. Initially, in “Flyers Get Their Wings” from March 1935, the *Defender* showed two aviators, Thomas Mills and Leonard Yates, and informed that they were part of a 15-student group comprising a “Race aviation college with a ground school and class in Harlem”⁵² – their equipment was at Roosevelt Field, the same airport which had been previously used by the US Army Air Service, Bessie Coleman, Lindbergh, Earhart, and Banning and Allen. Importantly, the paper also reported that neither flyer was “interested in offers to fight in the air for Emperor Haile Selassie of Abyssinia” – the *NYAN* subsequently informed that Mills and Yates had been inundated with “abusive letters from American supporters of Ethiopia (“Aviators Abused”). Apparently, the pilots’ attitude had changed by August 1935. The *Courier* and the *Defender* published a photograph of the “Black Legion,” or “what is said to be the first Negro air squadron,” including Mills and Yates. Clad in uniforms and standing in front of a plane, the group was expected to “go through an advanced flying course to prepare for possible duty in Abyssinia against the Italians.” As both papers noted, one of the flyers and later a student of Robinson’s in Chicago, Miss Lola Jackson, “eventually expects to form a women’s flying corps to serve as nurses” (“Harlem’s Pride Ready for Air,” “Harlem’s Air Squadron,” “Harlem Trains Black Legion with the Infantry Regiments”).

Although the group had put on such a military display, none of its members were dispatched to Ethiopia. As Harris shows, the FBI became involved in the matter and their

⁵² Their aero club was probably the Nathan Flying Squadron Aviation club, which had organized an air show at Roosevelt Field in May 1934. Mills and Yates were listed by the *Defender* and the *NYAN* as licensed pilots and members of the club in its short report on the event (“Race Aviators to Give Air Show Decoration Day,” “Airmen Offer Holiday Show”).

investigation concluded that “although Lola Jackson had told a journalist that she planned to go to Ethiopia if she could be helpful there, she had no such plans.” In fact, no members of the group, according to the investigation, were “considering service in Ethiopia.” Mills and Yates initially showed interest, but, in the end, no service in Africa materialized (57). Again, the black press titillated its audience with news about a black squadron willing to engage in aerial warfare abroad. If the group had actually engaged in fighting in Ethiopia, it would have represented a new milestone in black aviation history and also a new dimension in the Pan-Africanism displayed by black America. However, advancing Pan-Africanism and military aviation was left to John C. Robinson.

3.7.3 From Chicago to Ethiopia

John Charles Robinson was appointed “chief of the imperial air forces of Ethiopia by Emperor Haile Selassie” in August 1935 (“Ethiopian Air Chief”). However, before delving into the analysis of the newspaper coverage Robinson received during his mission in Ethiopia, it is necessary to contextualize Robinson’s recruitment by Claude Barnett for Haile Selassie’s government, and examine the sources of the pilot’s Pan-Africanism. According to Janet Waterford, Selassie reportedly said to Malaku E. Bayen, his recruiter in the United States, that “if this young American [Robinson] can construct an aeroplane from the ground up, he would be considered. Ethiopia has everything to make planes, from the ore to the most expensive woods. I have flyers. What I want is someone to teach mechanics and everything that goes with it” (“John Robinson Wings His Way Down to Tuskegee”). Robinson, however, became more than just an instructor in Ethiopia for he may have left for his mission there with more than an instructor’s job in mind.

The accounts of how Robinson met with Barnett differ (compare Scott 199, Tucker 69, Scott and Womack 51), but, in any case, the pilot offered his services to the Ethiopian government through Barnett, who had long known Bayen as the Ethiopian had previously

translated Ethiopian news from Amharic into English for the ANP (Harris 54). According to Tucker, Robinson “made the promise that he would volunteer to serve to defend Ethiopia’s independence in the face of Italian aggression” because he “viewed Ethiopia as the most visible stage and positive means to promote black aviation to the world” (69). Initially, Robinson did not offer only his own services, but those of his group as well. The members of the Challengers Air Pilots’ Association “felt their designation and experience as a Military Order of Guard Aviation unit provided the expertise needed to assist Ethiopia in the development of an Air Force.” That is why it was reported that “at least seven Challengers planned to serve as a volunteer air squadron for Ethiopia” (Scott and Womack 50). As with Harlem’s Black Legion, however, the plan did not materialize and only Robinson had traveled to Ethiopia before the State Department barred Americans from enlisting.

While Robinson had obvious military ambitions in Ethiopia – given the fact that he was hoping to enlist his para-military group – his Pan-Africanist sentiments were also a strong pull factor for his mission. Tucker claims that it had been Robinson’s continuous exposure to the Star Order of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Missionaries to Abyssinia’s activities, as well as the official Ethiopian delegation visiting Chicago and recruiting black professionals in 1927, that inspired the pilot’s Pan-Africanist philosophy (75-6). Also, some of the Challengers were members of the NAACP, the Urban League, and other black political and social organizations which were “focused on developments in regard to the fate of people of color far beyond America’s shores” (62). Finally, however, it should not be omitted that Robinson and the devout members of the Challengers worshipped at the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago’s Bronzeville (60).

The church’s reverend, Junius Caesar Austin was the master of ceremonies at Bessie Coleman’s opulent funeral in 1926 and had initiated and sponsored the annual flyover over the aviatrix’s grave. He had supported and urged his parishioners to financially aid Hubert

Julian in 1931. Austin was also a founding member of the Challenger Air Pilots' Association, according to Burkett, a historian of various black churches (326). Most importantly, Austin preached Pan-Africanism at his church. In 1922, the reverend had given a speech entitled "Representing the Negro Clergy" at the UNIA's conference in New York. Austin was a Garveyite from early on. In 1924, he had been elected to head the Foreign Mission Board for the National Baptist Convention and the Pilgrim Baptist Church had consequently become one of the largest foreign-mission contributors in the country (327-8). The reverend's activities reflected his focus on Africa and so must have his sermons – in January 1936, Robinson thanked Austin for having donated \$100 to Ethiopia ("Ethiopia Gets Check"). Claude A. Barnett also attended Austin's church (Burkett 334) and, although it is not clear whether Barnett and Robinson made their acquaintance there, it may be assumed that they shared Austin's Pan-African philosophy. Furthermore, given Austin's affinity for black aviation, Barnett must have repeatedly heard of Robinson's group at the church.

Similarly, he must have heard of or even met Robinson at the regular meetings of the local Tuskegee club, of which the two men were members, along with Doris H. Murphy, one of Robinson's students. Barnett and Robinson may have also met in August in 1934 at Tuskegee, where both men had given speeches ("Tuskegee Alumni Map \$10,000 Endowment Plan"). Given these connections between the two men, it is clear that Barnett must have heard about the military dimension of aviation that Robinson's group was emphasizing at its events and aviation students' graduation ceremonies. In other words, it may be safe to assume that when Barnett, the owner and director of a news agency that had been reporting on black aviation for fifteen years, recommended Robinson to Bayen, he knew that he was promoting black aviation and its military potential, as well as fostering stronger Pan-African ties between black America and Ethiopia.

Claude Barnett's Associated Negro Press reported constantly on Ethiopia during the mid-1930s. Barnett's agency functioned as an important cog in the wheels of the black press. He had started the company in March 1919, emphasizing "constructive news that would offer readers models to emulate and would win respect from both blacks and whites for the responsible black press" (Hogan 48). The initial news release from March 1919 went out to eighty members of the agency, including all the major weeklies, except the *Courier*, which joined in 1924, and the *Defender*, which did not become a subscriber until 1940 (57). It is unclear when exactly the *NYAN* began subscribing to the ANP, but the earliest date seems to be August 1927. The agency sent out news releases on Fridays and Mondays so that its members had time to utilize the news by their Wednesday deadline (59).

While the agency proved invaluable, especially for its smaller, local members during such national events as the Scottsboro case in 1931 and the second Italo-Ethiopian War, it also played a key role in providing news to the black press on black aviation. Many a story about William J. Powell and John C. Robinson in the *Courier* was reported courtesy of the ANP correspondents in California, namely Harry Levette, and in Chicago. There are dozens of texts from the Golden State and the Windy City, as well as much regional news on aviation that appeared in the Pittsburgh weekly. Furthermore, it was the ANP that had been able to deliver the news about Forsythe and Anderson's goodwill flight from every West Indian and Pan-American country that the flyers had visited. It was thus no surprise when Claude A. Barnett, with his ANP headquarters in Chicago, recruited Robinson to become the agency's correspondent – under the nom de plume Wilson James (Tucker 167) – in Ethiopia in 1935. In this way, Barnett combined the allure of direct foreign reporting, Pan-African sentiments for Ethiopia, and Robinson's potential military clash with Italy's vaunted air force.

As Lawrence D. Hogan, a historian of the ANP, claims, "the focus of foreign reporting during the 1930s" in the black press "remained the same as it had been in the previous

decade.” Stories documenting and “tracing the historic ties of black Americans to the African homeland, and those criticizing European colonialism” dominated the foreign-news sections of black newspapers. What changed in the 1930s, explains Hogan, “was the greater attention and resources brought to this coverage” (114). While the *Courier* sent Rogers to Ethiopia in the fall of 1935, the ANP had already secured a Latin American correspondent by 1933. Rudolph Dunbar had begun reporting for the ANP from London in 1934 and in 1935, the agency had listed its own reporter in the Virgin Islands. By 1938, informs Hogan, the ANP “had executive correspondents reporting from London, Paris, Copenhagen, Moscow, Johannesburg, the West Indies, the Virgin Islands, and Cristobal in the Canal Zone” (121). The ANP was thus responding to an increasing demand by the black readers in the U.S. for foreign news from countries with populations of Africa-descended people. Its involvement in Ethiopia through Robinson in 1935 then did not only showcase Barnett’s own Pan-Africanist views, but also marked the first step in ANP’s increasingly African direction. As Hogan explains, through the 1950s and into the 1960s, the agency would come “to concentrate more and more on events and people from” Africa, and by the end of the 1950s, “some seventy-five African papers were subscribing to the service” (235).

3.7.4 John C. Robinson’s Ethiopian Endeavors in the Black Press

There are few sources on the history of Ethiopian civilian and military aviation prior to 1935. Reportedly, Tafari Makonnen – crowned as Haile Selassie in 1930 – had hired two French pilots and purchased four French biplanes in 1929 (“Ethiopian Air Force – History”). The four Potez 25 biplanes assisted Makonnen “in the decisive battle against a rival warlord in early 1930.” Having witnessed the tactical and technological advantage that the planes could bring in battle, claims Tucker, “the emperor became an enthusiastic proponent of air power’s importance (102). Hubert Julian, serving under Makonnen at that time, confirmed the future emperor’s utilization of air power to the black press upon his return to the U.S. in 1930.

As the nationalist Youth Ethiopian Movement gained importance after Selassie's coronation, the emperor sought to hire black professionals rather than employ white foreign nationals, thereby ending the French monopoly on the small Ethiopian air force (Tucker 65). Between 1930 and 1935, the number of planes in the fleet had risen to over 10 (Tucker 103, "Ethiopian Air Force – History"). Along with French, Italian, German, and English planes, the fleet included a lone American aircraft – the Beechcraft, which "could outperform – or outrun – even the swiftest Italian combat fighter in case of pursuit" and thus became the "Emperor's aircraft" (Tucker 104). Because of the embargo imposed by the League of Nations, Robinson could only secure additional aircraft from Hitler's Germany – he received three Junkers 52 aircraft in 1935, which would later become valuable for transporting material (105-6). Such was the material situation of the Imperial Air Force when Robinson was named its chief in late August 1935 as between his arrival in April and promotion in the late summer, Robinson had played a leading role in "repairing, servicing, and improving his aircraft for active service (136).

However, it quickly became obvious that Ethiopia was not ready for Italy's *Regia Aeronautica*. At first, the *Courier* advanced a theory that Benjamin and Joseph Martin, sons of Dr. Martin, Ethiopia's minister to London, may meet in air battle with Bruno and Vittorio Mussolini ("Sons of Warring Fathers May Meet in Air Battles"), as the two Ethiopians were en route to join the country's air force. The story escalated two weeks later when the paper reported that Martin's sons "have challenged the two sons of Premier Mussolini to an air duel in Ethiopia" ("Il Duce's Sons Challenged"). The following week, the *Courier* carried a photograph of Mussolini's sons in a dejected pose, informing its readers that the Italians' planes had been riddled with Ethiopian guns ("Their Planes Riddled"). In pursuing this story, the black press was preparing its audience for the clash between the technologically overpowering Italian air force and the technologically lagging, but increasingly patriotic and

enthusiastic air force of Ethiopia. The photograph showed that even Mussolini's sons were not invincible and that, perhaps, Robinson's fleet could stop Italy's invasion. But this vision emphasized battles between individuals rather than Italy's actual military strategy.

It was Robinson himself who quickly disabused the black press and its audience of their naiveté. In "Robinson Tells All in the Bombing of Adowa" in the *Defender* and "Ethiops Plan Battle from High Ravines" for the *NYAN*, he related that "four large bombing planes arrived over [Addis Ababa and] caught the city asleep and unaware." "I saw a squad of soldiers standing in the streets dumbfounded, looking at the planes soaring above. They had their swords raised in their hands," described Robinson. Two planes, according to the report, were "droning ominously, circling the apparently doomed city. When I left the city, it wasn't possible to number the dead." The *Courier's* vision of warring brothers staging duels to decide the fate of Italy's invasion – as well as Robinson's own para-military training in Chicago – did not prepare the black press' readers for the shock of the way Giulio Douhet's doctrine, first presented in *The Command of the Air* in 1921, utilized Italy's air force to destroy civilian and military targets on the ground. For example, J.A. Rogers reported in December 1935 that 10 Caproni airplanes came "sweeping out of the haze of an early dawn, spreading death and destruction in their wake," attacking a "defenseless town" ("Sick, Wounded Burned Alive by Italian Bombs"). Italy was using its technological advantage in aviation differently than expected – by mercilessly killing not only soldiers, but also civilians.

Despite Italy's obvious technological advantage, however, Robinson was excelling as Ethiopia's air chief, and the black press took notice. Percival Leroy Prattis, one of the *Courier's* renowned reporters and a former journalist for the ANP, wrote a long racially-uplifting biographical story of Robinson for the Pittsburgh weekly and for the *NYAN*, which "reads like fiction" and offered "lessons to inspire and hearten black boys in every State." Apart from celebrating Robinson, the article did not fail to mention that the aviator had

decided to go to Ethiopia rather than wait whether Tuskegee would vote on opening an aviation class in April 1935 (“Ethiopian Air Ace Outwits Italian Planes in Battle,” “Ethiopia’s Black Condor”).⁵³ This only confirms that Robinson had seen more opportunities for the military advancement in black aviation on the front in Ethiopia than at an institute with a mere theoretical military department.

Later in October 1935, the *Courier* and the *Defender* announced that Chicagoans were raising funds for the “John Robinson Defense Fund for Ethiopia” (“Make Pledge to Raise Funds for Haile Selassie,” “Name Ethiopia Aid Fund for Local Aviator”). One month later, the two papers also carried a photograph of Robinson with H.R. Knickerbocker, an International News Service Correspondent, and two French flyers, inspecting a map of the war zone. The *Defender* noted that Robinson “has won the respect and warm friendship of the Ethiopian people as well as the white newspaper men and foreign attaches stationed at Addis Ababa” (“American Correspondent and Pilot,” “Col. John Robinson Checks Plan of War”).

Since the Ethiopian air force lacked offensive capabilities,⁵⁴ one of Robinson’s duties was, according to Tucker, reconnaissance flights. These “became the most effective sources of intelligence gathering for the emperor to ascertain Italian intentions, concentrations, and to relay orders to Ethiopian commanders on the front lines” (108). Robinson also flew Selassie on inspections of his troops (“Takes Plane Ride to Inspect Troops”). And in December, Robinson took the *Courier*’s Joel Augustus Rogers on one of such trips. Flying over the southern war front, Rogers noted to his readers that his pilot was “William H. Robinson [sic], Chicago youth and Tuskegee graduate, who is head of His Majesty’s air force,” and who

⁵³ On the same page, the *Courier* published a photograph of three Ethiopian pilots.

⁵⁴ A young aviator, Gus Coleman, opined in the *Defender* in early December 1935 that “should Ethiopia manage to secure even a small air force, they could have the Italians at their mercy by blowing up the single aviation base the Italians thought necessary to construct in view of Ethiopia’s complete lack of air equipment” (“Dixie Youth Sees Future in Aviation”).

pointed out during the flight various locations and hidings spots of the Ethiopian army (“Rogers at Front”).

One week later, Rogers reported that another one of Robinson’s flights led the pilot into a battle with two Italian planes: “Col. William T. Robinson [sic] was returning here from Addis Ababa with medicine for those wounded in the first air-raid of the Italians.” “Seeing a bomber,” Rogers informed, “he attacked it with his machine gun spitting bullets. He was in a position for the kill, it is alleged, when the distressed Italian plane was rescued by other ships. Robinson, with his motors roaring, escaped into the rainclouds. His plane was slightly damaged” (“Col. Robinson Stages Air Duel in Clouds with Enemy Planes”). Thus, despite having been reportedly hired to teach mechanics and service Ethiopian planes, John Charles Robinson became the first African American pilot to have fought in Africa for one of the continent’s countries’ independence against a colonial power wielding superior technology. And he did not fail.

3.7.5 Showing Off: John C. Robinson’s Technical Expertise on Display

As evidenced by the massive political support for the CPTP from 1938 onwards, the only way to advance black aviation politically was to present it as a military necessity for the African American community. That is what Robinson sought to do in Ethiopia years before the campaign had even begun. In January 1936, the *Courier* reported that an order of six new British airplanes, intended for Robinson’s colleagues from the Challenger association, had been turned down by both the United States and Britain, as were passport applications for the six Chicago flyers ready to join their leader in Ethiopia. Even though the US consul in Addis Ababa expressed pride in Robinson’s work and stated that the US government was supportive of the flyer, Robinson remained in Ethiopia on his own (“Col. Robinson Orders Six New Planes”).

Despite this setback, Robinson still featured in J.A. Rogers' texts, providing expertise on all things aeronautical. When Rogers wrote a text describing the panic in the Ethiopian capital over a potential Italian air raid, Robinson's expert opinion functioned as a calming presence: "The capital is 8300 feet high and the bombers will have to climb at least another 8,000 feet to escape the anti-aircraft gun. This, Col. John C. Robinson assures me, will be extremely difficult for the heavy bombing planes," concluded Rogers his article ("Rogers Paints Vivid Word Picture").

To present Robinson to the *Courier's* readers, to showcase the flyer's technical and mechanical prowess, and to outline his Pan-African sentiments even further, Rogers interviewed the Chicagoan in early January. In the interview, Robinson thanked Rogers for assuring him that "I am not fighting alone and that although I am the only American, black or white fighting for Ethiopia, that all the people of my race in America are behind us 100 per cent in our struggle." "I am glad," explained Robinson, "also to know that they realize that Ethiopia is fighting not only for herself, but also for black men in every part of the world and that Americans, especially black Americans, are willing to do anything to help us to carry on and to win." Once again, Robinson's dedication, humility, and profound feelings of Pan-Africanism were contrasted with Hubert Julian, who, according to Rogers, "is just the opposite" of Robinson, who, despite having broken his arm in four places had still heeded the call of Ethiopia ("J.A. Rogers Gets Exclusive Interview with Col. Robinson").

Robinson was later reported by Rogers to have even drunk hot water from his airplane to survive during one of his flights in the Ethiopian wilderness ("Rugged Ethiopian Hills to Halt Italy") and to having been assigned to pilot Selassie's brand new British four-seater ("Emperor Gets Special Plane"). In March, Robinson asked through Rogers for more medical aid from the Red Cross ("Colonel Robinsons Asks Race to Aid Ethiopia").

While the *Courier* had Rogers, the *Defender* was relying in some of its reporting on its “Operative/Operator 22” – a correspondent, whose identity the paper would not divulge, but whose photograph accompanied each of his reports. The texts sent out by the mysterious journalist were, however, mostly yellow journalism; uncorroborated stories. In March 1936, for example, the *Defender*’s reporter claimed that the Ethiopian air corps “consists of 150 pursuit planes and 40 bombers of the latest types. There are now 300 native pilots who have had at least six months of intensive training. There are 25 dare-devil stunt flyers who have been in the air corps service for more than a year” (“From Operative 22’s Mail”). Apart from the six-month training period – since Robinson had been present in Ethiopia since April of the previous year – the rest of the information reported was fabricated. The *Defender* had reported another piece of sensationalist news in October 1935, when it claimed that “Five hundred Ethiopian students are now studying aviation in various institutes of technology in Japan.” “The belief is prevalent,” continued the report, “that as soon as they have been licensed as pilots [...] sufficient number of planes will be furnished them, and they will return to Ethiopia [...] to resume the war with Italy.” The Black Dragon Society⁵⁵ was allegedly interceding with the Japanese government on behalf of Ethiopia (“Train 500 Ethiopian Pilots in Japan”). The *Defender* was thus still using yellow journalism and sensationalism in its coverage of the Ethiopian crisis. However, it is necessary to point out that, perhaps having been inspired by Robinson’s successes in aerial warfare, some of the paper’s most sensationalist news concerned Ethiopian, or black aviation.

After the January 1936 interview with Robinson, the reports on the aviator published in the spring issues of the *Courier* by Rogers and others began increasingly to emphasize Robinson’s versatile mechanical, technological, and flying skills; his technical and technological ingenuity and creativity, along with his dedicated Pan-Africanism, so aptly

⁵⁵ For more on this secret nationalist organization, see Frank Jacob’s *Japanism, Pan-Asianism and Terrorism: A Short History of the Amur Society (The Black Dragons) 1901-1945* (2014).

formulated in the interview with Rogers. In “Ethiopia Making Own Airplanes and Gas Masks,” Robinson was reported to have been “experimenting with Ethiopian raw materials and automobile parts [and] last week the first plane was completed.” The text also noted that Robinson had a history of building airplanes from scratch and that he had built for the Ethiopians a “war machine which acts perfectly in tests.” One week later, Robinson’s piloting skills were compared with those of British flyers in Ethiopia’s service. They, unlike the Chicagoan, had repeatedly crashed planes on important missions because “no matter how capable and what their record elsewhere, [they] are not so efficient in Ethiopia where they must fly under radically different conditions” (“Robinson May Return to U.S.,” “Ethiopia Airman Returning Home”). Because of the services Robinson had been performing for the Ethiopian army, he was selected “to lead a squadron of special bombing planes in an assault on certain mountains which are to be blasted in the campaign of Ethiopia to halt the advance of the Italians on Addis Ababa” (“Leading Mountain Attack”). According to Tucker, the mission probably never took place, but Robinson was later cited for bravery (182).

The climax of the coverage of Robinson’s achievements in Ethiopia came in early February, when Rogers wrote a lengthy essay on the country’s beauty and the pilot’s prowess and reputation. Although the piece provided much space for Rogers’ own commentary, a considerable portion of it revolved around Robinson, who was, for the last time in the Ethiopian coverage, given the opportunity to voice his views. Rogers described Robinson as knowledgeable of the Ethiopian terrain, although the pilot admitted to Rogers that “flying was tough as h—l in this land for me at first.” According to Rogers, “Robinson has been selected as a special target by the Italians. They are seeking revenge for the agitation against them by the people of Robinson’s race in America.” A few days before, for example, sixteen Italian bombers had attacked a spot where Robinson had just landed; and the Italians knew every time he left the capital, explained Rogers (“Rogers Takes Death Ride with Robinson”).

The flyer also demonstrated his expertise at length in the text, when he discussed Ethiopian army's camouflage tactics as well as Italians' cowardice. "You won't find many Italians risking their skin. [...] They select a certain spot then they go up from nine to ten thousand feet and loose their bombs, taking their chances at hitting something," explained Robinson. In his conclusion, Rogers had only words of praise for the Chicagoan: "He is an ideal if ever there was one. [...] He loves his race. [...] To give up a job of \$550 a month with the Curtiss-Wright company; to leave his flourishing garage business in Chicago and come to risk his life for Ethiopia, where he earns less than in America is as fine an example of heroic devotion as one can think of" ("Rogers Takes Death Ride with Robinson"). Rogers would later describe Robinson as "one of the world's heroes" ("Rogers Pays Tribute to Colonel Robinson") and include him in his bestseller publication *The Real Facts About Ethiopia*.

Two reasons make Rogers' piece crucial for what has been described in this dissertation as black press's aviation campaign. First, the *Courier's* reporter employed the same tone, tropes, and message in his concluding remarks on Robinson as that which had been utilized by the black press ever since Bessie Coleman's emergence in 1921/22. Rogers depicted Robinson as a crusader, a hero of his race, who promoted black aviation in order to advance his race. Moreover, the context of the Ethiopian crisis added a Pan-African and military dimension to the existing goodwill message of aviation – Robinson was a Pan-African martyr, willing to give up his life in fighting a colonial, technologically superior enemy. Secondly, it was the technological and military expertise that Robinson displayed across Rogers' texts in the *Courier* that demonstrated not only Robinson's lack of fear of Italy's vaunted technology, but his understanding of its underlying logic.

In pointing out and connecting Italian soldiers' lack of bravery along with Douhet's doctrine of civilian bombing, Robinson exposed the trope – highlighted for example in Garvey's *Negro World's* coverage of colonial aviation – of cowardice, cruelty, and

dehumanization through remote control of technology that seemed to be inherent to the ways in which colonial powers had been using their technological advantage against native populations in Africa and elsewhere. Robinson's opinions, expressed in Rogers' in-flight essay, thus also indirectly highlighted the dehumanizing strategy facilitated by aviation that white Americans in Tulsa employed toward their black compatriots when they attacked them not face to face, but remotely from the air; unsuspecting and defenseless. At the same time, it was Robinson's flying, technological, mechanical, and military expertise which further demonstrated that, if properly trained and equipped, Africa-descended people could and would bridge the existing racial technological gap and push back against any given colonial power. Robinson's underlying goodwill message of black aviation was thus decidedly Pan-African, internationalist, and military.

3.7.6 A Hero's Welcome

The *Courier* and the *NYAN* announced in early May that the aviator was on his way back to the country but would stop in London to deliver messages from Selassie to Dr. Martin, the consul ("Col. Robinson, Ethiopian Air Ace, Returning," "Ethiopia Airman Returning Home"). On May 23, the *Defender* and the *NYAN* devoted their front pages almost entirely to Robinson's arrival in New York. Featured were two photographs of the flyer in "his regular aviator's leather jacket. On the left side was the insignia of the Emperor's Conquering Lion of Judah embossed in gold. He wore a slip over sweater with the wings of a plane embossed in gold lettering and the Emperor's crown." Displaying thus his allegiance to Ethiopia, Robinson reiterated in an interview with a *Defender* reporter that "it was not so much the military skill of the Italians" rather than in-fighting that troubled Ethiopia. In this way, Robinson once again dismissed and recontextualized the idea that Ethiopians or any other black nation should fear the presumed technological advantages associated with colonial powers. Despite defying Italy's technological superiority, Robinson admitted to having been "severely gassed" several

times, having had his collar bone broken, and having been shot twice “while in combat with the Italians.” According to the *Defender*’s article, Robinson had taken part in twelve “actual flying battles and in one he narrowly missed shooting down the plane of Mussolini’s son.” He had amassed 728 flying hours in Ethiopia, tallying 1,328 hours over his twelve-year career (“Defender Scribe Greeted Robinson,” “Ethiopia War Ace Captures Harlem”).

With the detailed descriptions of Robinson’s wounds and flying experience while defending Ethiopia against Italy’s colonialism, the *Defender* as well as the *NYAN* continued the *Courier*’s portrayal of the aviator as a crusader. Unlike Coleman, Powell, or Banning, however, Robinson had become a crusader scarred by actual battle in faraway Africa, thereby finally combining aviation with military experience and Pan-Africanism. As an article in the *NYAN* aptly put it, Robinson “did not talk – he acted” (“Colonel Robinson in Harlem Monday”). The image of Robinson, the Pan-African war ace, must have been imprinted in black America’s mind, because the *Defender* and the *NYAN* reported that the police had to battle seven hundred spectators in Harlem upon Robinson’s arrival (“Rioting Marks Demonstration for War Ace”).

Five thousand people welcomed the aviator at Rockland Palace at an event organized by the United Aid for Ethiopia, where a hymn “Ode to Ethiopia,” specifically composed for the occasion, was sung to Robinson by Reverend William Lloyd Imes. The organization awarded Robinson “a silver trophy surmounted with an airplane model having a bloodstone base, symbolizing the blood he shed on Ethiopian soil” (“Robinson in Big Ovation in New York,” “The Colonel Gets Victory Trophy,” “5,000 Pay Tribute to Robinson,” “Emperor and Air Hero Are Honored in Song”). The trophy did not only solidify Robinson’s image in the minds of many as the first actual Pan-African warrior hailing from the United States, but also associated aviation with its military purpose; in covering the celebration, the *NYAN* called Robinson “a modern Negro Achilles” (“Watchtower”). Even Roi Ottley, otherwise sarcastic

in tone, devoted most of his regular column “Hectic Harlem” to praising Robinson as carrying “his honors well and modestly.”

Harlem’s welcome for Robinson, however, could not compare to Chicago’s, as the *Defender* May 30 issue, filled with articles on and photographs of Robinson at various events, demonstrates. Five thousand supporters awaited the flyer at the airport and twenty thousand by the Grand Hotel, where Robinson gave a speech. The war hero was greeted with military honors, too. Officers of the Eight Infantry Illinois National Guard, which Coleman had celebrated at her exhibition in 1922, were present. So were members of the Military Order of Guards, Boy Scouts of America, the commander of the George L. Giles Post American Legion, and officers of the Challengers. Along with these, Chicago’s dignitaries were in attendance, too: Robert S. Abbott, W.T. Brown, the “mayor” of Bronzeville, Julian H. Lewis, president of the Chicago branch of the United Aid for Ethiopia, Oscar DePriest, Lieut. John Scott of the Chicago police, and members of the Chicago Tuskegee club including Barnett.

Robinson was assigned his own policeman for protection as, reportedly, there had already been six assassination attempts carried out against him. Junius Caesar Austin of the Pilgrim Baptist Church was among those giving a welcome speech. Doris Murphy, Janet Waterford, and Willa Brown took a picture with the Brown Condor for the *Defender*, too. Dinners were had, interviews were given and speeches made. Abbott, for example, commended Robinson thusly: “The virtue of Colonel Robinson’s success, while seeking to enhance the military fortune of his black brothers in Ethiopia, was intensified by the fact that before leaving America, Colonel Robinson had made ample preparation through diligent scientific study to properly assume the obligation which awaited him” (“Twenty Thousand Greet Brown Condor,” Socialites Greet Hero at Airport,” “Col. Robinson Exhibits His Leadership,” “Aviatrixes Welcome Col. John Robinson,” “Reveal Six Attempts to Kill

Condor,” “Col. Robinson Speaker at Du Saible,” “Editor Abbott in Tribute to Col. Robinson”).

As Robinson’s unprecedented reception in Harlem and Chicago and his image portrayed in the *Defender* indicate, the aviator had managed to make black aviation and its military potential a nation-wide political issue. Even though monographs on Bronzeville, Chicago’s Black Renaissance, or Chicago aviation have ignored Robinson and his group, the aviator had turned Chicago air-minded. The image he projected was no longer that of an unlucky crusader – a trope prevalent in previous black aviation coverage – but rather of a Pan-African warrior, unafraid of colonizer’s technological superiority, because his own abilities and skills matched it. He had the support of the *Defender*, one of the most popular black newspapers in the country, as well as of Reverend Austin, a strong advocate of Pan-Africanism and black inter- and trans-nationalism. Robinson’s group had a para-military status and its leader had amassed well over a thousand flying hours, more than half of them on the battlefields of Ethiopia. Here had emerged a leader, the *Defender* seemed to be saying in its coverage of Robinson’s arrival, who could militarize black aviation. From Robinson’s return from Ethiopia onwards, the press coverage of black aviation would no longer use the crusader trope. It would increasingly emphasize the need for potential black aviators to seize educational opportunities and it would transform aviation, especially military training in aviation, into a political issue. If Forsythe and Anderson’s goodwill flight had utilized aviation as a means of fostering interracial relationship as a civil-rights issue, Robinson’s military duty in Ethiopia made black aviation decidedly political.

3.8 I’m Flying to Memphis: John C. Robinson’s Untold Mission

Still, in the spring of 1937, John C. Robinson laid claim to being a New Negro leader with one more mission which captured African Americans’ attention, but has gone entirely unnoticed in existing monographs on black aviation history. While the *Courier* relied heavily

on Powell and Schuyler's efforts to promote aviation on its pages, the *Defender* in 1937 invested directly into John C. Robinson's career, devising a new level of symbiosis between the black press and black aviators; the paper would later shift allegiance to Cornelius Coffey and Willa Beatrice Brown to lobby for the inclusion of African Americans in the CPTP. While Tucker's and Simmons' biographies of Robinson, as well as Scott and Womack's monograph on black aviation and the *Courier*, do note that Robinson spent much of 1937 touring the country and campaigning for aviation and his school, the combined efforts of the *Defender* and Robinson in the early spring of 1937 have so far gone unrecorded. The archive of the *Defender*'s articles on Robinson, however, indicates that the *Defender* was positioning itself to become the black press' leader in the aviation campaign by supporting the only African American war hero airman in the country and a model New Negro.

Robinson's new mission emerged in early 1937 – Memphis was under water. As Patrick O'Daniel notes, "Tens of thousands of desperate refugees rushed to Memphis fleeing floodwater in January and February of 1937. [...] This massive superflood broke all previous records, even those set in 1927. By mid-January it had devastated communities throughout the Ohio Valley, and then it moved into the rain-drenched Mississippi Valley." Suddenly, "overwhelmed Memphians not only had to accommodate the survivors of this disaster but also had to save their city from a flood crest greater than any before in the United States" (10). The *Chicago Defender*, distrustful of the Red Cross yet eager to help the black Southerners who had been the paper's loyal readers for more than two decades and had relatives in Chicago, paired with the Memphis Community Welfare League and promised to deliver food and other necessities to the area by train and plane ("Clothes, Shoes and Bedding Sent by Chicagoans").

On February 6, the paper announced on its front page that Colonel John Robinson would fly the *Defender*'s relief to Memphis. A photograph of Robinson in his pilot's jacket

with Ethiopian air force insignia was printed next to the announcement, which explained that Robinson was bringing “war-time experience and ability to aid.” While he was looking for a proper plane for the purpose of his mission, it was planned that he would make two trips a week from the paper’s relief station to the various camps in the flooded areas (“Col. John Robinson to Fly Relief Aid”). Two weeks later, the paper printed a large photograph of Robinson standing in full gear in front of a plane labeled “Chicago Defender Flood Relief.” His war experience and close ties to Ethiopia and its emperor were again highlighted through the accompanying caption, effectively portraying the aviator as a savior figure. Aviation was one of the few means of reaching the flood-stricken areas around Memphis and there was no one better equipped than the *Defender*’s pilot to complete this dangerous mission (“Chicago Defender Flood Relief Plane”).⁵⁶

Initially, however, Robinson’s plane suffered setbacks due to weather conditions and subsequent technical problems on the plane. Robinson was forced to land in Bloomington, Ill., and wait for spare parts. Owing to his reputation, however, the aviator was determined “to complete his mission of mercy to Memphis, Tenn., or die in the attempt” (“Col. Robinson Downed by Bad Weather”). Unlike Julian, who had promised similar determination but never delivered on it, Robinson eventually completed his mission in early March— and the *Defender* advertised it using language and tropes reminiscent of the paper’s coverage of the flyer’s return from Ethiopia. “Unseen hands, Friday just as evening was singing its swan song and the murk of the night was submerging the somber glow of a blood-red sun, rolled back the gathering clouds for just one minute,” wrote Dan Burley, the *Defender*’s correspondent in Memphis. “That one minute, ladies and gentlemen, was enough. It let the Brown Condor of Ethiopia, the personal air escort of his Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie, King of Kings, Conquering Lion of Judah, Select of God and Goodwill Ambassador of the *Chicago*

⁵⁶ The *Courier* informed on Robinson’s mission later in February in “Air Ace Flies to Memphis.”

Defender, Col. John Robinson, to slip through.” The city knew that “he would not fail [to arrive], since he didn’t fail Selassie,” explained Burley (“Brown Condor Lands Plane in Memphis”).

Robinson’s arrival had been mostly ignored by white Memphians, explains O’Daniel (77). And, since Robinson was supposed to arrive in Memphis two weeks before, only four people were awaiting him at the Memphis airport. According to Burley, the local white newspapers and radio shows had been mocking Robinson’s efforts for weeks, regarding “the flight as typical of Race enterprise” and expecting “some burlesque type of aviator – probably some aged fellow, bent, rusty, speaking some sort of ununderstandable lingo, crawling out of the cabin” (“Brown Condor Lands Plane in Memphis”). But Robinson’s arrival, successful landing, and visage recontextualized the mocking trope of inept African Americans, and apparently endeared him to the white reporters awaiting him and the word quickly spread around Beale Street that the promised black savior had arrived.

“The *Chicago Defender* became a symbol of progress,” claimed Burley, because the successful flight meant much to the city’s black populace (“Brown Condor Lands Plane in Memphis”). Robinson was even greeted by Robert Reed Church, Jr., Memphis’ most influential African American politician (“Bob Church Greets Flyer”). He spoke at the local radio station WNBR (“Memphis Officially Welcomes Col. John C. Robinson”) and took photographs with the city’s black businessmen and professionals (“Memphians Throng to Pilot”). He visited and gave speeches at the LeMoyne College and Porter School to hundreds of black students, telling them stories from Ethiopia and about flying (“1100 Memphis Students Hear Noted Flyer”). Throughout the coverage of these events, Robinson’s war experience in Ethiopia was highlighted repeatedly.

The *Defender* thus added a new piece to Robinson's existing aura of the race's savior and a race leader – not only had he been willing to fight Italian technological dominance in Ethiopia and prove black aviation's worth, but he also braved the calamitous weather and white Memphians' prejudice to deliver much-needed relief aid to Memphis. Black aviation was, owing to Robinson's skills and the black press' activities, connecting communities and making them notice the growing field. The *Defender* summarized Robinson's trip briefly in April ("Aviation"), but, more importantly, provided space for the aviator to write his own story of the "goodwill flight," as the paper called it on several occasions. In "Robinson's Own Story of Epic Flight," the pilot deferred any self-glorification and simply described the technical difficulties and dangerous weather conditions that had hampered his flight. Robinson's emphasis on solving these problems and his expertise in engine and flight mechanics, however, served as a reminder that black America had skilled black aviators who had bridged the racial technological gap, who were teaching those willing to learn how to excel in a technological field, and who did not hesitate to risk their lives providing a helping hand to communities in need.

3.9 The Writing in the Sky

By the end of 1937, the black press had thus established itself as the most vocal and influential advocate for black aviation. In cooperation with various organizations and individuals, it had managed to create a nationwide campaign celebrating and promoting pioneering black aviators. The black press also presented to its readers, in a barrage of articles, editorials, columns, and photos, the racial uplift tropes which characterized its coverage of black aviation: technical and mechanical education, job opportunities in the field of aviation, the crusading spirit and goodwill leadership of the flying New Negroes transcending borders and race, as well as the military dimension of aviation so vital for the

survival of Haiti, various African countries, and even of African Americans given the race-war invoking tragedy in Tulsa.

In the process, black newspapers also introduced an entire generation of skilled New Negro race leaders and role models, who sought to represent and recontextualize the representation of the race in the field of aviation and, as a result, disabuse Americans – black and white – of the stereotypical notion that people of color were technically and technologically inept, backward, and therefore uncivilized, as Charles Lindbergh and others before him so famously posited. By 1937, black America had raised an entire generation of successful black aviators. William J. Powell had been teaching flying and aeronautics as well running an aviation magazine in California and Arizona for almost a decade. Robinson and his group, comprised of many female aviators, had made Chicago's South Side air minded – some of the students would turn up at Tuskegee to train for the CPTP in the 1940s. John W. Greene had been advancing black aviation in Boston and Washington, D.C., Dr. Porter A. Davis had been dazzling Kansas City with his flying trips for over ten years. Leon Paris, Albert E. Forsythe, and Alfred Charles Anderson had demonstrated that black aviators could fly abroad and spread the gospel of technical and mechanical education, economic opportunities and the military dimension of aviation as a means of subverting long-standing stereotypes and proving Africa-descended people's humanity and belonging to the civilized world. In other words, black aviators had by 1937 emerged as race role models and leaders whose objective had always been to represent black America as technically apt and ingenious. Given the era in which they advanced black aviation – Jim Crow as well as the Great Depression – and their endeavors' starting point, black aviators established themselves as active participants in and contributors to the Harlem Renaissance's internationalism, struggles for various civil rights, and were depicted as those whom black America could call in time of

need. They set the ground and lobbied for the emergence of the Tuskegee Airmen in the late 1930s and first half of the 1940s.

Thus, when George S. Schuyler, perhaps black aviation's most vocal promoter among black journalists during the Harlem Renaissance era, released the first installment of *The Black Internationale* in the *Courier* in late 1936, black aviation had already become a commonly debated and popular topic in the black press and the communities it informed, molded, represented, and gave voice to. Schuyler's novellas – *The Black Internationale*, *The Black Empire*, and *Revolt in Ethiopia* – reflect this development; they address essentially all issues and engaged with tropes involved and depicted in the goodwill aviation campaign so heavily featured in black newspapers. Even though the novellas deal with a myriad of other issues as existing scholarship has shown, the texts also feature, celebrate, and propagate to a large degree – and in a fantastical vision – the phenomenon of black aviation and black aviators as New Negro race leaders and role models. Militant, assertive, technically as well as technologically-skilled, and inter- and transnationally-minded, Schuyler's black aviators represent a vanguard of progress and civilization among Africa-descended peoples as Schuyler imagines them seeking to establish a black empire of the air above Africa's skies.

4. *BLACK EMPIRE OF THE AIR: READING AVIATION IN GEORGE S. SCHUYLER'S SERIAL FICTION*

4.1 Introduction

George S. Schuyler's *The Black Internationale* and *The Black Empire*, serialized between 1936 and 1938 in the *Courier* under Schuyler's pseudonym of Samuel I. Brooks and collectively published in 1991 as *Black Empire*, have been read as pulp fiction mixing elements of science fiction and hard-boiled narration as well as characters to tell the story of Carl Slater, a Harlem-based journalist, and Dr. Henry Belsidus, a mysterious physician planning to violently reclaim Africa. In *The Black Internationale*, Belsidus carries out a large-scale invasion of Africa and subsequent mass murder of all white colonizers as he amasses a large educated and technologically-advanced army of trained aviators, soldiers, engineers, mechanics, doctors, and pastors of color to, once and for all, stop and deter white colonial powers from touching the African continent. In *The Black Empire*, Belsidus subsequently focuses on defending and strengthening the new empire, on controlling its skies. Schuyler's *Revolt in Ethiopia* serialized between 1938 and 1939 under the pseudonym of Rachel Call – and discussed in detail in section 4.7 – also deals with violent anti-colonialism. Dick Welland, an African American, aids Ettara, an Ethiopian princess, on a quest to secure a mythical treasure and to purchase weapons for Ethiopia's guerilla warfare against Italian occupants.

The duo of novellas comprising *Black Empire* has received considerable critical attention. Even though, in the 1991 edition of the texts published by the Northeastern University Press, Robert A. Hill and R. Kent Rasmussen observe that Schuyler's serial fiction "might not fit traditional definitions of *belles lettres*, it constitutes an extraordinary literary achievement and supplies an important key to a fuller understanding of [the author's] creative versatility" (260). The texts offer "readings as widely divergent as Pan-Africanist, radical, and fascist," argues Yogita Goyal in "Black Nationalist Hokum" (26). Pavla Veselá, for example,

reads the texts in “Neither Black Nor White” as blending of the genres of “thriller, melodrama, romance, war fiction, science fiction, and even the Soviet realist novel” (278).⁵⁷ Some scholars, for example John Cullen Gruesser in *Black on Black*, have deemed *Black Empire*, and *Revolt* by extension, a parody of fascism in general (111), while others, such as Etsuko Taketani in “Colored Empires in the 1930s” contextualize the novellas within Japan’s imperial ambitions in particular (138). Others have criticized Schuyler for engaging in “ideological aesthetic of black fascism” since Dr. Belsidus’ African conquest represents a “fascist political endeavor.” In fact, in creating Belsidus, claims Mark Christian Thompson in “Black Fascisms,” Schuyler seems to be asking the question “what if there had been a ‘black Mussolini’” (85).⁵⁸ Finally, Kalí Tal, in “‘That Just Kills Me:’ Black Militant Near-Future Fiction,” perceives *Black Empire* as an Afrofuturist “escapist fantasy combined with underlying cultural critique, designed for a public dissatisfied with their lived reality” (80).

Schuyler’s mixing of genres as well as his incorporation of topical issues, such as the Italo-Ethiopian war and rising support for militant black internationalism, have been used by scholars to explain the serials’ unprecedented popularity. *Black Empire* and later *Revolt* did certainly go “over mighty big” with the *Courier*’s readers, according to W.G. Nunn, the paper’s managing editor. *Black Empire* constituted “one of the best serials we have ever run [and] should be the answer to a circulation man’s prayers,” wrote Nunn to Schuyler in early 1937 (quoted in Hill and Rasmussen 268). Given the *Courier*’s rising circulation numbers in 1937, when it reached 250,000 primary readers, Schuyler’s novellas were not only popular, but also reached a large segment of the African American population since newspapers spread and circulated throughout communities, perhaps increasing the actual readership as much as

⁵⁷ Veselá explains that Belsidus’ emphasis on economic development, genetic miracles, centralized cultural and social policy, control of the masses, and the overall master-plot all resemble Soviet utopianism (282).

⁵⁸ As a result of his pro-Ethiopian columns and violent serialized novellas, Schuyler was watched by the FBI. For more, see William J. Maxwell’s *F.B. Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover’s Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature*

five-fold. For comparison, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, one of Harlem Renaissance's iconic novels, sold 5,000 copies between 1937 and 1945 (Lester 6).

Even Schuyler himself was surprised by his novellas' success. In an April 1937 letter to Percival Prattis, he explains that he had "been greatly amused by the public enthusiasm for [my novella], which is hokum and hack work of the purest vein. I deliberately set out to crowd as much race chauvinism and sheer improbability into it as my fertile imagination could conjure. The result vindicates my low opinion of the human race" (quoted in Hill and Rasmussen 260). Such denunciation of his own texts, however, cannot be taken at face value to label the novellas satire or parody only, as a number of scholars have done. As Hill and Rasmussen demonstrate in their afterword to the 1991 edition and the introduction to the 1996 edition of *Revolt in Ethiopia*, Schuyler wrote between 1935 and 1939 many texts supportive of black internationalism, Pan-Africanism, and Ethiopia alongside his scathing criticisms of racial essentialism and nationalism. *Black Empire* is thus "far more complex" than meets the eye, claim Hill and Rasmussen, because the novellas serve as "a historical document" which "reflect[s] the turbulence of the crisis-ridden [1930s]" and is rooted "in a strong sense of contemporary social issues" (261-3).

For example, a few months after publishing the last installment of *The Black Empire*, Schuyler penned an exhaustive essay for *The Crisis* on the plight of people of color under colonial and imperial rule. "The Rise of the Black Internationale" echoes the plot of his successful novellas, where technological advancements drive Dr. Belsidus' anti-colonial revenge: "[T]hese 75 years have seen the steady decline in the power and prestige of people of color the world over, thanks to the improvement in European firearms, the amazing technological advance of the West and the shattering of distance and isolation by modern transportation and communication," explains Schuyler. "[M]ost important of all, these years have seen the resultant rise of the White Internationale and the gradual rise of the Black

Internationale in opposition” (255). Despite Schuyler’s skeptical attitude towards his works, his non-fiction writing published simultaneously with his serialized fiction, and discussed below, suggests that the novellas represent a complex, albeit somewhat satirical, expression of and insight into Schuyler’s political and cultural persuasion.

Schuyler wrote forty five serials for the *Courier* during the 1930s under his own name and various pseudonyms – unlike other Harlem Renaissance authors, though, Schuyler wrote “almost exclusively [for] black [readers]” (Hill and Rasmussen 265-70).⁵⁹ Although his 1932 novel, *Black No More*, was published and heavily promoted by a white agent and publisher, Schuyler railed during the 1920s and the 1930s against the toxic influence white patronage exerted over black arts and literature. For example, in “Advice to Budding Literati” in the January 1926 issue of *The Messenger*, he criticized white patronage sustaining Harlem’s talents for its demands on black writing to be “bizarre, fantastical and outlandish, with a suggestion of the jungle, the plantation or the slum. Otherwise, it will not be *Negro* literature, and hence not acceptable” and financially supported (quoted in Hill and Rasmussen 300).

In “The Negro-Art Hokum,” Schuyler again refused such essentialism to be ascribed to African American literature. Instead, he preferred for black literature to function as propaganda. “[H]e believed that the best kind of art produced by or about blacks should promote the black struggle for economic and political equality,” explains Schuyler’s biographer, Jeffery Brown Ferguson (456). That is why in “Art and Propaganda” from 1926, Schuyler espoused “propaganda from the underdog—the oppressed class” and, in January 1936, after a year filled with race riots, he rejoiced in one of his columns that “the so-called

⁵⁹ According to Hill and Rasmussen, Schuyler used the pseudonym Samuel I. Brooks, which gave him an alter ego to use whenever he did not wish to be identified, as early as 1928 (264). Interestingly, according to the research conducted for this dissertation, Schuyler also used this pseudonym to author a series of editorials for the *Courier* between 1939 and 1941, in which he comments, among other things, on James H. Peck’s successes and criticizes, on numerous occasions, the fact that the Tuskegee airmen have not yet been allowed to fight in Africa and Europe during WWII.

Negro Renaissance [and] the Cult of the Negro is past. The Sambo Era has gone. The Coon Age is no more” (“Views and Reviews”).

Written strictly for a black audience, mixing various genres and current topics, and reflecting Schuyler’s complex views on cultural, social, and political issues, *Black Empire* and *Revolt* constitute Schuyler’s propagandist art by and about blacks at its extreme. One of the reasons for the texts’ popularity is that the novellas involve a plethora of fantastical and exaggerated elements, while also ultimately depicting people of color’s struggle for economic and political rights. This is perhaps best seen when the texts are read in connection with – and as an extension and promotion of – black aviation and its campaign in the black press. For, the novellas are not mere “escapist fantasy” as Tal claims, but rather almost propagandistic texts using transvaluation and recontextualization as they imagine and present black America’s potential for advancement, revenge, and reclamation of the ancestral homeland if only it had enough money at its disposal – a crucial element of black aviation’s coverage in the black press – and a capable leader at the helm to develop its talented black aviators and other technical professions.

The first installment of *The Black Internationale* appeared on the *Courier*’s pages on November 21, 1936, with advertisements, probably written by Schuyler himself, appearing a week earlier. Although aviation first emerges in the serial on January 16, 1937, after eight chapters, it barely leaves the story from that point on. In fact, aviation drives, frames, and makes possible almost all action in the novellas, taking the spotlight especially in the *The Black Empire*. This is true for the later *Revolt in Ethiopia* as well. Crucially, aviation, embodied by the character of Belsidus’ head of air force, Patricia Givens, entered the novella during a period when Schuyler produced perhaps his most eloquent defenses of and promotional texts about black aviation. Scholars have attributed Givens’ appearance on the scene to W.G. Nunn’s advice to Schuyler to “inject the woman angle” into the text one week

before Givens' entrance (Hill and Rasmussen 268). However, they have glossed over the confluence of Schuyler's pro-aviation texts with Givens' introduction as the head of the *Black Internationale's* air force which enables Belsidus to conquer and then defend Africa throughout the following fifty three chapters of the two serials. In other words, scholarly emphasis on Schuyler's treatment of gender in the text has obfuscated the fact that Patricia Givens represents the focal promotional aspect of Schuyler's novellas and the central driving force of and technology behind Belsidus' revenge plans: black aviation.

In "New Job Frontiers for Negro Youth," published in *The Crisis* in November 1936, the same month as the first installment of *The Black Internationale*, Schuyler outlines in more detail than before his vision for the technical advancement of black America. He observes that there are almost five million American youngsters "unemployed, not in school and seeking work," with African Americans "worse off because of the many lines of work from which [they are] excluded." "Only charlatans pretend to see," claims Schuyler, "a time when this young vast army will be employed privately." "What is [the young Negroes'] future?," asks Schuyler, "what sort of work can they get? For what sort of careers shall they prepare in this rapidly changing world?" (328). Science and technology are the solution, asserts Schuyler; both in real life and in his novellas where Dr. Belsidus assembles and finances an entire army of skilled technicians. With traditional teaching and preaching professions no longer economically attractive, and medical professions overcrowded, explains Schuyler, African Americans should turn to aviation mechanics, social work, and any type of engineering as this is the "age of technics and the key man is the technical scientist" (328-9). Although he does not highlight aviation as a field of opportunity for black pilots in this particular text, Schuyler's overall assessment of technical fields as key to the race's advancement previews Dr. Belsidus' ideology predicated on black technical creativity, ingenuity, and hard work.

Aviation drives the novellas, but scientific innovation on the part of black technicians and scientists complements aviation throughout the texts as well.

In December 1936, Schuyler added to his vision the essential role of black aviation for any potential advancement for people of color. The *American Mercury*, a magazine in which Schuyler and many other Harlem Renaissance authors had often published, ran an essay in July 1936 by Kenneth Brown Collings, titled “America Will Never Fly.” In it, Collings, a Marine pilot and a reporter from war-torn Ethiopia or later occupied Czechoslovakia, notes that the number of pilots who can and are willing to fly for the Army or the Navy is extremely low. This situation is exacerbated even further, claims Collings, by the fact that “Negroes cannot fly – even the Bureau of Air Commerce admits that” (292). Although Collings in a later text acknowledges that John C. Robinson represents an exception to this rule, the discrepancy in the ratio between black population and the number of black pilots cannot “be attributed to anything other than lack of ability” (“Mr. Collings Replies”).

Schuyler sent an eloquent and elegant rebuttal to Collings’ essay to the December 1936 issue of the magazine. In his letter, Schuyler presents a brief history of early black aviation, mentioning Eugene Bullard, Bessie Coleman, and Robinson who “eluded the entire Italian air force.” He summarizes the cross-country and international flights black aviators had carried out, including that of Leon Paris, and provides examples of successful air circuses held by aviators of color. In his outrage, Schuyler even goes so far as to posit that “there is a conspiracy in America to keep the Negro out of aviation as well as a lot of other avenues of endeavor.” Finally, he posits, “there isn’t anything [white Americans] can do that their colored brothers cannot do. You just can’t keep Sambo down – even on the ground” (“Negroes in the Air”).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ William J. Powell reacted to Colling’s essay in early 1937 as well.

The use of the Sambo figure, a stereotypical depiction of people of color, punctuates Schuyler's rebuttal to Collings and his defense of black aviation. However, it also signifies on his exhilaration over the alleged end of the Harlem Renaissance in his January 1936 column mentioned above. The figure connects the two texts in symbolizing the end of one era – literature by black authors tailored for white audiences – and announcing the beginning of another. An era of literature by and about people of color, which transforms the technically and technologically inept Sambo figure into a skilled and ingenuous black character. Given his passionate defense of black aviation, it does not come as a surprise that Schuyler frames the novellas, which he had begun to write at that very moment, in black aviation terms and weaves black aviation's goodwill message with an aggressively militarized aspect into his texts.

Finally, a few weeks after Schuyler introduces Patricia Givens in the novellas, he devotes his entire column for the *Courier* in late January 1937 to the importance of black aviation. "The machine that flies today successfully challenges the battleship, the tank, the submarine, and cavalry. [Planes sink] merchantmen and warships at will. [Aviation] has revolutionized warfare as much as gunpowder," observes Schuyler aptly. Time and geography no longer matter, explains the columnist, as "commercial airlines now girdle the habitable globe [and distances] formerly considered formidable are now negotiated [within a] few hours or days." Moreover, aviation offers job opportunities – as black aviation's goodwill message posited from its inception – since "great factories in all parts of the world hum with the activity of turning out thousands of these artificial birds that can fly farther and carry greater loads than any bird ever imagined." Indeed, jobs for "a new kind of technical expert [...] are plentiful," claims Schuyler confidently ("Views and Reviews").

In the rest of his column, Schuyler then recounts the glorious history of early black aviation, calling the achievements of black aviators such as Coleman, Robinson, Powell and

others “short of miraculous [...] considering the opposition to Negroes entering aviation or getting any instruction in it at all.” Noting that Powell’s school and workshop in California has recently build an entire plane from the ground up, Schuyler announces that “here is a new field Negroes are creating for themselves.” He urges his audience to take up aviation and get training because “there are never enough HIGHLY TRAINED workers in ANY field.” Finally, observing that “twenty years ago there were no colored radio engineers, municipal judges, tax commissioners, conductors of subway trains, air conditioning engineers, or salesman for great corporations,” Schuyler claims that all that is needed is support of the community for black aviation’s further advancement, “With the solid backing of a few thousand determined colored people, 100 trained Negro aviators and mechanics might get a unit in the Army Air Corps or secure work in airplane factories.” Predicting a coming war, Schuyler then closes his column with an ominous question: “Who knows how great the demand for skilled mechanics and pilots may be in 1940?” (“Views and Reviews”).

The *Black Empire* novellas answer Schuyler’s question. They imagine and depict the kind of work a well-trained army of black scientists, aviators, and mechanics could potentially perform in an armed conflict. Schuyler integrates his visions for a technically-trained black America and an advanced black air force led by Givens, a Bessie Coleman-like character, into his texts. In essence, Dr. Belsidus transposes black aviation’s goodwill message, its tropes and themes, into his plans: technical education and training, job opportunities in the field, aviation’s potential to cross boundaries and connect peoples of color across the globe, as well as its increasingly crucial role in warfare, all represent the building blocks on which Belsidus’ establishes his black empire. Throughout the two novellas, the doctor strives to gain and assert control over Africa’s skies to establish a black empire of the air and thus fulfill William J. Powell’s wish at the end of his 1934 autobiography to see the skies filled with black wings. In *Revolt in Ethiopia*, too, princess Ettara pursues the objective of re-gaining control over the

Ethiopian empire's sky. Overall then, Schuyler portrays, celebrates, and propagates black aviation as a means of subverting the stereotype of a technically and technologically inept Sambo, of recontextualizing and envisioning the potential of the field which black aviators have built by themselves despite Jim Crow, and of writing into being a modern, leading New Negro civilization predicated on cutting-edge technology and ruthless utilization of air warfare.

4.2 Educating the Black Internationale's Army and Putting it to Work

The Black Internationale's opening chapter is filled with action. Carl Slater, the novella's narrator, meets Dr. Belsidus and witnesses him murder a white woman; he is then kidnapped and begins to record Dr. Belsidus' master plan for the decolonization and reclamation of Africa. From the outset, Belsidus outlines that his campaign will be murderous and technology-driven. "With brains, courage and wealth even the most fantastic scheme can become reality," explains Belsidus to Carl, highlighting the role that black scientific and technical ingenuity will play in his scheme. "My ideal and objective is very frankly to cast down the Caucasians and elevate the colored people in their places," proclaims Belsidus, explaining his transvaluation of segregation as a positive phenomenon which he will use to his advantage to build a new, mechanized civilization of color. When Carl expresses doubts, saying that "white people have all the power, all the industry," the doctor unveils that it will be precisely black science which will be used to crush the alleged white technological superiority: "We have brains, the best brains in the Negro race. We have science of which the white man has not dreamed in our possession" (11), for example aviation. Schuyler thus introduces Dr. Belsidus as a charismatic and cold-blooded leader and Carl as audience, whose incredulity allows for Belsidus to expound on his designs.

In one of the dialogues in the novella's first chapters, Belsidus explains to Carl the structure upon which white supremacy – and his plan to bring it down – rests: technical and

scientific education. “All the means of education and information,” lectures Belsidus, “from nursery to college, from newspaper to book, are mobilized to perpetuate white supremacy; to enslave and degrade the darker peoples” (14). In a dialogue with delegates to the Black Internationale from Sierra Leone, for example, Belsidus observes that the country’s publishers and journalists, businessmen and traders, physicians, teachers, engineers, chemists, architects, and technicians are all white (34-35). Since Belsidus needs untainted black brains to execute his plans, he only recruits “young Negroes [who are] intellectuals, scientists, engineers. They are mentally the equal of the whites. They possess superior energy, superior vitality, they have superior [and] more intense, hatred and resentment; that fuel which operates the juggernaut of conquest.” With their help, and “new weapons of science,” Belsidus plans to “out-think and out-scheme the white people” (15).

Through many of his monologues and lectures, Belsidus thus highlights the fact that black liberation in the United States and Africa cannot succeed without reforming black men’s education. Schuyler portrays Belsidus, like himself, as painfully cognizant of the fact that black scientists, engineers or aviators – much like antebellum skilled artisans such as Denmark Vesey or Nat Turner – are the leaders that any black liberation and destruction of white supremacy, especially in education, cannot do without. Moreover, Belsidus intends to and does employ black youth for whom he foresees future in the numerous technical fields available. Although Schuyler could not envisage in his aforementioned essay for *The Crisis* “a time when this young vast army will be employed privately,” he imagines precisely such a scenario through Dr. Belsidus.

Overall then, if Belsidus’ plan to rid Africa of white colonizers and America of white supremacy is to succeed, black science and technology rooted in non-white education must lead the way “because everything in our civilization is predicated upon industry and commerce” (36). That is also why Belsidus equips his allies with cutting-edge methods and

materials to “teach the colored world how to read and write” in English, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese, as well as to “train technicians” (36-40). Moreover, at the first congress, all delegates to the Black Internationale are tasked with immediately selecting “one young man and one young woman who have finished secondary schools with honors and send[ing] them to America immediately for technical education,” and 10 young women with finished grammar school who will be sent to American trade schools (36). With money from illegal activities and slain white women, Belsidus is thus able to pursue his own segregated educational initiative.

Consequently, throughout the two novellas, Carl learns in seemingly every chapter of an invention or scientific discovery by Belsidus’ well-educated ‘brains.’ The texts are filled with proof that Belsidus’ reliance on an educational initiative is working. In chapter 10 of *The Black Internationale*, for example, Carl discovers legions of scientists and engineers at Belsidus-owned cement mills, liquid chemical farms, steam and electric plants (46-50). Upon his successful liberation of Africa, Belsidus’ men immediately install and erect the same facilities as well as build new roads and independent Temples of Love to propagate a Pan-African religion all over Africa.

Most importantly, however, Carl discovers in Chapter 10 that Belsidus boasts of a large all-black air force with its own hangars, airports, and planes – a true army of pilots and aviation mechanics. Belsidus reasons that without a well-trained air force, he cannot “successfully attack a great mechanical civilization with great mills, mines, factories, fleets, and above all the thousands and thousands of skilled technicians necessary for the conduct of modern warfare as well as the perpetuation of machine civilization.” Aware of John C. Robinson’s futile mission in Ethiopia against the *Regia Aeronautica* and Abd-el Krim’s bloody guerilla warfare against the air forces of France and Spain in Morocco in the early 1920s, Belsidus warns that “Abdel Krim, Haile Selassie and numerous other chieftains from

Fuzzy Wuzzy to Cetawayo [...] threw themselves against the machines of white civilization and failed” (36). Belsidus’ preparations and emphasis on readiness in terms of training, materials, and weapons read like a reaction to Haile Selassie’s fatal realization shortly before Italy attacked Ethiopia that “there are no factories to produce war materials [and] we did not have enough money to make purchases abroad. We asked for loans [but] we did not find anyone who would lend to Us” (quoted in Tucker 120). Belsidus’ obsession with readiness, proper technical training and education, as well as self-sufficiency thus reflect not only his skeptical views on the mainstream education provided to people of color, but also his skepticism towards the international community helping his cause. His ideology also seems to be heavily inspired by previous experiences of nations of color with white colonial powers’ technical supremacy – or the ever-present racial technological gap at the center of black press’ coverage of black aviation.

Apart from rigorous training, Belsidus also intends to rid his aviators, mechanics, scientists, and technicians “of that deeply ingrained inferiority complex, especially those who have been most exposed to the white man’s influence” (36). Carl is thus shocked when he first encounters Patricia Givens, the head of Belsidus’ air force, and personally experiences her supreme confidence. A week before Schuyler publishes his strongest endorsement of black aviation for the *Courier* in late January 1937, where he celebrates, among others’ William J. Powell’s students’ ability to construct a plane from scratch, Carl and the readers are taken to Westchester County, where Belsidus operates a mysterious facility. “This is our air school. [...] The hangars and workshops are away over there,” announces Givens to Slater (42). As Patricia shows Carl around the premises, he notes that he has “never seen a better ordered place.” He observes a facility, reminiscent of Powell’s workshop, where “more than a score of young colored men and women were working over engines, doping wings and otherwise engaged in the making and repairing of aircraft” (43).

The hangars hold twenty planes – some of them “built for high speed but several were huge transport planes capable of long journeys or carrying huge payloads.” Above the hangars, Carl is stunned to watch “two of the small speedy ships [...] performing the most hair-raising stunts.” Meanwhile, Patricia beams with confidence, telling Carl that “the time will come when we won’t have nearly enough [planes]. We finish one every ten days or so. It’s excellent training for our young mechanics and pilots. I have to keep them busy, you know?” (43). As the head of Belsidus’ air force who had studied aviation in France for three years like Bessie Coleman, Patricia explains to Carl, while piloting, that “it is the skilled technician, the scientist, who wins modern wars,” thus paraphrasing Schuyler’s “New Job Frontiers.” “[A]nd we are mobilizing the black scientists of the world. Our professors, our orators, our politicians have failed us. Our technicians will not” (46).

As Schuyler asserts in his column from late January 1937, black aviation is a field which aviators and mechanics of color have created for themselves. Patricia’s optimism for and belief in the leading role of technology and aviation in Belsidus’ plans echo Schuyler’s text. Consequently, from the moment when Carl and the readers are introduced to Patricia and the cutting-edge aviation facility in uptown New York, black aviation assumes a central role in the novella’s plot. Patricia takes Carl on short trips to other institutions belonging to the Black Internationale. They fly as far as Texas, where the facilities are all equipped with private airfields. She introduces him to hydroponic farming, the organization’s steam and electric plant, sun engine, and other revolutionary inventions which are “way past white science already” (50). At the end of the tour, having flown Carl across the country numerous times and having shown him all the black scientists’ achievements, Patricia triumphantly smiles at Carl and asks him, “Now do you doubt that we can win?” (54).

Still, the reason for Patricia’s triumphant optimism does not lie merely in her confidence in her own piloting and leadership skills or the technical ingenuity of her educated

and trained colleagues – it also lies in the entire organization’s self-sufficiency. Much like black aviators, led by Powell and Robinson – but without a crusading campaign in the black press to raise money for their efforts – the Black Internationale creates its own opportunities, its own fields of expertise, and produces its own leaders. It accepts and transvalues segregation as a fact of life and flourishes despite as well as because of it. In terms of aviation, ninety days prior to Belsidus dispatching his armed forces to Africa, the Black Internationale’s leader excitedly reports to his highest officers that “our airport and airplane factory in Westchester County has trained five hundred colored pilots, men and women, and manufactured one hundred pursuit planes and fifty bombing planes since we started the work” (86). The organization has purchased fifteen thousand acres in South Texas, where it has erected “six huge airplane hangars.” The entire place is to be “used later as an airport” for Belsidus’ “expeditionary force of five thousand men,” who are to be transported mainly by planes and freighters (87). Now that the organization has independently developed its army and air force and has established self-sufficiency in terms of materials, food, energy, and monetary sources, Belsidus is ready to “leave here in ninety days for West Africa” (87).

The first twenty chapters of *The Black Internationale* lay out the education and training phase of Belsidus’ plan. Once the leader launches his invasion of Africa, Schuyler depicts how technical and mechanical education can be employed in black liberation. Black Internationale’s invasion takes place without “the enemy [having any] inkling of what we are doing.” “Because they do not appreciate the magnitude of our work,” explains Belsidus to Carl, mocking Kenneth Brown Colling’s dismissal of black America’s efforts in aviation, “they are unable to cope with it” (88). No outsiders pay attention as “several rows of great bombing planes draw up with propellers whirring” and are loaded with men, gasoline, and oil. “With fifty bombers a day,” explains one of Belsidus’ operatives, the organization sends “five hundred men a day from [Westchester to Texas]. Within ten days our entire force will be

mobilized. It's good experience for the aviators. We've got a bunch of relief pilots at the other end. They bring these planes back tomorrow" (89). Along with freighters carrying cement, the planes and their pilots and mechanics play a crucial role in transportation and logistics. Aviation is thus initially shown to have a practical purpose in the invasion.

Since Belsidus' scheme is also inter- and trans-national, aviation also plays an essential role in the leader's communication with Black Internationale's cells in other parts of the world. Aviation, to paraphrase Schuyler's column from January 1937, renders borders, distances, and time differences unimportant. Carl captures this function of aviation with a metaphor: "It was seven o'clock when we reached our airport. A huge black and gold transport plane stood in the field near the quarters. It glistened in the rising sun like some huge prehistoric bird with wings spread, pulling a worm from the earth" (95). Modern technology and civilization are here combined with prehistory as Belsidus takes African Americans back to their motherland – back in time as well as toward a bright new future.

On board of the majestic mechanical bird, Belsidus, taking up Schuyler's claim that there is a conspiracy to prevent African Americans from learning to fly and perform other highly-skilled tasks, announces that "so long as the Negro did not make the machinery of modern civilization, so long as there were inner secrets to which he was not privy, just so long was the Negro doomed to remain a slave of the white man" (96). Slavery, a remnant of the past, is now over, however. Since Belsidus' army has acquired knowledge and wealth, it can enact its revenge, "the greatest venture black men have embarked upon in centuries" (92-6). Thus, on board of the prehistoric bird, Belsidus, Patricia, and Carl spend a half-week flying across vast areas. They visit former colonies with Africa-descended inhabitants such as Havana, Port-au-Prince "where Dr. Belsidus talked quietly with a slender black man for upwards of an hour," then Jamaica, Port of Spain, Georgetown, British Guiana, and Brazil's Recife. "On the morning of the fourth day," after having essentially completed Forsythe and

Anderson's pan-American flight from 1934 which never made it as far as South America, "Pat sent the giant plane down the runway and leaped off to Africa" (95-7). She sends black aviation onto another adventure; breaks boundaries and leaps back in time and into the future.

The way Belsidus employs his air force and air fleet within the United States and on his hop to Africa serves only as training; it can be considered a part of Belsidus' educational initiative. Once in Africa, however, the doctor truly puts his air force to work. Two days after Liberia falls to the Black Internationale, the entire "air force was parked on the Monrovia airfield while hundreds of men toiled to erect the temporary hangars" (109). Within a month, "airfields to the number of nineteen were scattered over the republic" (113) to ensure quick transportation, to secure control over the Liberian sky, and to prepare for the next round of invasion. The air force again helps with logistics: "By flying cement in large quantities to the various districts, the concrete troughs for the chemical farms had been quickly made and some were already in operation" (115). Under Patricia's direction, the air force transports and sets up radio towers in different parts of the country. In *The Black Empire*, the air force even delivers material and mechanics for setting up further radio towers across the continent within two days, with Patricia complaining that "[the material] would have been delivered in one day" if it had not been for the laziness of some workers (162).

Finally, as the full-scale invasion of Africa out of Monrovia is in final preparations, Carl observes "over to my right the new airfield, with its concrete runways, control tower and vast expanse cleared in a week by 2,000 workers, was in full operation. Some of the trucks loaded with cement and tools were delivering their loads to big bombing planes, which promptly took off to all parts of the Republic." Patricia parachutes cement, gasoline, and equipment all over the country every day. And feels exhausted, yet also privileged: "I love it, Carl. Oh, what a privilege to be doing what we are doing. Think what it will mean!" (115-6).

Aviation thus helps set up and accelerate all essential operations for the takeover of, first, Liberia and later the rest of Africa. Aviation functions as a building block – and delivers the necessary building blocks – of the Black Internationale’s infrastructure as the late chapters of the first novella read like an advertisement for technical and mechanical education which will lead to finding employment in aviation, construction, logistics, chemistry, and other fields requiring skills. Schuyler repeatedly embraced technical and mechanical work in his columns and essays for the *Courier* and *The Crisis* throughout the Harlem Renaissance era, and he transposes it to his extremely popular novellas. Aviation, however, is time and again highlighted in his non-fiction texts as one of the leading and indispensable fields in the increasingly modernizing and mechanized world. His novellas subsequently elevate black aviation into the most crucial cog in Black Internationale’s wheel which secures not only the smooth construction of a black empire, but which will also later assure that the empire’s military survives and imposes its will against colonial powers.

4.3 Revenge and Fury Raining from the Sky

“An air force [...] should not exist for defense but for offense. Such a force should not waste time upon the outbreak of hostilities trying to find the enemy air force in an effort to destroy it but should make immediately for the enemy’s industrial centers, transportation junctions, airfields and docks and destroy them,” summarizes Schuyler Giulio Douhet’s doctrine of air warfare in his review of *The Command of the Air* in March 1943. Originally written and published in 1921 in Italy, Douhet’s text was well-known and often read in U.S. military circles during the 1930s (Harahan, Kohn iii). It was officially released in the United States in late 1942 to support the Allied Forces’ Italian campaign during World War II and was even recommended in the *New York Times* as an ideal Christmas gift (“A Christmas Package of Wit and Fun”). Schuyler praises Douhet’s ruthless blueprint for air warfare in his review, explaining that if Japan had only followed the Italian’s singular vision, it could have easily

destroyed and taken over not only Hawaii, but the entire West Coast after its attack on Pearl Harbor (“Looks at Books”).

Schuyler most probably did not have access to the Army’s mimeographed version of Douhet’s text, but Belsidus’ merciless utilization of Patricia’s air force in his invasion and later aggressive protection of Africa is strongly reminiscent of Douhet’s teachings. This seems to be a result of Italy following Douhet’s doctrine of ruthless air bombing throughout its colonial campaigns in East Africa, especially in Ethiopia where John C. Robinson experienced Italian air power first hand and related it to the black press’ audience in his interviews with J.A. Rogers. Black papers reported, for example, on the bombing of Adowa, a revenge, according to Vittorio Mussolini, “for the heroic death of our soldiers, who forty years ago fell victim to overwhelming odds” (quoted in Tucker 124). In Adowa, an unimportant village filled with civilians and a Red Cross hospital, the *Regia Aeronautica* “unleashed two hard-hitting air strikes that dropped bombs. [...] An ugly omen of events to come, the Italians bombed a civilian population with little concern for consequences – early indications that Italy’s war would be a genocidal and racial conflict waged as much against Ethiopia’s civilians as its soldiers,” writes Phillip Thomas Tucker (126). As a result, the Italian air force became known as “baby killers” (127).

A report by the U.S. Air Corps analyzing the role of aviation in the war later stated that Italy “dropped over 2,000 tons of bombs and fired over 300,000 rounds of ammunition. [...] The extensive use of aircraft and mechanized forces [...] made it possible to advance with a rapidity never attained even on European battlefields. [...] Italian planes harassed Ethiopian supply lines [...] and helped break the morale of the enemy infantry [as well as] the heart of the people of the country” (quoted in Tucker 181). The *Regia Aeronautica*, much like Belsidus’ air force in the novellas, wiped out everything that stood in its way.

Although Mark Christian Thompson correctly notices that Schuyler's novellas represent a "violent, revolutionary, and ultimately literary vengeance for Italian aggression in Ethiopia" (*Black Fascisms* 85-6), his analysis focuses mostly on comparing Belsidus to Mussolini. Thompson omits the eerie way in which Belsidus' air force replicates Italian tactics and takes them to a new extreme as the novellas showcase black technical ingenuity in and ability to innovate existing air warfare equipment and strategy. Belsidus only implies aviation's power and efficiency in his early speeches about modern warfare and the fact that his organization's weapons have now surpassed those of the white man. Ultimately, however, the Black Internationale's air force serves as an explicit demonstration of the organization's military might – as well as a fictional depiction of what a well-trained fleet of black aviators could achieve if they followed Douhet's teachings and advanced it to a level imagined by Schuyler in his review of Douhet's text. If aviation is portrayed mainly as a useful and practical tool and means of transportation in the first portion of *The Black Internationale*, it becomes an indispensable weapon in the rest of the novella and particularly in its sequel, *The Black Empire*. The invasion of Africa, the subsequent creation of a black empire, and its survival are framed in aviation as Schuyler places air warfare in the forefront of all action.

In Chapter 29 of the first novella, Carl excitedly reports to the readers that a cotton mill is "turning out cloth in thousands of bales," chemical vegetable farms are feeding the Liberian natives better "than ever before in history," sun-powered factories are turning out guns, bullets, grenades, and shells – but there simply are not enough "in the way of airplanes and munitions in time for the great push" (122-3). Despite the organization's scientific and industrial achievements, Belsidus is aware that without a strong air force, his invasion will fail. Thus, he sends word for the "immediate purchase of fifty bombing planes" and, within weeks, he is ready to initiate the complete takeover of Africa. In spite of "the heavy tropical rain [...] falling in torrents [and] almost making the airfield a lake," the Black Internationale

air force stands “on that airfield in serried rows of glistening wings and bodies,” ready for take-off. Meanwhile, Belsidus shows to Carl a large map of Africa on which “every important African town was marked in electric lights set to turn green if in our hands and red if remaining in the hands of the whites” (123). As Belsidus and Carl watch the action unfold, “to 500 Temples of Love went the word to exterminate all white people and their black allies. As fast as sound can travel, the message of murder sped” (124).

Schuyler stages one spectacular scene of revenge carried out by Patricia’s powerful fleet after another, showcasing the power that armies can wield by utilizing a modern air force. “The rain suddenly stopped. Shortly afterwards the roar of a hundred airplane motors split the darkness,” describes Carl, breathless. “One by one the bombers and pursuit ships took off. In 15 minutes they were all winging their way to various destinations within a radius of a thousand miles” (125). Shortly, “laconic but no less encouraging messages” begin to come in: the French military infrastructure in Senegal and Ivory Coast is aflame, the government institutions in Sierra Leone have been bombed, and “whites [are] fleeing massacre in Kenya.” Green lights “jumped out all over the huge map” and reports “continued to pour in.” Patricia’s air force leads the charge in action or provides support where incendiary bombs have been used to start revolutions. Locals, supplied with “revolvers, ammunition and long sharp knives” assure that “the slaughter was proceeding with clocklike precision while the investments of Europeans went up in smoke” (126). Meanwhile, Black Internationale’s agents wreak havoc in European countries to send them fighting one another.

Still, explains Carl, aviation plays the most pivotal role in the violent takeover: “Belsidus did not believe that [the locals and the organization’s agents] could make the sort of shocking reprisal he wanted. This was where Pat and her air force came in” (128). “When the zero hour arrived, 100 planes took off under Pat’s command, loaded with high explosive and incendiary bombs,” quickly bombing the Gold Coast, Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone,

and western Ethiopia. “These operations were completed without accident or interruption before daylight,” narrates Carl, and “long before dawn a dozen towns and cities between Morocco and the Cameroons were in flames” (128-9). Reports come in with details about Patricia’s successful mission, each of them stating the inevitable: “All whites killed” (129). Schuyler here demonstrates how air warfare has transformed the ways in which wars are now led – Belsidus and Carl sit safely at the headquarters while the air force murders civilians and soldiers from a safe distance. Belsidus’ revenge is brutal in its own right, but Schuyler’s emphasis on aviation’s role in it serves as a powerful reminder of aviation’s increasing importance as well as the relative easiness with which armies – such as the Italian one in Ethiopia – can now swiftly attack and sow death anywhere.

Schuyler devotes entire paragraphs to the destruction of individual colonies. In the Belgian Congo, for example, the natives destroy, in a few hours, “what the Belgians had laboriously and cruelly erected in almost fifty years of colonial exploitation,” while in South Africa, the Zulus and “oppressed tribesmen” set Cape Town aflame (129-30). Most space, however, is devoted to Ethiopia. Patricia is guided into Ethiopian territory, Djibuti, and Italian Somaliland with the help of “signal fires lit by the Ethiopians in the hills.” Once there, her squadron “bombed every Italian barracks and supply station. [...] Those incendiary bombs wreaked havoc. Those that we didn’t kill in their beds, the Ethiopians did. With the arms and ammunition they’ve got, the Italians will never reconquer them,” rejoices Belsidus (132).

The Black Internationale’s military, including its mighty air force, carries out Belsidus’ plan in complete secrecy. Their stealth indicates two things. First, Patricia’s squadrons replicate Italy’s success in Ethiopia since, in 1935, Mussolini attacked without having declared war on Ethiopia. “After completing all their preparations, they crossed the border by aeroplane,” writes Haile Selassie, “without informing either us or the League of Nations of their decision to begin the war” (quoted in Tucker 124). Belsidus does not trust the

white-led institutions of the existing international order after what the League allowed Italy to perpetrate in East Africa, which is why his air force avenges Ethiopia with an unannounced and ruthless strike á la Italy. Second, the seeming secrecy of the Black Internationale's successful conquest of Africa belies the disbelief with which European colonial powers react to the situation. "Europe's numerous thickly populated cities were blown to bits as swarms of opposing airplanes dropped their deadly wares. Tanks rumbled to meet tanks and the thunder of big guns made night and day horrible. [...] By nightfall every European country was involved," explains Carl (133). Preoccupied with war on their continent, European governments cannot fathom that any African nation, let alone an international black front, could be behind these swift attacks employing modern weaponry. Most importantly, as Belsidus's agents make Italy believe that "British planes from Aden had raided their colonies, spreading fire and death," no one suspects an all-black air force to have carried out such a successful mission. The belief that people of color cannot fly is alive and well and Belsidus uses – transvalues – it to his advantage.

As *The Black Internationale* closes, "a great roar of motors overhead told us that Pat and her planes had returned. A heavy rain was falling, making the landing field soggy and slippery, but one by one the great ships came down and taxied to their hangars" (137). Belsidus' mission, carried out by the powerful air force, local insurgents, and agents in Europe has "made all Africa once more the possession of black men. The Near East was seething and watchful India was prepared to strike once more for freedom" (133). In Europe, "pitiless and persistent air attacks reduced the civilian populations further into bestial fear and terror" (138). Belsidus, tired yet jubilant, announces to the Black Internationale delegates from all parts of the world – who have been "brought [...] by our airplanes [to] Kakata, Liberia, [...] the capital of the new Empire of Africa" (139) – that "Africa does not need and does not want the white man. Africa will not have the white man." Instead, "we will have our

own culture,” clamors Belsidus, “our own religion, our own education, our own army, navy and air fleet. [...] Together we can build [...] an empire of black men and women working toward a cooperative civilization unexcelled in this world. [...] Brains and organization triumphed once. They shall do it again” (140-2).

The first novella’s finale signals the end of Belsidus’s conquest of Africa and a successful vengeance on European colonial powers’ plundering of the continent. Given the novella’s success and the fact that Schuyler was compelled to write a sequel, the “serials [must have] provided a sense of epic revenge,” claim Hill and Rasmussen, especially in view of the “tremendous sense of violation and outrage that the Italo-Ethiopian war unleashed among blacks worldwide, including the frustration of those who had attempted to volunteer to fight in Ethiopia but were prevented from doing so by the U.S. and other western governments” (281). The last thirteen chapters of the first novella, for example, function as a long list of announcements of the atrocities perpetrated against white colonizers and their local aides, as well as of descriptions of a brutal, fratricidal war taking place in Europe. For those hurt by Ethiopia’s surrender in December 1936, but hopeful for its continuous guerilla warfare, the ending of *The Black Internationale* must have brought a sense of exhilaration and an understandable desire to read what Belsidus would do next.

Revenge, however, appears in the first novella even before Patricia’s air force is ever used over African skies. In Chapter 16, Belsidus interrupts preparations for his invasion and orders the head aviator to avenge a lynching in Mississippi, where a man was lynched despite being “absolutely innocent of the rape with which he was charged” (67). “The South and those who rule it understand only one thing: force. That country lives and dies by violence. Therefore we shall repay violence with violence, burning with burning, death with death,” explains Belsidus to Patricia and Carl, with his eyes glowing “ominously, almost fanatically” (68). Patricia quickly flies to Mississippi – displaying early in the novel her prowess, the

practical use of aviation, and its capability to cross vast spaces – where Carl first drops leaflets explaining to the inhabitants their grave sin for which they are being punished. Signed “The Sons of Christ,” the leaflets are to shift blame for the revenge onto a group of Catholics – this is reminiscent of Schuyler’s 1932 novel, *Black No More*, where the main character, Max Disher, also distributes fictional leaflets to cause infighting. Once Black Internationale’s posters are dropped, Carl releases thermite bombs and sets the town of Newton on fire: “Streams of blinding fire ran in all directions, igniting everything in their path [...] Flames swept everywhere. The town became a raging inferno” (70).

This revenge of a lynching seems to fit the pattern described by Hill and Rasmussen that the two novellas possess “a radical vindicationist air” which gives them “a structural and ideological coherence” (279). There were 34 lynchings in the United States between 1935 and 1937 (“Famous Trials”), that is during a time when African Americans, especially in the South, had to tone down their support for Ethiopia as national and local newspapers sided with Italy (Tucker 124). One can thus read Belsidus’ swift and unexpected act of revenge – given his preoccupation with preparing for his mission – as a reaction to these lynchings. Or, in fact, as a response to any and all lynchings: the image of a black aviator dropping bombs in retaliation for the notorious act must have caused exhilaration in Schuyler’s audience no matter what.

However, in the context of Schuyler’s aviation framework for the novellas, this revenge can also be read as a symbolic retribution for Tulsa race riot of 1921, the very reason why the black press and black aviators campaigned so heavily for the development of aviation as a matter of survival for black America. Sparked by an alleged sexual assault of a 17-year-old white girl by an African American boy, the Tulsa race riot led to the destruction of an entire section of the city and, more importantly, introduced air warfare and merciless bombing onto the American soil and into the African American psyche. Given how well-versed

Schuyler was in early black aviation history, Garveyist race-war rhetoric, and the history of the black press, it is possible to see how Patricia's brief mission in aerial warfare in Mississippi symbolizes a revenge for the scarring events in Tulsa.

Despite this episodic revenge which features aviation and previews Belsidus' future utilization of air warfare, most scholars have focused on the overall atmosphere of revenge and race war pervading *Black Empire*. For Yogita Goyal, the two novellas depict "black nationalism as a global tyranny, an empire that is as vicious and evil as the one it replaces, powered not by dreams of freedom but by fantasies of revenge." As an ideologue of such nationalism, Dr. Belsidus then "functions in a way wholly counter to the anti-colonial platform of pan-Africanism" (22). Or, as Alexander M. Bain posits, Belsidus shows what "organized internationalism could *not* look like" (944). On the other hand, claims Tal, the novellas simply express Schuyler's pessimism "about the possibility of achieving justice and equality 'within the system'" (67). This would explain Belsidus' distrust of institutions set up by white Americans and other Westerners, such as the education system or the League of Nations. Overall, some scholars criticize Schuyler for cynicism towards race relations and for his exploitation of race chauvinism in the texts, while others have tried to contextualize the novellas in a framework of violent resistance against oppression and colonialism.

Some scholars have also been looking for specific sources of Schuyler's inspiration for the violent revenge depicted in the novellas. For example, in a groundbreaking interpretation of *Black Empire* and some of Schuyler's journalistic work, Etsuko Taketani explains that Schuyler's novellas participate in the larger cultural and intellectual project of the "Black Pacific," which provides an interpretative matrix for the novella's use of revenge and race war. Schuyler's texts from the mid-1930s deal with the race war theme, claims Taketani, since it emerged "as a reciprocal fantasy of the black and fascist Italian presses, the product of the broad and violent fascination with a 'colored empire' triggered by the rumored

alliance of Ethiopia and Japan” (“Colored Empires in the 1930s”142). The black press wrote repeatedly about the possibility of the two empires of color joining in an anti-colonial war against Italy, and Schuyler even wrote a series of unpublished essays for the *Courier* titled “Japan and the Negro” in 1937/8 which teased out the contours of such an alliance (140). In Japan, texts envisioning an alliance between Japan and black America had existed for some time as well. Kojiro Sato, a retired army officer, had for example written a book called *A Fantasy of the Japanese-United States War* in 1921, in which ten million African Americans, led by Marcus Garvey, “rise in revolt against the United States with arms and ammunition supplied by Japan via [a] great airship” (*The Black Pacific Narrative* 72). Taketani thus presents compelling evidence for black America’s fascination with Japan to have served as inspiration for Belsidus’ vengeful race war.

Some scholars have also read *Black Empire* alongside Martin R. Delany’s *Blake or the Huts of America* (1859-61), Sutton E. Griggs’ *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* (1903) or DuBois’s *Dark Princess* (1928) to contextualize Schuyler’s use of black inter- and transnationalism, race war, revenge, and liberation tropes. Little scholarly attention, however, has been paid to Dusé Mohamed Ali’s novella *Ere Roosevelt Came: A Record of the Adventures of the Man in the Cloak*, serialized in the *Lagos Comet* between February 24 and October 13, 1934. Born in Egypt in 1866, Ali, Marcus Garvey’s mentor during his London work for the *African Times and Orient Review* between 1912 and 1914, worked as Garvey’s UNIA’s foreign secretary and regular contributor to Garvey’s *Negro World* in the early 1920s in New York. After his break with the UNIA, Ali moved to Detroit, where he worked with pan-Islamic groups, and then to Lagos, Nigeria, where he edited the *Comet* (Lubin 70-74, Adi and Sherwood 1-5). In the mid-1930s, Ali criticized Italy and the League of Nations for their treatment of Ethiopia in Schuyler’s *Courier* (“Says England Will Lose India”). And his Lagos-based paper was even advertised by the *Courier* in 1936 by

Schuyler's friend and colleague, Percival L. Prattis ("Questions and Answers"). It is unclear how much Schuyler knew about Ali's views and the novella, but, given his close study of all things Garveyite and his interest in international affairs, it may be safe to assume that Schuyler was at least partially aware of Ali's work in Nigeria and even of his novella.

Curiously, claims Alex Lubin in *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of Afro-Arab Political Imaginary*, Ali eschews pan-Islamism in his novella and focuses instead on "the struggle of black Americans to represent the United States" (74). Like Schuyler, Ali disavows black nationalist leadership – with his text parodying Garvey and DuBois – and instead turns to "African American airmen as the saviors [of] an impending international race war" (74). In the novella, Emperor Blood, the leader of a white supremacist group mobilizes against the Afro-Asian world "on behalf of the 'Nordic Empire,'" only to ally himself with Russia and Japan, whose forces are, however, destroyed by an all-black air squadron. Ali embraces the black airmen as "ideal citizens in the United States" who are, in the end, granted a full citizenship and integration for their valuable service rendered to the country (75), ends Lubin his analysis of black aviators' presence in Ali's text.

Still, there is more to black aviation in the novella than Lubin reveals as Ali effectively recreates a thinly-veiled Garveyite fantasy of establishing an all-black air force in the aftermath of the Tulsa race riot. The ALL BLACK AIR LINE begins in the text as a group of "fifty University men, formed [...] into a prospective flying corps" and trained at a flying field in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The black press broadcasts information about the organization and, shortly, there are three hundred applicants "pour[ing] in from all parts of the United States," with money being successfully collected for modern planes and equipment as well. Learning of the enterprise, Emperor Blood initially regards it "a sensational joke," but eventually fears that the aviators "might assist unemployed Negro rioters or take reprisals from the air on his lynching parties" (Chapter XXI).

Like Schuyler, Ali writes air battle scenes into his text. In Chapter XXIII, Blood's Invisible State forces attack the black-owned airfields and hangars in Oklahoma, Georgia, and Louisiana only to be "shot down or driven off" by the well-prepared African Americans. Three chapters later, the black squadron receives more planes, paid for "liberally" by black American communities across the country, and is dispatched to the Alaskan peninsula to protect the nation against a Russian invasion. Working on this mission "by employing their hands and minds" gives the black aviators "an entirely new outlook [and] a new concept of their duty to the State" as they begin to command "the respect and admiration of all patriotically inclined Americans." In Chapter XXVII, after long preparations, the enthusiastic all-black air force is depicted in a spectacular battle against the Russians, "practically wip[ing] out the demoralized Soviet air-men" with "incendiary bombs and machine gun fire." The black press celebrates the air force's heroism and success, California declares a state holiday to honor the squadron, and the newly elected integrationist president outlaws segregation and passes legislation which assures racial equality in the country forever.

In essence, Ali, writing in 1934, does not only fantasize in his text about a more effective version of Garvey's Black Eagle Flying Corps, discussed in section 2.1 of this dissertation, but he also makes the dreams of black journalists and black aviators – working on the black aviation campaign – come true in a fictional form. In Ali's novella, black aviation serves as a deterrent against lynching and race riots. Emperor Blood watches in horror in the novella's final chapters as black aviators thwart his plans by raining revenge and fury from the air upon the Invisible State's white supremacist forces. Furthermore, black aviation's success inspires African Americans in the text to pursue technically-skilled employment and to embrace aviation as the leading technology which helps present black America to the rest of the world as civilized and technologically-advanced. Black aviators earn the respect of their fellow countrymen – which ultimately results in the acceptance of

black Americans as rightful citizens of the United States. Black aviators represent the race so well in Ali's novella that they convince white America of their humanity, worth, and ingenuity, the very objective at the heart of the black aviation campaign.

Schuyler's *Black Empire* provides a much more complex depiction of black aviation and of revenge carried out by an all-black air force. While Ali's novella – predominantly focused on the political machinations of Emperor Blood and black nationalist leaders – offers glimpses of how black aviators could avenge centuries of racial oppression, Schuyler's texts envision an entire global campaign involving the Americas, Africa, and Europe. Ali's novella with a surprising black aviation element therefore may help explain what inspired Schuyler to frame Belsidus' revenge in aviation terms, but it is argued here that reading aviation and the black aviation campaign in more detail in *Black Empire* contributes even further to the existing critical conversation on revenge and race war in Schuyler's novellas.

As Chapters 2 and 3 in this dissertation have shown, a race-war scenario had been hotly debated in the black press well before the Italo-Ethiopian conflict triggered an unprecedented wave of empathy for Ethiopia and rage against Italy among African Americans and people of color worldwide. In fact, it seems that Italy's attack merely enhanced an already existing issue which had always included a strong air warfare element – especially after Tulsa and the gradual emergence of successful black aviators, including John C. Robinson, the head of the Imperial Ethiopian Air Force. Schuyler had been one of black aviation's most vocal proponents during the Harlem Renaissance era and it should therefore come as no surprise that he not only invokes the race-war scenario in his novellas, but also that black aviation plays a pivotal role in the fictional, fantastical narrative of revenge raining down from the skies.

While Mark C. Thompson asserts that Schuyler's novellas came to existence because, “unable to write columns containing factual accounts of African American valor on the

battlefields of Ethiopia, Schuyler manifests in fantasy what African Americans have been barred from doing” (“God of War” 186), it seems that Schuyler wrote *Black Empire* precisely because he had been observing with keen interest the development of black aviation. And he especially followed the engagement of one of black aviation’s major representatives, John C. Robinson, in Ethiopia against Italy’s vaunted air force. Schuyler fantasizes in a July 1935 column that “as an old soldier, I would certainly like to participate in [the Ethiopian] adventure and press a machine-gun trigger on the Italian hordes as they soiled over the Ethiopian terrain. It is one of the few wars in which I could participate with enthusiasm.” However, all he “can do [is] to meet the exactions of the landlord, the butcher, the groceryman [and] the other parasites that feed on me” (“Views and Reviews”). Eighteen months later, though, when Robinson has emerged as virtually the only African American soldier who fought in Ethiopia and has become a war hero in the black press, Schuyler’s fantasy materializes in a duo of violent, hard-boiled novellas with an overt aviation framework. Thus, as much as black America’s fascination with Ethiopia’s potential alliance with Japan may have informed Schuyler’s depiction of a race war, the fact that an avowedly Pan-Africanist black aviator participated in an actual race war in revered Ethiopia must have inspired Schuyler to a large degree as well.

To the black press, Robinson represented a racial uplift and war hero. The *Defender* informed its readers at the end of Robinson’s mission in Ethiopia in May 1936 that the Chicagoan had been “cited several times for bravery. He was in twelve actual flying battles and in one he narrowly missed shooting down the plane of Mussolini’s son” (quoted in Tucker 179). Despite little actual military training and lack of modern equipment, Robinson managed to hold his own against the *Regia Aeronautica*, black newspapers asserted. Given his unprecedented heroics, however, black America must have wondered what would have happened if only Robinson’s plan, initiated at the beginning of his tenure in Ethiopia, to form

an all-black air force composed of his colleagues from the Military Order of Guards had materialized.

Although Selassie refused to bomb the Italians from planes since it would have been “contrary to all Ethiopian ideas of gallantry in battles” (Tucker 135), the emperor had from early on intended for Robinson to assemble an all-black air force, without French or British pilots. Selassie and Robinson hoped that young Ethiopian student-pilots would learn from “a nucleus of experienced African Americans” from Robinson’s Chicago group. The *Courier* reported on this objective of Robinson’s in early January 1936, explaining that the aviator was attempting to bring six of his colleagues to Ethiopia, but the U.S. government prevented them from departing (“Col. Robinson Orders Six New Planes”). In mid-January, the paper even ran two large photographs on its cover page – one of J.A. Rogers with a uniformed Robinson, “who fought off two Italian planes when Adowa was bombed,” and the second of Willa Beatrice Brown, one of Robinson’s most successful students. Captioned “Wants to Fight Italian Bombers,” the photographs of Brown presented to the paper’s audience a female aviator “horrified by the attacks of Italian aviators on undefended Ethiopian cities and towns” and willing to “answer [Robinson’s] call to Ethiopia.”

In advertising two Pan-Africanist black aviators fighting or willing to fight for Ethiopia on its cover page, the *Courier*, Schuyler’s home newspaper, teased the possibility of Robinson forming an all-black, African American-led air squadron to fight Italy. It fueled the existing popular race-war scenarios expressed by Schuyler in his columns and by black aviators and supportive journalists, as well as the paper’s readers, during the aviation campaign. In fact, *Courier*’s circulation increased more than threefold owing to its passionate reporting on the Ethiopian crisis – and as a result of Schuyler’s novellas’ popularity. Moreover, the paper also created and promoted a fantasy of an African American female aviator, who “makes you enjoy spending your money at one of Wallgreen’s drug stores”

(“Wants to Fight Italian Bombers”) during her everyday job as a cashier, leading a squadron of Ethiopian airplanes in an aerial attack to avenge Italian atrocities. Hill and Rasmussen therefore correctly posit that Brown may have inspired Schuyler to write Patricia Givens into his novellas (284); however, they ignore John C. Robinson and his connection to Brown, his stature in the black press and its aviation campaign, as well as his omnipresence in the newspaper coverage of the Italo-Ethiopian war. Yet, it must be pointed out here that Patricia’s character carries out in *Black Empire* the very revenge against Italy that Brown was not given a chance to participate in and Robinson could not fully accomplish. In other words, Schuyler’s novellas depict Patricia’s air force as successfully finishing Robinson’s mission to form an all-black air force and to defeat Italy – with a vengeance. The imagery, language, and characters associated with revenge and race war in Schuyler’s novellas are thus formulated in aviation terms, having been inspired by real events and real black aviators.

Education, technological and scientific advancement, violence and revenge – all these essential themes and tropes depicted in *Black Empire* are always already framed in aviation terms. The revenge and race-war aspects of the texts – as shocking and difficult to comprehend as they may be – seem to symbolically exorcise the demons of black aviation history. Patricia’s mission in Mississippi avenges a horrific lynching, while serving as literary retribution for the Tulsa race riot in 1921. The specter of the racial technological gap and air warfare which sparked the black aviation campaign in the black press and haunted black aviators, leaders, and journalists throughout the 1920s and the 1930s is dealt with swiftly and cruelly in Schuyler’s novellas as Patricia and Carl bomb a Southern town without remorse. Furthermore, Schuyler transposes into his texts the fantasy of a race war involving an all-black air force. Inspired by the aviation campaign which presented John C. Robinson as a war hero and a race leader who attempted to face a technically-superior colonial power by assembling a squadron of skilled African American aviators, including an attractive, Pan-

Africanist woman who led a double life as a cashier and an aviator wishing to avenge Italian savagery in Ethiopia, Schuyler composes novellas where aviation is the means by which Ethiopia is avenged and Robinson's mission successfully completed. In a sense, *Black Empire* thus serves as a coping mechanism for the anxieties and frustration omnipresent throughout the black aviation campaign.

4.4 Control of the Air: Armed Liberation, Decolonization, and Survival

Still, revenge in the context of a race war is only one side of the air warfare coin in *The Black Internationale* and *The Black Empire*. Retribution features heavily particularly in the former text, but aviation as a means of violent liberation, decolonization, and subsequent fight for survival is a prominent, if not dominant characteristic of the latter serial. Scholarship concerning Schuyler's texts, however, has mostly addressed the politics of Belsidus' empire after the revolution has been completed. Goyal, for example, asserts that Belsidus behaves not as "a liberator but a colonizer" who denies or ignores African "autonomy and self-determination [and] manipulates native chiefs" (26). For him, diaspora represents "military conquest" and his project stands for "nationalism gone berserk, with little redemptive value" (24-5). Indeed, Belsidus establishes a provisional dictatorship because "Negroes are not yet used to freedom" and because his leadership will assure that Africa remains "completely safe from white attacks" (Schuyler 141). According to Alexander M. Bain, this vision then "streamlines a continent into a monoculture [and a] modernized, neo-liberal African superstate" (947-52). However, such assessments seem rash, given how little postrevolutionary politics the novellas involve.

Scholars often support their reading with the first two chapters of *The Black Empire*, in which the surgeon general expounds on the empire's fascist use of eugenics to "eliminate the unfit" (148). However, as Kali Tal aptly points out, "the authors of black militant novels of armed resistance to and overthrow of white supremacy [including Schuyler] almost never

attempt to describe postrevolutionary society and often abandon their protagonists before, in the middle of, or immediately after the battle” (70). Thus, even though *The Black Empire* does provide numerous brief glimpses of Belsidus’ views on society-building and state politics, the novella’s focal point is the newly-established empire’s fight for survival and complete liberation. Throughout the sequel, the empire finds itself in perpetual crisis and revolution, and Schuyler thus depicts the most extreme of situations in an armed struggle for liberation.

Violence and action again fill the pages of *The Black Empire*. As Taketani correctly explains, however, “nonviolence is no alternative [for Belsidus] to the structural violence of colonialism.” In this sense, Taketani observes, Schuyler’s novellas express views preceding Frantz Fanon’s seminal text “On Violence” in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), particularly the notion that “anticolonialism is no less anticolonial for being violent” (Taketani 142). According to Fanon, armed liberation or decolonization is always already brutal:

National liberation, national reawakening, restoration of the nation to the people or Commonwealth, whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonization is always a violent event. At whatever level we study it [...] decolonization is quite simply the substitution of one ‘species’ of mankind by another. [...] Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is clearly an agenda for total disorder. But it cannot be accomplished by the wave of a magic wand, a natural cataclysm, or a gentlemen’s agreement. [...] In its bare reality, decolonization reeks of red-hot cannonballs and bloody knives [because] to destroy the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonist’s sector, burying it deep within the earth. (1-6)

Fanon’s aggressively poetic definition of violent decolonization perfectly captures how Belsidus sees his liberation struggle and the way Schuyler portrays it. Substitution of species takes place on two different levels in *Black Empire* since Belsidus does not only violently

transform the politics, geography, and minds of colonized Africa and its inhabitants, but he also initially converts skilled but unwanted, proud but degraded African Americans into New Negro fighters who, with aviation leading the charge, wreak havoc on white colonizers. Aviation is depicted as the one technology which allows for this transformation, the substitution of one species for another, to happen. Patricia's air force facilitates and heads the process of violent liberation, while embodying the very essence of the transformed New Negroes.

In "This is the Voice of Algeria" (1959), Fanon highlights the role of technology in liberation and decolonization. Mapping the use of the radio during Algeria's anti-colonial struggle during the 1950s, Fanon explains that by purchasing a radio receiver and listening to the *Voice of Free Algeria*, the Algerians obtained "the only means of entering into communication with the Revolution, of living with it." "Almost magically," asserts the Martinique-born psychiatrist, "the technical instrument of the radio receiver lost its identity as an enemy object. The radio set was no longer a part of the occupier's arsenal of cultural oppression." Suddenly, "having a radio meant paying one's taxes to the nation, buying the right of entry into the struggle of an assembled people" (8). In other words, the Algerians adopted their colonizers' technology – although traditions had previously forbidden it – and transformed it into a unifying instrument in the decolonization movement.

Fanon's treatises on violence and the use of technology in decolonization open a reading of Schuyler's novellas as depicting an always already violent fight for liberation, which relies heavily on adoption as well as creative and ingenious transformation of the enemy's technology – aviation – into a weapon of resistance, liberation, and survival. Appropriating technology and mastering it to liberate a colonized or oppressed people's minds and actual everyday existence lies at the heart of Belsidus' project. At the same time, it also lay at the root of black aviators' attempts to make black America air-minded through

education, air events, a campaign in the black press, and overall representation in the field. In placing aviation in the forefront of his novellas, Schuyler amplifies black aviators' goodwill message with a fictional depiction of armed liberation via aviation. What Leon Desire Paris' flight to Haiti during the U.S. occupation symbolically promised but ultimately could not deliver and what Robinson's heroic but futile mission in Ethiopia teased in black newspapers and the popular imagination, Schuyler completes in his violent celebration of air warfare. In particular, *The Black Empire* takes the readers through an aviation adventure where Patricia and Carl carry out missions to protect the empire, assure its survival against technologically-superior colonial powers, and, once and for all, liberate Africa. In short, *The Black Empire* revolves almost exclusively around the control and liberation of the air above Africa as it serves its propagandistic purpose of celebrating and promoting black aviation.

The very first pages of the sequel novella prepare the readers for the frantic struggle for survival which will occupy Belsidus' mind throughout the text. "The European nations [...] were now locked in a fight to the death which our agents had instigated. But how long would that war last? And when it was over, would the victors ignore Africa?," wonders Carl. And "if they attacked, how could we hope to hold off their mighty battle fleets and their swarms of airplanes? Our technical staff was driving ahead feverishly to prepare for the inevitable struggle, but our progress was maddeningly slow," complains Carl, worried, to the readers (146). Carl and Patricia leave for their honeymoon, hoping that the war raging in Europe will give them some respite. Within days, however, Belsidus summons all delegates to Kakata and announces that "Europe has started its war to recapture Africa." Attacking with powerful air forces, Belsidus reports, "the Italians bombed and took Tripoli an hour ago. A French air squadron has flown over Tunis demanding surrender and we may expect the British to strike at any time." Indeed, "We had done our best," acknowledges the leader of the Black Empire, "but we hadn't had time to prepare properly. The whites knew this, I supposed,

which was why they were attacking now, before we became strong” (165-8). Within the first six chapters, the empire faces impending doom as European countries’ thirst for African resources and colonial labor overpowers their grievances and they attack Africa from the air. This sets up the novella as a fight for liberation taking place mostly in Africa’s skies.

While *The Black Internationale* outlines the makings of an all-black military and a revolution predicated on people of color catching up with and surpassing white science, the plot of the sequel relies mostly, if not solely on technical innovations to air warfare with the objective of gaining command of the air. General McNeel reports to Belsidus that “we have less than 500 planes. And any one of the airplane carriers of England, France, Italy or Germany carries that many. [...] We have a million rifles, ample stores of small arms ammunition and thousands of machine guns. [...] But frankly, Chief, it couldn’t last long in the face of such opposition as we have now.” The Black Empire’s army is able to “bomb battleships, troopships, and landing parties, but we can only do it as long as we have control of the air” (170). Patricia, dejected, cannot but agree with McNeel’s assessment.

Initially, in his reaction to McNeel’s report and Patricia’s skepticism, Belsidus seemingly dismisses aviation as a decisive feature of modern warfare, stating that “air bombs do not win wars. Look at the examples of Madrid and Shanghai. They continued to be held even after repeated heavy attacks from the air” (169). Then, however, Belsidus introduces his first innovation to aerial warfare: employing his stratosphere planes in combination with chemical warfare. The revolutionary stratosphere planes are revealed at the end of the first novella as machines capable of flying at the speed of 400 miles an hour (136). Yet, they are never employed in the invasion. In her new mission in the sequel text, however, Patricia is to utilize all fifteen of them. Her air force is to carry scores of cages filled with “a strange and deadly army” of rats infested with cholera, spotted typhus, bubonic plague, and other deadly

illnesses and to drop them over major European cities to paralyze the colonial powers threatening Black Empire's existence (169-72).

If the first novella offers several brief scenes from the cockpit, the sequel overflows with them as the text follows Patricia's new mission first-hand. Schuyler devotes two whole chapters to depicting the wonders of flying in a stratosphere plane. Carl marvels at the planes' speed, claiming that "although I had been in many planes, I had never seen any climb so rapidly and at such a steep angle. [...] At 20,000 feet we were far above the clouds in a lonely, spaceless world accompanied only by our fourteen companions now in perfect 'V' formation" (174). Carl's narration is filled with awe and sentimentality, too: "On we went, literally flashing through the air now, ten miles above the earth. The sun had disappeared; it was almost black dark [...] but the first brilliant stars were appearing out of the void above" (174-5).

After airplanes are refueled, serviced, and parachutes are distributed in a swift and smooth operation (176-8), Carl, once again in the air, admires Patricia's piloting skills: "This was blind flying with a vengeance. We seemed to be soaring aloft into nothingness. I looked at Pat, so cool and calm at the controls, and I felt more proud of her than ever" (178). Even as his characters fly to exterminate entire populations with chemical warfare, Schuyler imbues his text with moments of aviation beauty and celebrates the technology with displays of aviation's capability to transport the novella's plot and characters across immense distances. The world shrinks and Africa unites owing to aviation as Patricia's fleet, including "Africans, black Europeans, Latin Americans, and Caribbeans, [but] dominated by African Americans" (Veselá 279), symbolizes black unity.

The long flight from Liberia to Europe ends with Patricia dropping cages with infested rats over London while Carl waxes poetic, "London from the air! A spectacle not easily forgotten: a faery tracery of light against a background of black velvet. The metropolis, the

brain, the heart and soul of the world's greatest empire!" (179). His awe of aviation and its ability to transport him to London is abruptly interrupted, however, as he parachutes down to the British capital to assist in a special Black Empire mission to murder fifteen thousand of Britain's best technicians and engineers. At this point, the novella – over the span of seven chapters – turns into a spy thriller. Once the mission is successfully accomplished, though, aviation again takes center stage as autogiros extract Carl's group – albeit with complications – out of London. Patricia's squadron picks Carl up, sets an entire section of London on fire with quiet glass cylinder bombs, and sets off on its return trip to Morocco. Owing to Patricia's skillful piloting, the squadron manages to safely land in Fez only to realize with horror that the entire French fleet is about to attack the airfield.

Schuyler here serves a breath-taking plot brimming with action and spectacular drama, most of it involving Patricia's air force. At once, the French attack as "Out of the north swooped squadron after squadron of big French bombers at 2,000 feet. Above them raced a cloud of fast little pursuit planes. Sirens screamed. Anti-aircraft guns crashed. [...] The airdrome collapsed like a house of cards, a great sheet of flame shooting out as gasoline tanks exploded" (214-5). Once again, however, the Black Empire is revealed to possess another ace – a technological innovation – up its sleeve. The airfield at Fez boasts an underground facility which offers protection to Patricia's plane: "As we sped along," describes Carl, "a strip of earth much wider than our plane opened up as if by command, revealing a wide ramp. Down we went, deeper, deeper, ever deeper into the earth. The earth closed behind us." Despite the damage done by the French, the airfield is repaired and "in less than fifteen minutes there was a straight runway down the field" (214). Patricia's mission can thus continue, albeit only for a while.

Despite the technical ingenuity and preparedness of the Black Empire staff at Fez, the French attack confirms McNeel's prediction that the empire may fail at liberating and

decolonizing Africa – and may not even survive unless it re-gains control of the air. Patricia, assessing the situation at Fez, soberly explains to Carl and General Sandu that “without controlling the air [...] we can’t control anything, and it will be only a matter of time before we’ll be driven back into the jungle like pygmies.” Patricia thus equates aviation with civilization. Sandu concurs, realizing that even the cutting-edge underground hiding place and facilities “that will save us a lot of ships [...] won’t give us mastery of the air” (214). Schuyler underscores the empire’s dire situation in the following chapter as its entirety depicts a spectacular airplane fight between Patricia’s large plane and the French pursuit ships. Attempting a maneuver similar to the one which helped Robinson narrowly escape two Italian reconnaissance biplanes as he flew at full speed into a nearby high cloud bank (Tucker 163), Patricia directs the “torpedo-like” stratosphere plane to climb high into the clouds. She outraces the French pilots, but not the French bullets. As her plane is irreparably damaged, Carl, Patricia, and the remainder of the crew parachute out, shooting at their pursuers. With the ship “hurtling down in a mass of flames [...] directly toward Pat and me,” Carl despairs that their lives may soon be over. Schuyler here sets up a cliffhanger in which the fate of the Black Empire literally hangs in the air. “There was no time to do anything. There was nothing we could do,” narrates Carl, closing his eyes “in agonizing suspense” (217-20) as the chapter closes.

After their stratosphere machine crashes, Patricia, with her “green helmet [...] drenched with blood from her head wound,” Carl, and the rest of the crew find themselves stranded in a desert. “Suppose,” asks Carl at the end of another chapter, “that they didn’t find us?” (221-3). Fortunately, owing to Patricia’s colleagues’ piloting and navigation skills, Carl and company find out that they are 400 miles from Fez and still on a direct route to Kakata. The group discovers a downed French plane, repairs it, and sets off on a perilous return flight through the Moroccan skies “dominated by French planes” (229). On the way, the plane

begins to leak gas too fast and the group crash in the jungle where they are captured by cannibals who think they are French pilots of color. At the last moment, right before Carl and company are served to the tribe, a Black Empire squadron rescues the group in breathtaking fashion, dropping flares and gas bombs on the village.

In the end, the group are transported back to Kakata in “three big black and gold transport planes” (237). Instead of cheers and exhilaration, however, the capital awaits Patricia and Carl’s arrival in uncharacteristically dark atmosphere. “Where before at night the capital had been brilliantly lighted, it was now in darkness except for an occasional searchlight sweeping the African sky. [...] There was a tenseness, an air of sinister expectancy pervading everything,” paints Carl the gloomy picture. “Boom Boom from sky. [...] Kill many peoples yesterday. [...] Airplane come from ship by Monrovia. Maybe come back pretty soon. Maybe tonight. Maybe tomorrow,” explains the dinner maid to Carl ominously, rolling her eyes “in terror” (237-8).

The first novella is full of cliffhangers, but Schuyler packs the sequel with so much action, so many ups and downs for the main characters, Patricia and Carl, that the text becomes a rollercoaster of emotions. All because the skies over Africa, cleared by Patricia’s air force during the invasion, are now filled with opposition forces and mortal danger. “The white air fleets dominate the skies above Northern Africa and our ships have had to stay on the ground, or under the ground, for the past two or three days. The British, based on Aden, have raided our centers in East Africa, and these raids will increase. We are still in control of the air in central and western Africa, but this cannot apparently last long,” summarizes Belsidus the dire situation to the dejected audience of his Supreme Council (240). “It certainly didn’t look good for the Black Empire,” observes Carl skeptically, “with control of the air and the sea, Europe would soon again control Africa. We had neither the arms nor the munitions nor the men to hold back trained hordes of Europeans” (240). Without control of the air – as

the novellas' preceding chapters clearly show – Patricia's air force and, in turn, the entire empire stand helpless.

At this point in the sequel novella, Belsidus and the Black Empire find themselves in a situation eerily similar to that of Robinson in Ethiopia. Despite the Chicagoan's valiant efforts to train young Ethiopian pilots, service outdated planes,⁶¹ and fly reconnaissance flights as well as to transport the emperor and medical supplies across the vast and high Ethiopian mountain ranges, the Imperial Air Force could never match Italy's power in the air. While the Ethiopians notched important victories on the ground, it was from the air that the Italians gradually but ruthlessly overpowered them. The Italian air force, "numbering over three hundred aircraft on the northern front and about one hundred aircraft on the southern front, had the sky to itself [and] possessed almost total air superiority," writes Tucker (130). Italy's well-trained pilots "continued to launch strategic bombing campaigns," dropping mustard gas on both Ethiopian soldiers as well as the civilian population and gassing Robinson three times in the process. "By design, the terror bombing of the civilian populace was calculated to destroy the Ethiopian will to resist," says Tucker (151). Belsidus, despite frantic manufacturing of weapons and educating and training an army and an air force, falls short, it seems, of challenging the European colonial powers for sustainable control over Africa. Kakata's populace is hiding in terror of bombing and the European fleets have almost total control over Africa's skies.

Belsidus acknowledges the situation, but proposes a solution, involving, once again, aviation and highlighting its importance for modern warfare. Schuyler seems to concede here, realistically, that, like Robinson, Belsidus' hastily assembled air force does not have the manpower and machinery to face the European fleets squarely. Unlike Haile Selassie who adhered to traditional and ultimately suicidal tactics, however, Schuyler's diabolical leader

⁶¹ J.A. Rogers quoted Robinson as saying that Ethiopia's planes were "so old that one deserved a medal for flying them even in peace time" ("Rogers Pays Tribute to Colonel Robinson").

resorts to a brand new weapon devised by “Prof. Vincente Portabla, the tall, lean, awkward black scholar who had once headed the department of physics at the University of Rio de Janeiro” (239). Shortly after Belsidus reveals the new weapon of mass destruction to the Council, the Europeans attack: “Now the sky seemed filled with hostile planes, scores of them,” describes the situation Carl. “Great bombs fell and resoundingly burst. It looked like the end of Kakata, the Black Empire and us” (242). Prof. Portabla, nevertheless, readies his “infernal machine” (242), positioning it at the center of the Kakata airfield from which Belsidus famously launched his invasion in the first novella. “We watched intently, hardly a breath escaping us as we waited to see what this machine, which was not much larger than a bombing plane or a Pullman car, would be able to do against the combined air fleets of the British and French navy,” narrates Carl, holding the readers in suspense (243).

In invoking the image of a Pullman car, a machine connoting African Americans’ subservient standing within the United States’ democracy as well as the menial positions to which skilled black Americans were relegated in the U.S. industry and services, Schuyler highlights the fact that black scientists and technicians, as his columns argue, may be able to redefine their race’s unequal position. His fantasy of a modern black civilization predicated on cutting-edge technologies, innovation, and ingenuity imagines black bodies inventing, operating, and servicing machines well beyond the train car where black Americans are segregated, always already inferior, and servants to white patrons. Segregation in Schuyler’s novellas actually lies in transvaluation or in how much forward black science and technology can pull away from white civilization.

Schuyler paints this exact moment of reverse segregation in the scene where Carl and the rest of the Council watch with “bated breath” as the “searchlights lit up the night sky, revealing every [European] plane.” Portabla’s Pullman-car-like machine “pointed upward toward the onrushing planes [and] waved slowly back and forth like an iridescent finger.”

“Suddenly,” narrates Carl, “an incredibly amazing thing happened [as] one by one the propellers of the swarm of planes fell silent, and one by one the great ships plunged like flaming plummets to the earth, crashing resoundingly. [...] Squadron after squadron crashed to the earth.” And Portabla does not stop at destroying only the attacking planes. As “remaining planes [...] turned to flee back to the coast from whence they had come [...] one by one the fleeing bombers and pursuit planes fell like stricken flies. Soon the southern sky was empty of everything except the moon and stars” (243-4). The air is clear of Europeans.

Having witnessed the amazing result, General McNeel immediately observes that “this is a life saver, all right. [...] It gives us air control again, and with air control we can hold off invasion for a long time” (244). But the machine offers more than mere defensive options – its capabilities forebode a brutal end for the colonizers’ conquest. It functions as an “atom smasher, a huge cyclotron, which generates an atomic or proton beam which can disintegrate any metal,” explains Portabla excitedly to McNeel. It can also stop “the propellers of machines and [render] batteries and connections useless” (245). When the Council members inspect a giant fallen bomber at the airfield, they realize that “it was almost unrecognizable. It had been scorched and melted like a slag, its parts fused together as if it had been dipped into a volcano filled with molten lava.” Upon closer inspection, the group finds that “all over the countryside were scattered these blobs of slag which had once been death-destroying bombers piloted by white men who believed themselves all-conquering” (245). Portabla’s machine thus erases Europe’s technological superiority and imbues Belsidus’ project with renewed confidence as reports come in stating that “of the 300 planes participating in the raid, only twelve had escaped” (245). Schuyler here depicts, once again, a spectacular scene of air warfare destruction which bodes well for the Black Empire as it regains control of the air.

Schuyler devotes a chapter to describing in detail how Portabla’s machines “sent their devastating proton rays seaward,” destroying “the great combined navy that had threatened

the very existence of the Black Empire” (249). The final two chapters, however, again revolve around aviation. In the penultimate installment, Belsidus sends Patricia’s “entire air fleet, preceded by stratosphere planes [...] for Fez to clear the North African air of enemies” (250). Then he decides on the final step that ends the war – he mounts the cyclotrons onto the stratosphere planes, combining his innovation in aviation with a cutting-edge killing machine to revolutionize air warfare. “[T]he black and golden ships flew in early and swarms of mechanics began preparing the bombers and stratosphere planes for the new equipment. Pursuit planes stood ready for protection,” describes Carl the scene (252). Patricia remains unable to fly due to her head injury, but she still directs “the preparation of the Black Empire Air Corps for the final battle and select[s] the pilots for the planes.” After seven days of frantic activity, “the huge squadron took off in the early morning mist, surrounded by a swarm of pursuit planes. A fleet of big bombers followed later in the day, each loaded with a huge incendiary and contact bombs.” And throughout that day, Patricia monitors her air force, “getting reports and issuing instructions” (253).

In the last chapter, Carl leaves Patricia behind in Kakata in order to witness and narrate the victory of the Black Empire air fleets first-hand. As with the end of *The Black Internationale*, the final target of Belsidus’ attack is Mussolini’s air force. Carl does not spare any details in describing the vengeful destruction of Italy’s forces as “the buildings, planes, machinery [in Benghazi] disintegrated into a million pieces. [...] In a few moments the place was a shambles, a field of bloody desolation. Not an Italian plane remained” (255). Italy, however, attempts a counterattack: “The sky was soon blackened by the great fleet, twice as numerous as that which had bombed Kakata.” As before, the proton rays drop the oncoming planes like flies until “the earth was covered with grounded ships.” Patricia’s pursuit pilots strafe “the helpless grounded planes with incendiary bullets and small thermite bombs. [...] Relentlessly, the little black and gold ships passed back and forth over the helpless Italian

planes, reducing them and their pilots to cinders. And what happened at Benghazi was repeated at Tunis, Tripoli and Alexandria” (256). Italian forces are wiped out.

After three days of utter destruction of the remaining European armies, “three days in which the world marveled at the rise of a new world power, in which black people everywhere rejoiced, [and] in which delegates in their colorful uniforms arrived by plane” from all over the world, Belsidus, relieved, finally celebrates “the liberation of Africa and the emancipation of the black race.” Now, he claims, “we who were once the lowest are [...] the highest. We who were once despised and slandered are now honored and feared. We who were said to have no future except to hew and haul for the white race have created a future more glorious than the white man ever imagined.” With black scientists, technicians, and aviators proving their ingenuity and prowess, Belsidus can declare that “We used every instrument in our power to achieve success [and now] you have a great empire created out of black brains and strength” (257). Since decolonization has been achieved and the empire controls the air above and the sea routes around Africa, Belsidus unveils his vision for the future – a future based on freedom and devoid of conquest. “You must not [...] try to enslave others [and] you must banish race hatred from your hearts,” implores Belsidus and promises to build a civilization as glorious as that of Egypt, Ethiopia, Benin, Timbuctoo, Songhoy, and Morocco. “Go forth, my comrades,” completes Belsidus his message, “and imbue your followers with the determination to remain forever free” (256-8).

Indeed, it is really only when African skies have been cleared of European fleets and the Black Empire air force reigns supreme that Belsidus allows himself to speak of the continent’s bright future. This only underscores the fact that hardly anything happens or is achieved in the two novellas, particularly in *The Black Empire*, without black aviation being directly or indirectly involved. Promotional of black aviation as the texts are, they employ the technology as a vehicle for almost any action and movement forward in the plot. Aviation

functions as a vehicle for the invasion, violent decolonization, and vicious fight for survival which form the novellas' backbone. Belsidus' educated and well-trained army of engineers, scientists, technicians, pilots, and mechanics is shown to out-think and out-work the allegedly superior European civilization. Patricia's air force ensures that inventions, weapons, and materials are swiftly and reliably transported across vast spaces, defying time which ticks against Belsidus' revolution.

Finally, aviation functions as a vehicle in developing characters as well: Carl gradually evolves from a skeptical observer into an excited participant in Patricia's air force missions, driven both by love for the aviatrix as well as by passion for aviation's immense potential for liberation. In short, all aspects of Belsidus' plans involve aviation in some variation. Ultimately, it is aviation which literally delivers victory and liberation – both physically and in spirit, serving as inspiration and confidence-boost – to people of color worldwide. In the end, Schuyler depicts aviation throughout the novellas as a multi-purpose, universal technical field which decides wars and helps build empires. With the assistance of an all-black air force, Belsidus gains the ability to protect and advance the Black Empire on the ground and in the air.

It must also be noted that the omnipresence of black aviation in the novellas sheds light on Schuyler's depiction of African Americans and people of color in general, as civilized and modern. Though low-brow, hard-boiled, and propaganda-like to the level of ridicule, the immensely popular novellas propose a way of presenting people of color's humanity and belonging to American and global civilization, the ultimate objective of the Harlem Renaissance ideologues and authors. By transposing the civil and human rights struggles of black Americans onto the African continent, Schuyler recreates in fiction Alain Locke's wish for black America to lead other Africa-diasporic peoples into a new, modern, and dynamic era – in touch with the twentieth-century civilization. Schuyler's scientists,

technicians, and aviators are depicted as modern, New Negro role models capable of destroying and surpassing white civilization and its racial restrictions; as race leaders who build a brand new empire which does not enslave, but works “toward a cooperative civilization unexcelled in the world” (142). In this way, Schuyler’s novellas subvert the long-standing stereotype of people of color being viewed as technologically inept and they participate in an ongoing discussion in African American literature on depicting technology as a means of liberation.

4.5 Black Empire in the Context of Frederick Douglass’ and Booker T.

Washington’s Treatments of Technology

Schuyler’s novellas reflect and address an issue which goes back to the 18th and 19th centuries: the representation of African Americans vis-à-vis technology, science, and inventions. As this section shows, Schuyler in his novellas engages with and responds to earlier texts by black American authors – Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington – who discuss the role of technology in the African American experience and the part it plays in the liberation of people of color from slavery and oppression. Schuyler’s New Negro, technologically and technically skilled characters, led by black aviators, represent a new evolutionary step in the depiction of African Americans in black literature as human, skilled, and civilized. Schuyler’s serials depict fantastical modern characters who expand on Douglass’s realization in his slave narrative that literacy alongside technical and technological skills pave the way to proving African American’s humanity to white America and to acquiring the self-assurance to rebel against systems of oppression such as slavery. At the same time, Schuyler’s novellas reject Washington’s stifling views on technical and mechanical education as a way of keeping freed African Americans as rudimentary, unambitious laborers in the Jim Crow South.

As Bruce Sinclair explains in *Technology and the African American Experience*, African Americans were from early on often stereotyped as “technically incompetent” in the new American republic built upon and by “Yankee ingenuity [or] natural disposition for quick and novel solutions to the practical problems of life” (2-4). As a result, slaves and freedmen were effectively excluded from Americanness, defined as scientific and technological ingenuity and exhibited, for example, in Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*. They were thus also prevented from developing not only literacy in writing and reading, but also technical literacies of practical and business life. By withholding access to technology – and technical and mechanical education as well as employment – slaves could be, writes Carroll Pursell in *A Hammer in Their Hands: A Documentary History of Technology and the African-American Experience*, characterized as “childlike” and “below real men” (xv). Especially since “whiteness and technological capability” were seen as “fundamental elements of [American] masculinity” (Sinclair 3). Indeed, the notion that “the truly masculine man” must be “good with tools and, ideally, [own] them” (Pursell xiv) kept enslaved Africans in a position of inferiority and outside the definitions of humanity and civilization. This also relegated black women completely from any discussion about their potential technical and technological skills and claim to Americanness.

However, the institution of slavery did, by its very nature, require African Americans to use machinery and be involved in science on a daily basis. According to some estimates, by the 18th century, “10 percent of all black women were engaged in cloth production, while upwards of half of all males were employed in blacksmithing, leather-working, cooperage, and carpentry.” These occupations were considered elite, “as were such subsequent pursuits as the management of steam engines, boilers, and other machinery.” Plantations were “industrial enterprises that employed advanced technologies and depended upon a wide variety of skills,” explains Robert Fogel (qtd in Sinclair 8). Crucially, the cheap and skilled

labor that technically apt slaves provided resulted in a shift in occupational hierarchies on plantations. According to Fogel, planters switched to slaves to manage their properties, which brought about “some book learning” to slaves and, more importantly, “rewarded [the skilled and influential slaves] with an extra measure of pride.” Unsurprisingly then, it was the skilled craftsmen and artisans who “led most slave rebellions” (qtd in Sinclair 8) and who most often escaped to the North (Pursell 21). Technology was therefore associated in African Americans’ minds with potential for liberation.

In early African American literature, slave narratives – functioning as historical documents and self-fashioning (non-)fiction – often depict slaves’ daily encounters with and usage of technology to counter the reality of technology being cynically employed “as the means by which people of color throughout the United States – African, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian – were [...] subordinated to the grander purposes of American civilization” (Sinclair 5). Slave narratives document and retell the potential of science and technology to dehumanize slaves as dispensable tools, as well as to humanize them by displaying their ingenuity and inventiveness. After all, pointing out slavery’s inhumanity and expressing slaves’ humanity was the central objective of slave narratives. As Philip Gould claims, the distinction between the slave as property and his humanity is “one of the central motifs in black writing from the 1770s until the American civil war” (41-2).

One of the best-known ways of expressing slaves’ humanity in the slave narrative is the retelling of the act of becoming literate, finding one’s own voice, and telling their life story under slavery. In the Enlightenment era, writes Shirley Moody-Turner, “written literacy and the capacity to produce literature were seen as representative of the cognitive ability to reason and thus as a measurement of humanity, progress, and social status” (201). If the slaves’ capacity to read and write determined humanity and characterized the slave narrative, however, so did the capacity to operate machinery and become literate in science and

technology. Literacy, in its multiple meanings, represented “the technology of reason,” claims Gates (132).

In “The Economies of the Slave Narrative,” Gould explains that slave narratives possess the ability of “recuperating African American humanity” through emulating the Franklidian “American success story” (99), which is deeply embedded not only in the capacity to eloquently represent oneself through writing but also in technological capabilities and personal investment in scientific progress. Indeed, slave narratives by Frederick Douglass, Olaudah Equiano, and Elizabeth Keckley, as well as Booker T. Washington’s neo-slave narrative, share an “entrepreneurial figure whose hard work, calculation, and initiative made [them] suitable [...] as the new American hero.” Such African American characters directly challenge the stereotypes of “shiftlessness and dishonesty” traditionally associated with blackness (Gould 99). More importantly, they establish a connection between science and technology and slave’s humanity as slave narrative authors find and highlight their liberation through hard work and engagement with a craft that requires intelligence, highly technical and technological skills, and inventiveness.

Slave narratives are thus inherently preoccupied with science and technology. If slaves were considered non-human, without the capacity to reason and express themselves in writing, then it follows that they could not possess the ability to operate, let alone invent, design, or apply technology. Yet, slave narratives clearly show that slaves were often tasked with acquiring technical skills and performing demanding technological work, thereby unveiling fissures in the pro-slavery argument that slaves were naturally inhuman and uncivilized. In fact, slave narratives expressed slaves’ humanity, among others, precisely as capacity to operate machinery and perform highly skilled tasks. In *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1831), for example, Thomas R. Gray depicts Turner as an inquisitive child, who not only spent any free time reading books, but also “making experiments in casting different

things in moulds made of earth, in attempting to make paper, gunpowder, and many other experiments, that although I could not perfect, yet convinced me of its practicability if I had the means.” As a result, explains Turner to Gray, “the negroes in the neighborhood [grew confident] in my superior judgment, that they would often carry me with them when they were going on any roguery, to plan for them.” Turner’s narration provides a glimpse into how the acquisition of technical skills and scientific knowledge would often bring about the recognition of slaves’ own worth – and a consciousness that propelled them to push back against the inhumanity of slavery and for freedom. Turner’s technical talents and ingenuity also earn him a leadership position as his peers notice this consciousness of his own worth, which is later channeled into one of the most notorious slave rebellions in U.S. history.

Humanity and leadership are highlighted when slaves display their technical prowess in their narratives. In scenes where slaves discover their human consciousness and articulate thought – which is usually interpreted as a result of access to and development of literacy – technology and technical literacies are always present in the form of everyday labor performed by slaves and they play a formative role in the process of humanizing the slave. This is the case, for example, with Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative* (1845), in which the author outlines the potential for technology, technical skills, and scientific knowledge to liberate slaves intellectually and, as a result, physically.

Early in life, Douglas realizes that literacy is “the pathway from slavery to freedom” (29). He observes his master, Mr. Auld, berating his wife for teaching Frederick to read and write: “A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master – to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world [as] he would at once become unmanageable” (29). Mr. Auld fears what Ronald T. Judy calls “the paramount dangers of thinking” (100) – he warns his wife that learning transforms slaves into men, which undermines the logic of slavery as ownership of animal-like property, rather than humans

with intellect. Initially, learning dejects Douglass: “[it] had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. [...] It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me [as] I often found myself regretting my own existence” (33). Nevertheless, Douglass perseveres in learning the alphabet by not only reading, but also by observing carpenters at the shipyard marking ship parts by letters, which he copies into his notebook. Albeit rudimentary, the very process of initial learning thus introduces Douglass to the practical role of technology in developing literacy, consciousness, and ultimately proving one’s humanity. Literacy becomes, in multiple ways, Douglass’ technology of liberation.

When Douglass returns to the shipyard after having spent a year under Mr. Covey, the environment again serves educational purposes for Douglass – but this time, the slave improves on his technical, rather than literacy skills. Working among freedmen and white workers, Douglass is initially employed to learn to calk, but ends up becoming a jack-of-all-trades for seventy-five carpenters. He learns to recognize tools, work with timber, and perform other more-or-less-technical tasks. Later, after a fight with some of the carpenters, Douglass is transferred to another shipyard to calk, and becomes a self-made artisan: “[I] very soon learned the art of using my mallet and irons. [Within] one year [...] I was able to command the highest wages given to the most experienced calkers” (64). Once he realizes that his ever-improving artisanal skills and experience earn him higher wages, he strives for more education, which, in turn, leads to more independence: “After learning how to calk, I sought my own employment, made my own contracts, and collected the money which I earned” (64).

While the famous fight scene with Covey represents, according to Paul Gilroy, a symbolic transformation of Douglass from slave into man and reverses the Hegelian slave-master dialectic (156), it is, in fact, through the learning and acquisition of technical literacies and skills at the shipyard that Douglass becomes his own master. Douglass recognizes his

own technical ingenuity as he quickly learns some of the best-paid trades in the shipyards and revives his desire to become a free man. It is on ships that Douglass labors to improve his literacy and it is ships again two years later that provide him with additional tools – artisanal skills and the ownership of his own set of actual tools – to become an independent, technically and technologically skilled and literate man. Unlike the rudimentary heavy slave labor that makes “thoughtless” slaves (64), the highly-skilled work in the shipyards finally opens Douglass’ eyes to the realization that, through mastery of technology, he can become his own master with his own tools to liberation.

Douglass’s humanity and budding consciousness is thus not only written, but also calked in his *Narrative* in the scenes where Douglass performs technically-skilled labor. Reading the text through the prism of the importance of technology and science in liberating slaves intellectually and physically then provides tools for interpreting and understanding Douglass’s later statements on technology which highlight his preoccupation with the topic. In 1848, for example, Douglass writes in a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe that “[African Americans] must become mechanics – we must build, as well as live in houses – we must make, as well as use furniture – we must construct bridges, as well as pass over them – before we can properly live, or be respected by our fellow men” (qtd in Sinclair 7). In other words, African Americans must become involved in what only in the early twentieth century became known as ‘technology:’ both the tools, machines, utensils, weapons, instruments, housing, clothing, communicating and transporting devices and the skills by which people produce and use them, as well as applied science and knowledge (Bain 860, MacKenzie vii). Three years after the first edition of his *Narrative*, Douglass in his letter re-articulates the realization that African American humanity is recognized by the white population through the former’s

display of technical skills. Crucially, Douglass here also precedes Schuyler's aspirations for black men to become not mere laborers, but potentially mechanics, designers, and engineers.⁶²

Later, in "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" (1852), Douglass recognizes, however, that perhaps not even technical and technological prowess may prove black men's humanity. He observes that "while we are [...] using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are reading, writing, and cyphering, acting as [...] lawyers, doctors, ministers [...] we are called upon to prove that we are men!" Indeed, Douglass seems to be saying, African Americans have proven enough of their humanity through ingenuity yet are repeatedly asked to do more. Despite the dejected tone, though, a sense of pride, too, pervades Douglass's speech – while the white majority may not recognize African Americans' humanity in spite of the obvious heavy and technically-skilled labor performed, the actual everyday engagement of people of color with technology and scientific progress in all fields remains essential to their maintenance of a sense of worth and human consciousness. Douglass's *Narrative* and speeches thus also confirm that slave labor involving highly-technical tasks enhances the artisan's independence and, consequently, the desire to flee and be free.

While bold visions for African American laborers in the rapidly-developing era of 19th-century industrialization seem to be an overlooked, yet omnipresent feature of Frederick Douglass's texts, they are a central and widely discussed element of Booker T. Washington's

⁶² Douglass saw technology as freeing and humanizing in another area as well: photography. As John Stauffer et al. explain in *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American*, Douglass "defined himself as a free man and citizen as much through his [photographic] portraits as his words." Douglass sought to employ the technology of photography as "abolitionists' greatest weapon, for it gave the lie to slavery as a benevolent institution and exposed it as a dehumanizing horror." In other words, photography – like slave narratives – "bore witness to African Americans' essential humanity, while also countering the racist caricatures that proliferated throughout the North" (xi).

writings, which envision a robust program of industrial education for African Americans in the postbellum South. Published in 1901, six years after Douglass's death, Washington's *Up from Slavery* and his later texts offer, according to Deborah McDowell, "correctives or replacements for Douglass's life and works and for the antebellum slave narrative in general" (155). Unlike a traditional antebellum slave narrative like Douglass's, Washington's text "avoided the genre's straightforward rehearsal of slavery's wrongs, producing a counter-narrative which seemed aglow with optimism" (156). For, unlike Douglass, Washington was a "gradualist and separatist, believing that change would best occur in a black utopia in a faraway place" (Bieze 136); this came to be known as the Tuskegee Normal School for Colored Teachers, established in 1881.

Despite their divergent approaches to the depictions of slavery and its legacies, both Douglass and Washington are preoccupied in their texts with the role of technology in African American lives and future. Washington's visions for black laborers, however, are not aspirational like Douglass's, but stifling. Gradually, his utopian school of industrial education, Tuskegee, turns into a dystopian place where African Americans' aspirations to find employment in technical fields wither since Washington sees black men as mechanics, agricultural laborers, and bricklayers, whose progress and civil rights should come only after generations have proven their humanity in terms of economic worth to the white population. In Washington's words, if black men succeed in their respective industries, they "could lay the foundations upon which [their] children and grandchildren could grow to higher and more important things in life" (104).

Up from Slavery represents a work of racial uplift, in which Washington expounds the virtues of labor. In agreement with Douglass, Washington confirms that slaves performed technical labor during slavery: "[While] the slave owner and his sons had mastered no special industry [...] the slaves, in many cases, had mastered some handicraft, and none were

ashamed, and few unwilling, to labour” (12). Similarly, in his notorious “Atlanta Exposition Speech,” Washington acknowledges to his white audience that it was the African Americans who “tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth” (112). It is this kind of labor, however, that African Americans should in Washington’s opinion keep performing to be recognized as human – and aspire to little more.

Industrial education is, according to Washington, the best way to prove black men’s worth to the world. Early in his youth, Washington determines that he has to “secure an education at any cost” (22), but also comes to later realize that his education would not follow “the craze for Greek and Latin learning [which was believed to] make one a very superior human being” (42). Instead, Washington “had a strong feeling that what our people most needed was to get a foundation in education, industry, and property” (48). That is why he enrolls at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, where he observes that students are “constantly making the effort through the industries to help [themselves], and that very effort was of immense value in character-building” (45-6). Labor, if performed well and with diligence, claims Washington, has the innate value of realizing and bringing out one’s worth, his very humanity.” Like Douglass, Washington sees labor as liberating: “At Hampton [...] I learned to love labour, not alone for its financial value, but for labour’s own sake and for the independence and self-reliance which the ability to do something which the world wants done brings.” It is at Hampton that Washington experiences his “first taste of what it meant to live a life of unselfishness, [his] first knowledge of the fact that the happiest individuals are those who do the most to make others useful and happy” (39).

Selflessness, utility of black labor, and reliance on the outside world to provide the framework for interpreting black men’s worth through their labor’s usefulness are essential premises of Washington’s philosophy which underlie his industrial program gleaned at

Hampton and later expanded at Tuskegee. While Douglass envisions black technical and technological labor as a stepping-stone toward recognition of people of color's humanity and means of gaining mobility, however, Washington interprets it as stationary. He urges African Americans to remain in the South and be useful to the white population's needs. While Douglass's technical education, directly connected to his work on ships and at the shipyard, is a necessary condition for mobility, Washington negates mobility by encouraging the industrially-educated African Americans to anchor themselves in "agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions." African Americans "may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life. [...] It is at the bottom of life we must begin" (112), exhorts Washington his students. Commonality, not Douglassian exceptionalism and potential for leadership, drives Washington's industrial education.

Washington's philosophy of industrial education as the anchor that prevents African Americans from reaching to the future pervaded the Tuskegee curriculum. In their instruction, explains Washington, the Tuskegee instructors did not want to "educate our students out of sympathy with agricultural life, so that they would be attracted from the country to the cities, and yield to the temptation of trying to live by their wits" (65). In Washington's terminology, higher learning and tapping into the potential of creative minds represents potential sin. That is why Tuskegee provided its students with an education that would "cause them to return to the plantation districts" (65). Although Washington promises to teach his students "how to make the forces of nature – air, water, steam, electricity, horse-power – assist them" in work (76), it is labor and utility for the white community, rather than ingenuity, inventiveness, and creativity with technologies and science to enable African American mobility and show the full potential of their humanity, which were emphasized at Tuskegee. Bricks, wagons, carts,

and buggies are assembled at and supplied by Tuskegee to the neighboring white community, boasts Washington (109); but nothing new is invented. Washington, like Douglass's Mr. Auld, only seeks the material and financial gain from black labor, not its development through further education and encouragement to create. African Americans' humanity does not seem to have a place in Washington's industrial education.

Indeed, Washington's critics – W.E.B. DuBois primarily – noticed this gap. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, published only two years after *Up from Slavery*, DuBois contrasts Douglass's "period of self-assertion and self-development," the main objective of which was the "assertion of the manhood rights of the Negro by himself," with Washington's "old attitude of adjustment and submission" (22). Washington's industrial education program, states DuBois, "accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races" and represents an "industrial slavery and civic death of black men" (23-25). DuBois, like Douglass, advocates for black men to be "aroused and encouraged, by the initiative of the richer and wiser environing group [to] a forward movement" to pursue higher education and to assert their humanity rather than follow Washington, who "belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions [in the South]" (26). Rather than Washingtonian submission, DuBois advocates for people of color's self-assertion.

There are numerous reasons for reading Washington's *Up from Slavery* as a textual version of an educational philosophy and program that stifle the development of African American technological ingenuity and creativeness. At Tuskegee, Washington was expanding on the Hampton program of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, whom he saw as "super-human" (30) and "the rarest, strongest, and most beautiful character" (39). As Donald Spivey documents in *Schooling for the New Slavery*, Armstrong established a program at Hampton which propagated labor as "the greatest moral force in civilization." He believed that "the training of the hand was at the same time a training of the mind and will," and that industrial

education would provide a corrective to black men's "shiftless class" (19-20). Through industrial education, Armstrong and his supporters also hoped to instill in the black population "a habit of restraint," rather than aspirations that would produce "noisy and dangerous demagogues" (17). In short, industrial education functioned as a civilizing tool; a means of controlling the black population.

In direct contradiction to Douglass's and DuBois's plans of self-assertion through technological ingenuity and creativity, Armstrong argued that "what [white] men want [in black men] is not talent, it is purpose: in other words, not the power to achieve, but the will of labor" (Spivey 20). As if writing Washington's "Atlanta Exposition Speech," the general also viewed black industrial labor as "indispensable to Southern prosperity" (21) and argued for restraint in African Americans' demand for civil rights and political representation: "Patience is better than politics, and industry a shorter road to civil rights" (35). Finally, Armstrong exposed the objective of industrial education at Hampton and later at Tuskegee in 1890, when he stated that "the South educated the black man as a measure of self-protection" (35).

Overall, Washington's plans to educate black men in industrial labor, modeled after Armstrong's racist world views, achieved little to advance Douglass's vision of black men's humanity demonstrated through technically- and technologically-skilled labor. Although black labor played a crucial role in building Southern railroads, mining coal in Tennessee, working in iron and steel factories as well as in the cotton industry (Spivey 72-3), the industrial education offered at Hampton and Tuskegee provided students with knowledge "chiefly in accordance with the demands for labor" (55). The two institutes failed their students in attaining knowledge beyond the rudimentary. "The carpenter is not taught enough mathematics, the machinist enough physics, or the farmer enough chemistry for the purpose of his particular work," noted Tuskegee's own head of academic curriculum in 1906 (quoted in Spivey 56). Overall, Washington's and other's industrial education programs for black men

in the South were producing mere working hands, not creative minds; bodies to be dispensed with, not talents to be encouraged and developed. Washington's aspirations for African Americans were modeled after Armstrong's understanding of black men as mere labor. That is why there was little humanity and development of black technical capacities built into Washington's program.

Schuyler's novellas reflect and participate in the discussion of technology as a means of proving African Americans' humanity and of liberation. They address the issue of people of color being relegated from the categories of civility and modernity, and they focus on the stereotype of people of color being perceived as technologically and technically inept. Although the novellas are not autobiographical texts like slave narratives, *Black Empire* does seem to represent a fictional articulation of Schuyler's views on science and technology as a means of black liberation and proof of humanity. The novellas show Schuyler's preoccupation with the topic; they fetishize black science, innovativeness, and technically-skilled labor, as well as their potential for proving black ingenuity. After all, as the novellas' sub-titles indicate, Schuyler's well-educated and trained artisans are assembled to send the *Black Genius Against the World* and then, through their ingenuity and skills, to establish *A Great New Civilization in Modern Africa*. Aviation plays, of course, an essential role in Schuyler's engagement with Douglass and Washington's texts addressing these issues.

Schuyler's deep interest in science and technology is little known – perhaps overshadowed by scholars' emphasis on his conservative politics – but, as Hill and Rasmussen note, the journalist and novelist's "fascination with scientific and technological progress had been sparked at an early age and remained a lifelong preoccupation" (301). Schuyler's overall views on technology, science, and technical education can be summarized as a combination of, response to, and expansion on Douglass's and Washington's philosophies of racial uplift through acquiring skills and, in turn, skilled jobs. In 1931,

Schuyler reminisced in a column that “I often shudder [...] when I think of the thousands of colored youngsters who each year are being turned out to face the world with little real preparation and no opportunities. What a jar my youthful pride and aspirations received when I applied for work at the very offices and factories owned by the men whose sons had been my intimates” – there was no work to be had. “They were polite, even apologetic, but very, very definite. No office, nor even decent factory work, was open to ‘colored’ – but I might sweep out in the mornings, and oh yes, there was trucking” (quoted in Hill and Rasmussen 305). Instead of the menial jobs with little potential of promotion that Schuyler was offered, his columns – and his novellas – promote skilled jobs which require education, technical and technological aptitude, and which provide an improved position in society. His texts thus offer and encourage aspirations.

Schuyler wants every able-bodied black man to seize any and every opportunity in the technical and technological labor market. In a column in 1935, for example, he writes that “science offers a wonderfully thrilling field for the young man and woman in this day and time. [...] It has always seemed to me that more Negroes should be active in the exact sciences such as engineering, chemistry, physics, geology, etc.” (“Views and Reviews”). Schuyler’s preoccupation with science and technology is driven by his curiosity about their potential for people of color. His vision for African Americans is aspirational – unlike Washington’s – in both tone and message as he encourages his audience to pursue dreams of higher education and develop their talents. His philosophy is a complex mixture of idealism, naiveté, and rationality in proposing that black scientists and technicians flood American industries and overpower racism and discrimination by their human capacity to create, invent, innovate, as well as labor. His novellas imagine what would happen if Jim Crow continuously kept skilled African Americans out of technical schools and appropriate employment – the

anger of the unemployed and rejected, yet educated and skilled scientists, technicians, and aviators is what powers Belsidus' revolution.

In "New Job Frontiers for Negro Youth," Schuyler observes that "we may do without teachers, preachers, doctors and dentists, but our civilization is bogged down without electricians, engineers, chemists, metallurgists and their like." Foreshadowing the leadership role that Dr. Belsidus envisions for scientists and the technically-educated and skilled in his plans for black liberation and takeover of Africa, Schuyler also opines that "it is desirable that our future Negro leadership consists of scientists rather than teachers and preachers" (329). In so promoting higher education in the sciences and technical fields, Schuyler expands not only Douglass' aspiration for technology to play a liberating role in people of color's lives, but also on DuBois's claim from *The Souls of Black Folk* that "ultimate assimilation" of black men into the American nation will come "through self-assertion, and no other terms" (25). Schuyler, indeed, seems to be encouraging of exactly that self-assertion and leadership on the part of technically-educated, highly-skilled, innovative, and creative people of color.

If Douglass' and Washington's texts present divergent ways for slaves or former slaves to assume their place as full members of the American society, Schuyler's novellas fantasize about and depict a shocking scenario in which African Americans escape Jim Crow and, owing to their superior education, knowledge, and skills, become a self-governing nation which unites all people of color under the umbrella of technological progress as liberation. Their humanity is proved in their spirited fight against the oppressive structures of Jim Crow – education and the job market – and colonialism. Their transformation from second-class citizens to full citizens and leaders of a Black Empire is, indeed, lined with violence and destruction – however, as Fanon and, more importantly, Douglass' famous fight with Mr. Covey indicate, liberation cannot be undertaken without violence. While Washington's institutions teach the students to make forces of nature assist them in work, Schuyler's

characters tame and reshape forces of nature to make possible and expedite their liberation. Belsidus' aviators control the air and are able to swiftly attack any enemy. His futuristic machines harvest energy from the sun, grow food faster, produce more durable materials more efficiently, and have the capacity to turn the opposition's allegedly superior weapons into useless slags of metal.

Overall, as Amor Kohli puts it, "*Black Empire* respects the power of 'the machines of white civilization,' but refuses to accept what they supposedly suggest about the legitimacy of their creators' position of supremacy" (170). Instead, Schuyler embraces "technocratic messianism" (163) as his characters prefer to engage in technology rather than politics to solve issues plaguing their lives. The novellas thus serve as promotional, aspirational texts of racial uplift where technology is celebrated as a weapon of liberation for it is the skilled scientists, artisans, and aviators who make Belsidus' revolution – the overthrow of white political, technological, and civilizational supremacy – happen. In this way, the novellas signify on Turner's narrative and Douglass' texts as they envision the skilled class as leaders of the fight for freedom, fight for proving people of color's humanity and civility, and the transformation of the oppressed into citizens of the most modern of nations.

While the novellas embrace Turner's and Douglass' legacies, Schuyler also renounces Washington's ideology. In the first novella, Belsidus sacks Monrovia, Liberia, and replaces the former capital, established by the white-led American Colonization Society in 1824, with a new metropolis, Kakata. Once there, he holds a conference "in one of the great palaver kitchens erected for the 1928 conference assembled by former president C.D.B. King" (109). This move is not a mere gesture of decolonization on Belsidus' part. Rather, it is a symbolic and literal removal – an outright rejection – of Booker T. Washington's model of industrial education. In 1928, in Kakata, the Liberian government held the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of the proposed Booker T. Washington Agricultural and Industrial Institute, which

selected a site in Kakata for the institute, opened in 1929 (Dunn 777). According to Spivey, the Institute, directly modeled after Tuskegee and supported by Washington's successor, Robert R. Moton, became the first project in Africa built with the specific objective of supporting "white-ruled world order through international black industrial education" (*Miseducation* 7-14). Kakata had been selected because one of the industrial activities taught to the natives at the Institute was to be "the exploiting of Liberian rubber" at a nearby Firestone plantation (33), about which Schuyler writes in his *Slaves Today, A Story of Liberia* (1931). The Institute thus helped utilize native labor, which was overseen by white labor force (*Schooling* 123). Like Hampton and Tuskegee, the Liberian branch of black industrial education served the purpose of maximizing the efficiency of black labor for the purposes of colonial capitalism and overall control of the native population by the colonial-friendly government. Thus, when Belsidus transforms the "wayside settlement [of Kakata] to the capital of the new Empire of Africa" (139), Schuyler signals his symbolic divorce of black American and African population from outdated and exploitative models of industrial education.

By eschewing Washingtonian education and promoting technological and technical skill-acquisition, Schuyler's novellas also integrate black aviation's goodwill message of education and job opportunities for any skilled pilot, technician, and mechanic into its fantastic future. For Schuyler places aviators, Patricia Givens in particular, in the most important leadership position within the Black Internationale and Black Empire structure. Patricia, the head of the air force, effectively acts as Belsidus' right hand. The novellas depict what Bain refers to as "emancipatory modernity" (954), where a female aviator exists as Belsidus' "true [...] intellectual match" whose "energy is subsumed in Belsidus' cause" (Tal 78). Although Tal argues that "it is to Carl Slater [...] that Belsidus explains his plans, provides his rationalizations, and waxes elaborate about his beliefs and philosophies" (79), it

is, in fact, Patricia who interprets the leader's orders, objectives, and intentions to Carl, the mostly passive observer, and, in turn, to the readers. More importantly, it is the aviatrix who executes these very orders. Patricia and her air force lead the way in all action taking place in the texts. Aviation unites African tribes into an empire as Belsidus is able to communicate with even extremely distant regions. Aviation bridges and connects most of what John A. Williams calls the "set-ups" (quoted in Hill and Rasmussen xi) that form the structure of Schuyler's novellas – Patricia transports Carl between places, facilities, and battlefields, leading most of the action herself. Therefore, it is Patricia who perhaps best captures the essence of Schuyler's fantasy of flying out of Jim Crow and Washington's educational structures which are holding African Americans back in the past and render them non-participants in American civilization and progress. Instead, Patricia flies African Americans to Africa, the skies of which the aviatrix controls and flies across in the most modern of machines without abandon. Patricia, as an aviatrix and a leader, is Schuyler's most modern New Negro character with a transnationalist spirit.

Finally, aviation also features symbolically in the reverse Middle Passage Schuyler writes into *The Black Internationale*. Belsidus must transport most building materials, machinery, and soldiers across the Atlantic via planes and ships. He purchases six freighters for his mission: the S.S. Bessie Coleman, S.S. Samory, S.S. Nat Turner, S.S. Fred Douglass, S.S. Phyllis Wheatley, and S.S. Sojourner Truth, which are later joined by S.S. Kelly Miller (92). The seven names mix together historical figures – a pioneer black aviatrix, a 19th-century Guinean master-strategist who used modern warfare against French colonizers, a leader of a slave rebellion, one of the most eminent black leaders and thinkers, a female prodigy whose middle passage inspired her poetry, an advocate of African American humanity and protector of black womanhood, and, finally, a ground-breaking black mathematician. Both the names and the ships connect North America with the African

continent, thereby creating a Pan-African fleet that brings black American scientists, engineers, soldiers, leaders, and cutting-edge material possessions to Africa. Black human cargo – the most crucial element of the Middle passage – with the most modern equipment returns to Africa to retake the land and rid it of colonialism. And aviation is here referred to symbolically through S.S. Bessie Coleman as it will be aviation – headed by a female aviatrix who studied in France like Coleman – leading the way amongst the modern technologies Belsidus utilizes in his project.

Schuyler's *Black Empire* thus represents a radical version of Douglass' aspirational vision for African Americans to prove their humanity through acquiring technical and technological skills – not just literacy. Schuyler's New Negro scientists, technicians, and aviators – fed up with the systemic oppressive structures of Jim Crow and tired of Washington's educational models of rudimentary industry – rebel under Belsidus' leadership, thereby emulating the 19th-century slave artisans and craftsmen who led unsuccessful rebellions against the peculiar institution. Schuyler thus imbues, mainly through aviation, the trope of technology as a means of proving humanity and achieving freedom and liberty with a radical framework in which technology in black hands is used for both liberation and revenge, for both proving humanity and asserting membership in the twentieth-century civilization.

4.6 Love is in the Air

Aviation in *Black Empire*, however, does not feature merely as a decisive weapon in modern warfare, a vehicle for avenging Italy's devastation of Ethiopia from the air, a field which allows Schuyler to depict people of color as assertive New Negroes and as participants in modern science and technology; nor is aviation merely a means of crossing vast distances in the novellas. It must be noted here that aviation also frames and drives the romance aspect of the texts, particularly the relationship between Carl and Patricia. Schuyler contributes a new element to the aviation campaign in the black press, which serious black aviators and

journalists only implied in their texts: flying as a romantic endeavor. Aviation provides intimacy in the narrow space of the cockpit. It fuels the dramatic action which inspires heightened emotions and, in turn, brings characters together – Carl’s fascination with Patricia grows and deepens during their various missions in the air. Most importantly, in coupling Carl, a Harlem journalist, and Patricia, an aviatrix, Schuyler symbolically weds the black press with black aviation – this is a union which his journalism supported and fostered throughout the larger Harlem Renaissance era. Carl and Patricia’s relationship, created by perhaps the most vocal black aviation advocate and written for and published in one of the most vocal newspaper crusaders for black aviation, thus brings the black aviation campaign in the black press full circle.

Indeed, Carl is stunned by Patricia’s beauty from their very first encounter. “[There] sat the prettiest colored girl I’ve ever seen. She had the color of a pale Indian with the softness of feature of the Negro, and wore with trim and easy grace a modish dark green business suit. Perched on one side of her head was one of those cute modernistic hats.” Patricia’s face holds Carl “spellbound.” “It was absolutely symmetrical, with lips not large but sensuously full, rather high cheekbones, and large, wide-spaced eyes like limpid pools under the moonlight on a tropic plain,” explains Carl in an excited tone. Most importantly, “her general expression was one of unbelievable innocence and sweetness” (40), especially compared to Belsidus’ diabolical appearance. At first, however, Carl does not know what role Patricia plays in Belsidus’ project; although she does wear a “green leather pilot’s cap and jacket” when they meet again (42). When he learns that Patricia heads the Black Internationale air force, the announcement “took my breath away,” confesses Carl (43). Shortly after the news, he admits that he “was in love with this girl” (44); in love with her looks and modern stylishness, as well as with her skills in the most modern of technical fields since he cannot “get over this girl’s sureness, her nonchalance. She handled the autogiro as I would an automobile” (45).

In Carl's eyes, Patricia represents the brilliance of the group that Belsidus has assembled. It is her piloting which takes him from one Black Internationale facility to another and which makes him "lose [...] skepticism about the possibilities of success" (44). Scene after scene in the first novella, Carl reports to the readers on the aviatrix's beauty and skills, highlighting her confidence, characteristic of a New Negro: "I couldn't help but admire the expertness with which she piloted the plane. Would she be interested in love, I wondered – this beauty who superintended an aircraft factory, piloted planes across country and talked of conditioning the masses, world revolution and such things" (47). When Patricia suggests to Carl that he call her "Pat," Carl begins to wonder "about the future" – the future of Belsidus' endeavor as well as the potential future with Patricia as the two issues become increasingly interconnected. When Carl expresses his feelings to Patricia, the aviatrix refuses his advances, saying "Sorry, Carl, but there isn't much time for romance. There's too much to be done, and such a short time in which to do it. Romance can wait. Forget about it. There's plenty of time for that in the future" (56). However, attraction is palpable between the two from this point on and Carl, for the time being, contends himself with "feasting my eyes upon her beauty as she piloted the autogiro over the country with faultless precision" (55). He also kisses Pat after a "shameless orgy" (66) in one of Belsidus' Temples of Love.

Overall, the potential relationship between Carl and Patricia imbues Belsidus' project with an Eden-like promise of the modern and leading civilization of people of color spawning a new generation once their mission is completed. In the *Black Internationale*, though, Patricia does still hide her feelings towards Carl until the invasion is successfully carried out. The journalist complains in a soliloquy that Patricia "was becoming more distant. [...] And yet it somehow felt that she should be mine [and] had I lived in another age, I could have taken her without delay or ado." Carl acknowledges that Patricia's leadership as the head of Belsidus' air force is much too important for the project, though: "Now, because of her career,

because of what she wanted to do for the race [...] I was held off” (93-4). Still, aboard the plane headed to Africa to initiate Black Internationale’s takeover of the continent, Patricia tells Carl not to “give up hope.” Like the promise of a bright future in liberated Africa, Patricia’s message “made me buoyant,” states Carl (94).

Belsidus’ plan for people of color’s future is closely interrelated with the relationship. As Carl observes the preparations and later the advances of Belsidus’ engineers and soldiers, he cannot keep quiet his passion for Patricia, who, through aviation, directs, represents, and makes possible these marvelous changes happening in Africa. “Busy as I’ve been in this tremendous undertaking,” Carl confesses to Patricia, “I’ve been terribly lonely for you. Just starved.” In fact, “I’d be delighted to marry you this minute, Patricia Givens, if you’d have me,” whispers Carl in her ear (116). The penultimate installment of the first novella ends with a cliffhanger as Patricia, after having successfully completed her deadly mission and revenge on Italy, enters Belsidus’ ‘situation room:’ “The door flew open and there was my Pat, face smeared with grease, but smiling triumphantly, and as pretty as ever” (137). Subsequently, with Africa decolonized, Patricia’s words to Carl close the first novella: “Yes, love. Tomorrow we, like Africa, shall be united, after so long. United forever” (142).

Aviation, represented by Patricia, plays a central role as the leading technology in Belsidus’ liberation of Africa. It also plays a romantic role as it is mainly owing to the Black Internationale air force that Africa is united at the end of the text – a romantic ideal, a back-to-Africa dream is thus achieved. Finally, aviation unites the two main characters, whose very affinity is spurred and fueled by Patricia’s aviation skills and Carl’s admiration for them – even the couple’s honeymoon is unsurprisingly aviation-themed as they hurtle “through the cloudless sky on the happiest trip of our lives [in] one of the Black Internationale’s black and gold pursuit planes” (146).

The relationship symbolizes the love for aviation which Carl gradually begins to feel owing to Patricia's prowess. When he is not listening to Belsidus' boastful speeches, Carl spends most of his time in the tiny, yet intimate space of Patricia's plane's cockpit with the attractive aviatrix sitting next to him, especially in the sequel novella. The depth of the relationship between Carl and Patricia – between journalism and aviation – is thus further expanded in *The Black Empire*. Carl, protective of his wife but also progressively enamored with aviation, accompanies Patricia on and observes her during her various missions to protect the Black Empire and regain control over African skies. "Chief," asks Patricia Belsidus as she is to set off on her chemical warfare mission, "I know it's a silly request when there is so much to be done and so few of us to direct it, but cannot Carl go along with me [...] as a sort of observer [?]" (173). Belsidus concedes and now that the aviatrix is no longer Carl's love interest but a partner, the journalist may focus on reporting on the various aviation endeavors depicted in the novella.

Since a large portion of the text is set in the air as bombers flood cities with infested rats, stratosphere planes are shot down by French pursuit planes, and fleets stage battles in the skies, Carl becomes a reporter of black aviation, the voice which captures the achievements of black aviators, the danger of their missions, and – in a move reminiscent of the aviation campaign of the black press – also the crusading spirit of Patricia, the revolutionary aviatrix, and her air force. Schuyler no longer sexualizes Patricia as the object of Carl's attraction in the sequel text. It is aviation's potential for and its role in liberation and decolonization which become the new, attractive, and dynamic object of Carl's breathless narration. With Patricia at the controls, Carl reports on all the flying action taking place above decolonized Africa.

In *The Black Empire*, Carl tells the readers of Pat's flying and navigating the stratosphere planes through a pitch-black sky. He is proud of her at Fez when she averts French pursuit planes and then he wonders if Patricia has "a charmed life" as "the windows

around her had been struck several times [by bullets] but the gas tanks, oil lines and engines were so far intact” during their battle above Morocco (218). Carl narrates how he and Patricia subsequently parachute to death but end up surviving in the desert despite the aviatrix’s head injury. Much like John C. Robinson, Patricia seems to rush into action and survive, covering herself in glory. Her crash – unlike those of Bessie Coleman or Charles E. James – does not deter the aviatrix on her mission. While she gives orders to her fleets from the safety of Kakata, Carl joins Belsidus to witness the action in the air first-hand – he never stops reporting on aviation and his wife; and their role in the bloody conflict.

At the end of the sequel novella, Patricia squeezes Carl’s hand and communicates her emotions without a sound; there is nothing else to be said after all the breathtaking aviation action and fight for survival. Africa is now free, united, and a new generation of confident, assertive, and utterly modern New Negroes has risen. The marriage between Carl and Patricia then foreshadows that this generation will reproduce and bring to the decolonized continent a generation of free, unshackled people of color. In fact, the plot of the sequel novella – with its dynamic, never-stopping action – serves as a temporary stop in the couple’s honeymoon. Supposed to last an entire month and probably meant to encourage Carl and Patricia to conceive a child which would symbolize the unity of Africa and African Americans, their honeymoon is cut short because the Black Empire must first survive before it can move forward and lay the ground for next generations to live free on the continent.

Patricia squeezing Carl’s hand may also be read as a sign of relief and as recognition of black aviation’s achievements. Ever the proud and self-assured black aviatrix, Patricia repeatedly expresses confidence about Belsidus’ project and her crusading willingness to die in the process of completing her mission. She is aware of the crucial position that her air force holds. As Carl guides the readers on Patricia’s mission – emulating the black press reporters who ventured flights with pioneer black pilots so as to promote black aviation – aviation

comes to occupy a central part in the events taking place in the novellas, thereby confirming both the aviatrix's confidence and her superior skills and ingenuity. Carl's reporting promotes black aviation as it is owing to his narrative that the readers may marvel at and appreciate the spectacle that is Patricia as a modern, assertive woman and a New Negro aviatrix, a race leader and a role model.

4.7 The Flying Ethiops in Revolt in Ethiopia

The genre of a black internationalist romance mixed with adventure and a strong dose of aviation is also what characterizes George S. Schuyler's third aviation-inspired novella, *Revolt in Ethiopia*. Under Schuyler's pseudonym of Rachell Call, the text was serialized between July 1938 and January 1939, only a few months after *The Black Empire* had ended. In 1996, the novella was published as part of *Ethiopian Stories*. In *Revolt*, an African American heir to an oil fortune in Texas, Dick Welland, is traveling from Marseille to Cairo and Alexandria aboard the *S.S. Metallica* where he meets an Ethiopian princess, Ettara, the emperor's niece. When the princess tells Dick that she is on a quest to secure a hidden mythical treasure which would allow Ethiopia to purchase the most modern weaponry to fight the Italian occupants, the American decides to help her escape from the boat where an Ethiopian traitor, Ras Resta Gusa, and Italian spies are trying to kidnap and kill her. Subsequently, Dick assists Ettara in flying to her homeland, securing the treasure, and transporting it to Belgium, where it is exchanged for cash and, in turn, for weaponry. At the end, Ettara agrees to marry Dick.

Aviation features heavily in the text. As with the previous duo of novellas, flying frames and fuels most of the action and romance taking place. Aviation also allows for the story to elapse within seventy two hours since – similarly to *Black Empire* – the main characters cover vast distances across the African continent in a matter of hours. In short, aviation keeps the novella's action dynamic. Furthermore, at the heart of Ettara's mission lies

the desire to control Ethiopia's air, because Ethiopians can never fully revolt and retake their country – like Belsidus does with Africa and his all-black air force – without Ethiopian aviators regaining command over the country's skies. Precisely because the text depicts Ethiopians flying and fighting in the air, Schuyler again presents his readers with the imagery of people of color controlling and mastering the most modern of technologies, thus subverting commonly-held stereotypes. Finally, aviation, as with *Black Empire*, unites Dick and Ettara – it provides and symbolizes intimacy – and unites African Americans with Ethiopia in a shared struggle against colonial and imperial oppression. The text thus adds another piece into the mosaic of black characters utilizing aviation to decolonize and liberate Africa, demonstrating their New Negro assertiveness, militancy, and transnational spirit.

By the time *Revolt* first appeared in the *Courier* and introduced the character of Princess Ettara, Schuyler's audience had grown accustomed to African princesses – indirectly connected to aviation – featuring in the black press. In November 1935, Hubert Julian returned from Addis Ababa to Harlem. Reports mocking the “Black Eagle” in the black press highlighted the fact that one of Julian's achievements during his sojourn in Ethiopia had been the courting of Haile Selassie's “one unwedded daughter, the princess Tschai.” When asked whether the rumors about his potential marriage to the royal were true, the Trinidad-born parachutist teased journalists with “You'll see” (“Col. Julian Turns Back on Ethiopia,” “Julian Quits Ethiopia”). Two years later, after a spell abroad during which Julian still filled headlines in black papers, “the conqueror of the heavens, world traveler and soldier of fortune” returned in December 1937 to New York – with an Egyptian princess by his side and the title of an “equerry” to “Her Royal Highness Princess Almina Ali,” the daughter “of the late Prince Hadji Ali,” a popular vaudeville artist (“Julian, with Monocle and Princess, Back in Harlem”). Although black newspapers vigorously debated whether Almina was a true royal, it is safe to

assume that Harlem was clearly used to the black aviation personality being associated in the black press with African princesses.

Dick Welland's character does fit Julian's description in some respects. A world traveler looking for adventure and female company everywhere he goes, Dick is well-versed in aviation and its potential, but cannot fly himself. He can parachute, however, and plan escapes and travels with the help of planes, which proves useful to Princess Ettara on her quest. On the other hand, the drama which takes place on the *S.S. Metallic* during the opening chapters – the assassination attempts on Ettara, and by extension on Dick – must have reminded the readers of John C. Robinson's journey home from Ethiopia during which Italian spies tried to kill him six times. "The most significant attempt to kill him," reported the *Defender* upon Robinson's return to the U.S., "was on the ship which brought the flyer to Marseille, France. While on deck, Colonel Robinson was warned by an Egyptian that several men were after him. Shortly afterwards three men started after him with a dagger, but the plot was nipped by two sailors" ("Reveal Six Attempts to Kill Condor"). Overall, however, Dick most seems to resemble Carl from *Black Empire*. Even though he does not function as the narrator in this novella, Dick does follow, like Carl, a brave female character – whose servants can fly and fight the Italians in the air – to Ethiopia despite his initial reticence and skepticism, and functions as the somewhat oblivious observer and translator of the Ethiopian adventure for the black American audience, embodied by his valet, Bill.

Unlike Carl, Dick does not work as a journalist, but his doubtfulness of Ettara's mission is reminiscent of Carl's initial hesitation to support Belsidus and Patricia's revolutionary vision. Dick encounters Ettara as she is being bothered by Resta. They begin to talk and Dick joins the princess for dinner. In the middle of the dining hall, however, they find out that Ettara's bodyguard, John, has been murdered – and Dick is thrown into the action that is Ettara's secret mission to liberate Ethiopia. The American claims that he is on a mere

“pleasure trip” and is “not eager to get involved too deeply in anything [...] dangerous.” Ettara, however, pleads to his Pan-African spirit: “You don’t wish to see Ethiopia free? [...] You don’t wish to see the Italians beaten and driven out? You are unsympathetic with the aspirations of black men?” (134). Dick, apparently a reader of the black press, opines: “I’m sympathetic with the Ethiopians but frankly I can’t see how they can win, so why waste time?” Echoing black press editorials, Dick thinks that “even when [the Ethiopians] had arms, he recalled, they had been unable to stem the tide of invasion. [...] It would require millions of dollars,” which black newspapers argued that African Americans could not spare abroad, and “it was utterly silly to think anything concrete could be done to expel the Fascists” anyway (136). Lack of conviction of and a leisurely attitude to Ethiopia’s plight thus define Dick at first.

Schuyler, too, initially held skeptical views towards any other than financial help for Ethiopia on the part of black Americans – his fantasy of wanting to shoot the Italians with a machine gun notwithstanding. In his weekly texts, he urged his readers to “start a stream of currency toward New York [because] it would not only increase our self-esteem and pleasantly surprise the Ethiopians, but it would tremendously enhance our prestige in the eyes of the white world which usually expects us only to clown” (quoted in Hill 20). At the same time, though, the columnist was always mindful of the gravity of and repercussions from Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia. “Make no mistake about it,” writes Schuyler in the winter of 1935, “if Ethiopia loses and is enslaved, the cause of white imperialism will be immeasurably advanced and the cause of black liberation will be hopelessly retarded. The last of free Africa MUST remain free” (quoted in Hill 21). Schuyler later explained to his readers that “the defeat of Ethiopia and its consequent dismemberment will be a very damaging blow to the prestige and aspirations of colored people everywhere” (21). In Dick Welland, Schuyler thus fictionalizes his columns into a lead character – Dick, doubtful at first, eventually invests

financially and engages actively in Ettara's quest, realizing that, perhaps, helping Ethiopia is not merely a national, but a black transnational issue.

As in *Black Empire*, it is the main female character symbolizing Africa or an African nation, who convinces the male character to assist her on her journey. "I am on a mission now that will make it possible for our eager millions to have arms in their hands and drive the Italians to the sea," explains Ettara to Dick excitedly. She appeals to his Americanness, "that pioneering spirit that conquers, that spirit which has made our people in America the most progressive Negroes in the world." And reveals that she spent eight years in the U.S., studying at Howard University between 1927 and 1935 (135). As Hill correctly notes in his foreword to *Revolt*, the princess recognizes Dick, an African American, as a "sort of cultural vanguard in the African world;" in other words, a representative of Locke's New Negro. Ettara here argues to Dick and the readers, claims Hill, that "the privileged cultural position of African-Americans should not blind them to the infinite adaptability of African culture" and that black Americans' progressiveness carries "political responsibility" for other peoples of color (26). Ettara's pleading thus expresses the most essential tenets of black transnationalism and the American New Negro's central role in it.

At the same time, the princess' utterance reminds the readers of the role of black aviation in the very notion of progress being associated with black America. Indeed, when the princess mentions the progressive and conquering spirit of black Americans, it is difficult to read aviation into it. However, given her sojourn in Washington, D.C., during the years of the Harlem Renaissance as well as the period of black aviation's gradual rise to a nationwide civil rights, racial uplift, and black inter- and trans-nationalist phenomenon, aviation – and the mastery of this technology by black pioneer aviators – is here implied as one of the reasons why African Americans, in her eyes, represent the vanguard of progress.

Two chapters later, Ettara's scene of pleading with Dick to help her on her mission is expanded with a dramatic aviation plot set-up. Emperor Menelik, who famously defeated the Italians at Adowa in 1896, "believed," explains Ettara to Dick, "that the day would come when Ethiopia would again be attacked by Italy. He knew it would cost a vast sum of money for Ethiopia to purchase the wherewithal of modern warfare. So he accumulated gold and precious stones from every part of the empire until he possessed an enormous store of wealth." That is the origin of the mythical treasure the princess is after. Most importantly, this treasure is hiding "in a secret place guarded by a thousand picked men, warlike priests of the Coptic Church, high on an almost inaccessible peak" (143), says Ettara. The very location of Menelik's treasure – in a mountainous region known only to its ancient protectors – predetermines how Dick, the alleged pioneer, will be able to access it: by air. Since the treasure is located, as Ivy G. Wilson points out, "in the ancient center of human civilization" (268), it seems telling that the utterly western technology of aviation – which, according to Charles Lindbergh, defines modern civilizations and civilized people – should be the method by which an African American, helping to and working together with Ethiopians, secures an ancient treasure to equip Ethiopia with twentieth-century weaponry. In this way, the novella, according to Hill, shows "the complementarity of modern science and so-called primitive knowledge" (27). It also highlights aviation as a technology uniting peoples of color.

Along with his observer role, Dick essentially functions as an aviation visionary in the novella. He wires for a seaplane to carry Ettara, Bill, and himself away from Gusa and the Italians. Out of Alexandria, another expensive flight in a "big transport plane" takes the trio to the Somalian-Ethiopian border. Schuyler intersperses the trip with technical details about altitude and, more importantly, about time, to highlight how Dick's ingenious plan to fly Ettara to Ethiopia and back relies on the speed which only aviation can provide. "They passed Cairo at a 200-mile clip; at 11.15 as they lunched they saw the great dam at Assouan, and

Dick knew they had covered 500 miles. Khartoum flashed into view at 4.30,” narrates Schuyler. After a pit stop, “at 5.00 sharp,” the plane gets on its way again. The speed with which Dick’s group covers the vast African distances lulls the American into a false sense of security: “we’ve outsmarted them, Ettara,” says Dick confidently. At that very moment, however, “three military pursuit planes” catch up with Dick’s transport plane and “loafed on its tail.” When Dick’s ship finally lands by “a large collection of huts,” the Italian pursuit planes end up “on each side and in the rear.” “They were now on soil the Italians claimed,” Schuyler sets up the cliffhanger. “Dick handed a high-powered rifle to the princess and another to Bill. The crews of the Italian planes were already running toward them” (161-2). And the group is about to fight for their lives.

A shooting scene follows in which Dick and Bill kill several of the aviators; the rest is finished by “a surging mob of Ethiopians.” Its leader, Dedsjasmach Yamrou recognizes the princess and invites Ettara and her entourage to dinner, where they discuss the ongoing guerilla war taking place in the Ethiopian mountains. During the discussion, Yamrou boasts that his men “take much plenty Italian airplane. Three good one us get this day, eh? Can fix up sometime but us get too small petrol” (162-5). As Dick listens to Yamrou speak, he thinks “suddenly of a daring scheme” involving aviation. “I take it that every day counts. Every day the Ethiopians have less and less arms and munitions. Every day the Italians go deeper into the country and consolidate their gains. So we’re working against time,” prefaces Dick his plan. “We’ve got to put guns in these people’s hands soon and get them added supplies of munitions or they will never be able to win. [...] I know it’s a long way [to the treasure at Abra Destum], but why can’t we fly there and get it over with in an hour,” proposes Dick (166). His familiarity with flying as a progressive and affluent black American allows him to see aviation for what it is: “a gift from heaven,” to quote Lindberg, which may facilitate

Ethiopia's liberation. Dick realizes that his role is to be an aviation visionary, who utilizes this particular technology to advance Ethiopia into the twentieth century.

One major obstacle stands in Dick's way, however. "And who's going to fly the plane?," asks Ettara. "I can't fly, you can't fly and there's probably nobody here that can fly" (167). "I fly," announces Yamrou shyly. Dick is "amazed" but "gratified" as his disbelief indicates what his view of Ethiopians, and probably Africans in general, has been. As a journalist, Schuyler long railed against stereotypical depictions of people of color, including Africans, hence his dismissal of the Harlem Renaissance artists' frequent exoticization of black cultures in their art. In a column from 1935, Schuyler observes that "far from being the benighted, ignorant savage, a notch above the gorilla, which white folk love to depict, the African today is quite alert and informed. More, he is rapidly becoming industrialized and is now quite familiar with the white man's tools. He is using them today. He will be manufacturing them himself tomorrow" ("Views and Reviews"). The fact that Yamrou knows how to fly a plane, since he "learn fly in Angland. I fly good," only suggests – as in *Black Empire* – that Ethiopians, and any people of color for that matter, may be "thoroughly competent to wage 'modern warfare' if given 'modern weapons'" (Hill 26).

The fact that the Ethiopian has mastered aviation allows Dick to make his plan even more adventurous and modern. Even though Yamrou agrees to fly the trio to Abra Destum, he warns Dick that "you die there if you land." Dick, ever ingenious and a daredevil, replies that "those Italians had parachutes. [...] Why can't we use them? Then Dedjasmach can fly over the mountain and we can bail out with our guns and equipment. It will be a cinch" (167). Just like that, Schuyler transforms the quest for an ancient treasure into a modern, adrenaline-filled aviation adventure with stolen Italian planes piloted by Ethiopians dropping two African Americans and an Ethiopian princess above inaccessible mountains to parachute down to a sacred temple. Moreover, it is necessary to note that this neck-breaking speed is facilitated by

the fact that Ettara's helpers include an African American aviation visionary and a technically and technologically-skilled Ethiopian aviator, who can carry out dangerous flying missions. Aviation in black hands is a potent weapon, Schuyler seems to be suggesting here.

As in *Black Empire*, the novella involves detailed scenes of flight. However, while in the duo of texts, Patricia flows from one modern Black Internationale facility to another, Yamrou's plane labors "manfully, with the heavy load, rising ever higher and higher over miles of primeval forests." Schuyler here pairs and contrasts the inaccessibility of Ethiopia's jungle and mountain ranges with the modern technology of aviation to highlight how only planes are able to reach the previously unreachable. Which is precisely why Ethiopians need their own planes to combat Italy's insidious encroachment on everything the African nation holds dear and to regain control over its own skies. When Yamrou "circled the summit [of Abra Destum] and dropped several smoke bombs," Schuyler stages a short parachute scene in which the author's fantastical future saviors of Ethiopia drop down from the skies onto the mountain, onto "the backbone of creation" (171). Dick, looking "at the awful desolation below him" dives overboard, pulling his cord and "waiting with curious calm for one hurtling toward the earth. Then a great pull and his speed slackened. He breathed easy. The parachute had opened" (170). As they reassemble, Dick, Ettara, and Bill can see "for scores of miles in every direction. The mountain seemed to stand as king amid a kingdom of mountains" (171), with the successful parachutists standing on its crown.

Despite the majestic and ancient beauty around him, Dick's thoughts race back to aviation. "No matter how much gold there was, Yamrou could fly it out in a couple of trips. [...] We could get a run here of at least a thousand feet. Perhaps we can get out by plane!" Dick exclaims (171). But his scheming is interrupted by "a squadron of six bombing planes [...] bearing down rapidly from the east. Their markings were Italian" (172). The Italians' dominance in the skies catches up with the American's plans once again. The invaders

quickly descend and parachute onto the mountain, capturing Dick's group. They search Ettara violently and when Dick protests, they whip him: "Again and again, the heavy strip of leather lashed Dick's back until it seemed that each time would be the last he could possibly stand. He was dizzy, numb with pain, aching in every muscle" (174). The scene, according to Ivy G. Wilson, "links the Ethiopian opposition against Italian fascism as the twentieth-century analogue of black resistance against the peculiar institution in the nineteenth" (269). However, it also highlights the fact, pointed out by John C. Robinson in the *Courier*, that even though Italians may be more technologically advanced than the traditionalist Ethiopia, they are not more civilized no matter how powerful technology they may be able to wield.

The Italians display further uncivilized behavior when they attempt to rape Ettara, in front of Dick. Schuyler here intervenes with another well-timed cliffhanger. As Ettara – and symbolically Ethiopia – is about to be defiled by Italy, "her screams echo[ing] over the mountainside and deep valleys beyond," the protectors of Abra Destum shoot the Italian rapist with rifles "equipped with Maxim silencers [and] telescopic sights" (176-9). The protectors thus use the most modern equipment to protect the sacred ancient mountain, again highlighting Schuyler's mixing of the modern and the allegedly primitive. "Suddenly, as [Ettara] was almost forced to the ground, the man straightened up with a look of surprise and pain on his face, turned half way round. Blood gushed from his lips. Then his knees buckled and he fell at her feet" (176), narrates Schuyler dramatically, suggesting that, in the end, Italians will be forced to bow down to Ettara and Ethiopia, whose protectors prove time and again in the text that they can defend the cradle of human civilization from white imperial conquerors and mere pretenders of civilization.

Dick's subsequent experience inside Abra Destum's caves, where the Bishop Truli Handem watches over "the true Ark of the Covenant brought from Jerusalem" (185), further underscores the image of Ethiopia as the staple of civilization. Like Carl in *Black Empire*,

Dick is the eyes and ears which capture and communicate to the readership the awe which Ethiopia awakens in the African American. “Here was a Negro civilization older than any other except India and China; a civilization that had flourished before Greece and Rome, before Carthage, yes, before Egypt. [...] Here it survived in spite of Mussolini, in spite of perfidious England, in spite of Ethiopia’s desertion by the traitorous League of Nations,” writes Schuyler, echoing the *Courier*’s reports on the Italo-Ethiopian war, J.A. Rogers’ texts, and his own columns condemning the betrayal of Ethiopia by the international community. Dick “wept unashamed,” making a resolution at that very moment that Ethiopia “must not die; not if he could prevent it” (182). Reminiscent of Sutton E. Griggs’ *Unfettered* (1902) and Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* (1903) where ancient African civilizations also hide and wait underground to be discovered by an African American (Gruesser 117), the scene renews Dick’s determination to aid Ethiopia, as Schuyler preached to his readers.

It also helps the lead character invent a new ingenious aviation plan. “It’s a king’s ransom,” exclaims Dick when he sees the treasure Ettara has secured at Abra Destum. Indeed, “It’s salvation for Ethiopia,” explains the princess, “with these jewels we can keep our men in the field for years, if we can only get safely out of here.” Aviation comes to the group’s rescue again. Dick finds out that “the nearest landing place for a plane is 25 miles from here across a very difficult country,” with Italy’s “patrol planes [flying] over this area every day” (188-9). As before, Dick’s group must therefore face the Italians’ control of the air but opts for flying as the most expedient solution anyway since the escape route would normally take three weeks by any other type of transportation. Dick’s reliance on aviation and Yamrou’s piloting abilities thus expedite Ettara and Ethiopia’s mission “to get to civilization” (191). Aviation here functions as material assistance since it allows Ettara to complete her mission within seventy two hours. And it also helps symbolically on Ethiopia’s route to modernity

since it will allow the princess to deliver modern, civilization-defining weaponry to her homeland and to defend the oldest Christian civilization.

However, en route to the “secret airfield” (193), Dick, Ettara, and Bill are stopped by Italian machine-guns, taken hostage, and transported to a nearby occupied village. The Italians’ cruelty, masked as superiority in warfare and weapons, resurfaces when two white Italian officers order a unit of Askaris, “black Italian soldiers from the coast colonies,” to execute Ettara’s entourage of Ethiopian soldiers. “[A] volley rent the quiet canyon. The Ethiopians toppled over in a grotesque heap” (200-1), writes Schuyler as the Italians’ cowardice is in the forefront here again. To pinpoint it even further, Dick, having experienced a savage whipping from the Italians who were in Ethiopia on an alleged civilizing mission, comments sarcastically on the scene: “I see civilization has finally reached Ethiopia” (201). This is, of course, a statement about Italy rather than Ethiopia, as the occupants’ displays of barbarity and savagery fill the novella’s plot and contrast Dick and Ettara’s heroic quest to utilize modern weapons to protect humanity and civilization, rather than drive it into barbarity as the Italians are doing.

Of course, Italy’s inhumanity is, in the end, avenged by aviation in *Revolt* since it is this very technology which functions throughout Schuyler’s three novellas as *the* most effective – actually and symbolically – means of decolonizing Africa. In black pilots’ hands and owing to an African American’s progressive vision, aviation is transformed into a necessary means to an end, rather than an end in itself. While Italy, both in the historical and fictional war in Ethiopia, employed aviation purposely to sow fear into the locals’ hearts and to decimate the nation’s army as well as its population, Schuyler’s aviators are often shown to be using the technology only to defend themselves and their homeland. Even in Belsidus’ violent reclamation, Patricia’s air force does not play the role of an oppressor, but that of a vigilante – albeit a ruthless one – which destroys mostly the colonizers’ military facilities.

Schuyler depicts precisely this elaborate and careful utilization of aviation when Yamrou attacks the Italian-occupied village to rescue Ettara, Dick, and Bill:

Like a sparrow, a lone plane was darting across the sky, high in the air, making for the village. [...] It was, they assumed, another plane from the Italian air base. [...] Suddenly there was a gust of smoke followed by a burst of flame and in a moment the sound of an explosion reached them. [...] Consternation swept the Italian ranks. [...] It was obvious that the little destroyer was not an Italian plane. Could it be Ethiopian? [...] Down came the plane again in a dive straight at the village. Smoke and flames were left in its wake and the approaching party could hear the explosion of the incendiary bombs. [...] The villagers had run off to one side. It was fortunate that they did. Or perhaps it was by design. [...] Panic-stricken, no one stopped to fire at the oncomer. Back and forth went the plane, spreading death. Dick, Bill and the princess stood absolutely still in the center of the road, an island in the sea of pandemonium. (213-4).

Yamrou attacks the Italians with precision during the evening raid. He purposely avoids the native villagers and targets an Italian bomber plane which brought Ras Resta Gusa and Captain Frascetti. He creates chaos, dispersing and killing the Italians, while letting his “white-cloaked Ethiopian soldiers” (214) finish the rest. The Italians do not know how to react to Yamrou’s aerial assault because they assume that the oncoming plane is Italian; they also seem to strongly believe that a native could not possibly fly an attack plane so well. And yet, Yamrou carefully aims at the Italians and does not harm a single Ethiopian during the action, including Ettara and her African American entourage. Yamrou thus exhibits mastery of aviation in general and air warfare in particular, which the allegedly civilization-bringing Italians could not fathom in a person of color.

Still, despite Yamrou's brave rescue mission, Ettara's quest is not yet complete. Once the princess is saved, Yamrou relates to the group that the Ethiopians "were on their last legs unless they could get more arms and ammunition, immediately." Once again, Dick, the adventurous African American, proposes a dangerous night aviation mission, arguing that "we can get to Beni Shengui in a little over an hour, refuel and be on our way to Khartoum and get there by morning. From there we can take a plane direct to Alexandria, and with luck we should be in Marseilles by evening" (217). As before, Dick involves Yamrou, the native aviator, to pilot on the perilous journey. As the end of Ettara's mission and the novella nears, Schuyler again fills the pages with detailed descriptions of flights and of Yamrou "speeding toward freedom" (218). In Khartoum, after a flight over "the wild Ethiopian scenery," Dick orders a plane to Egypt. The airport agent tells him, "smiling condescendingly," that it would "cost a small fortune" to rent an entire plane for the small party. But Dick, exhibiting his newly-acquired Pan-Africanist sentiments, replies that "the cost don't bother us" (219), thereby fulfilling Schuyler's wish for African Americans to invest into Ethiopian future and surprise patronizing whites with their active generosity.

Schuyler then transforms the novella's penultimate installment into a promotional text for aviation. While Ettara and Bill are sleeping onboard the large transport plane, Dick cannot help but think back to what has taken place: "So much had happened in the 24 hours since they had left the cozy subterranean quarters [...] in the bowels of sacred Mount Abra Destum. But a little over 48 hours had elapsed since they had taken off in the little plane piloted by Yamrou for the flight from Beni Sengui to the mountain treasury." "And just 72 hours had gone," realizes Dick with amazement, "since their chartered plane had left Alexandria [...] on the quest to the unknown." Even more directly, Schuyler reveals to the readership through Dick's inner monologue how all this has been achieved: "Airplanes made such a difference. The same journey by any other available transportation would have taken weeks and weeks.

Now it was merely a matter of hours. Who knew where they would be a week hence” (221). Even though all the flights cost Dick a lot of money, “the speed is worth it” (222), argues the African American and celebrates his inventiveness.

When the party’s plane “set down on the Antwerp airfield and brought their eventful journey to an end,” Dick again thinks to himself that “it had all been something of a dream, that reign of suspicion and intrigue on the *S.S. Metallic*, that wild flight across the Mediterranean, the nightmare in Ethiopia, the flight back and now together and safe here in this staid city of merchants and jewelers” (225). But the large financial investment and adventurous planning of aviation missions on Dick’s part bring results and prove aviation’s central role in liberating Ethiopia as the ancient treasure allows Ettara to purchase field radio sets, medical supplies, hundreds of thousands of rifles, five hundred machine guns, and “ten bombing planes and twenty fighters” (226). Ethiopia shall thus be saved, and its sacred skies protected and controlled by the Ethiopians. Schuyler asserts in the novella that airplanes, indeed, make a difference in the face of colonialism and oppression. He showcases the ability of the aviation technology to make possible and expedite dangerous but vital missions. He contrasts the role black aviation can play in liberation and decolonization of Ethiopia with the ruthlessly utilitarian employment of air warfare by the Italians in their allegedly civilizing mission. Finally, through this contrast, Schuyler is able to highlight how mastery by people of color of this modern, western, and allegedly civilization-defining technology allows the subversion and redefinition of the stereotype of them being technically and technologically inept, barbaric, and uncivilized.

As with *Black Empire*, aviation also accentuates and frames the romance aspect of the novella. It is Dick’s adventurousness – reflected in his aviation schemes to retrieve Ethiopia’s treasure as quickly as possible and, in turn, to deliver modern flying machines to the nation’s fighters – which attracts Ettara. Dick, like Carl with Patricia, is enamored with the princess:

“her strange exotic beauty captivated him. She was almost American, what with her American education and stylish clothes; and yet there was something of another age about her, something of the nameless wisdom of the oldest Christian country in the world, and something, too, of the fanatical zeal for freedom” (145). Exotic and sexual, Ettara is presented as a combination of black beauty with a passion for freedom-fighting, so similar to Patricia’s, which awakens the Pan-Africanist and black trans-nationalist spirit in the leading male character. It is always the woman in Schuyler’s three novellas who, symbolizing African diaspora, unites peoples of color across the world to aid Africa or Ethiopia in the struggle against colonization. Schuyler’s romantic plots are thus always already aviation-fueled romances of black inter- and trans-nationalism.

Revolt provides plenty of examples of how romance – with the help of aviation – crosses and erases borders, but also enhances decolonization. Like Patricia in *Black Empire*, Ettara does not permit the attraction between Dick and her to “get out of the realm of the platonic,” and focuses rather on her mission. “I know exactly how you feel,” explains the princess to Dick, “and I like you a lot too, Dick, but there’s work to be done for Ethiopia. And until that work is finished, I cannot think of anything else. [...] Ethiopia must come first [and] you must help me not to fail” (148). Ettara and Ethiopia thus need the African American, they need his interest and ingenuity in the revolt and the future of the country, but Ettara will not allow exploitation on Dick’s part. That is why his reward – the union of black America and Africa, symbolized by their potential marriage – can come only after the mission is successfully completed.

As Dick’s assistance proves increasingly beneficial, Ettara begins to call him “darling” (180) midway through the novella. And as Dick learns that Ettara stands for more than beauty – the beauty of Africa – he comes to appreciate her complex persona. “She was really an ace, he mused” in a Carl-like fashion. “So few women were at once beautiful, smart, healthy and

natural in their association with men. She was self-reliant, too” (199). Dick’s observations can also be applied to his simultaneously growing appreciation for Ethiopia, as he realizes in his growing Pan-Africanism that, like Ettara, Yamrou and the protectors of Abra Destum are just as modern as any westerner, and yet more civilized.

These realizations lead Dick to the decision to marry Ettara as soon as “they got out of this and back to Egypt” (199), which only explains further why the African American utilizes aviation for expedience so much throughout the text. As they approach Cairo at the beginning of the penultimate chapter, Dick wakes up and beholds “a brilliant sun [...] drenching the Nile Valley, its green fields and its pretty white villages with incandescent light. [F]ar beyond the stately pyramids were the glistening towers of the ancient capital,” which Dick’s group is approaching aboard the modern airplane. Inspired, Dick asks Ettara shortly, “So, now I suppose you’ll say ‘yes’ when I ask you to marry.” The princess replies, amused, “just wait until this job is over with, Mr. Welland” (223). But, the moment the mission is completed, Ettara rushes to be married to Dick and to reunite black America with Ethiopia: “Why tomorrow? Why not today? We ought to be able to get enough sleep between now and when the license bureau opens this morning. Don’t you think so, darling?” The novella then ends with an excited proclamation by Ettara that “I’m going to be an American, too” (227). While Yogita Goyal has read Ettara’s exclamation as the containment of black “transnationalism within the domestic realm of marriage” (32), it seems, rather, that Ettara aligns herself and her country with black America because it stands for black aviation and progress. Black aviators during Ettara’s sojourn in Washington, as well as Dick during the quest, all display the potential of aviation in black hands for liberation and decolonization. They thus highlight the fact that black America, through aviation, does really represent the vanguard of progress and modernity.

Overall then, Schuyler's depiction of aviation in general, and black aviation in particular, in *Revolt* once again highlights the importance of aviation for decolonization and liberation. Chartered planes, piloted by British aviators, transport Dick, Ettara, and Bill to occupied Ethiopia. Once they enter the Italy-claimed territory, however, these planes must land and then immediately leave. Aviation thus seemingly loses its magic – it is as if only the Italians operate in the skies above Ethiopia. That is why Yamrou's aviation prowess surprises Dick – while Ettara remains nonplussed, aware of her countrymen's technical and technological abilities if given the chance. Excited after having found out that the Ethiops can fly and operate complex machinery, Dick then successfully and fully utilizes the brave native pilot in his plans. Thus, even though colonial chartered planes carry the group as far as the Somali border, it is then ultimately black aviation in stolen Italian planes in the Ethiopian skies which functions as a vehicle for Dick's plans to liberate Ethiopia. Dick's hired aviators – like those employed by Haile Selassie during Robinson's tenure as the head of the Imperial Air Force – prove disloyal as they flee the very moment Italian soldiers and pilots attack. A single black aviator, however, proves courageous, devoted, and skilled as Yamrou flies Dick's group across the Italy-controlled skies and rescues them from torture and potential execution. It is thus ultimately Yamrou and black aviation – spurred by Dick as the African American visionary of aviation – which symbolize the Ethiops' fighting spirit and modernity, and which assures the success of Ettara's mission to liberate the cradle of Christian civilization.

CONCLUSION: THE SKY IS THE LIMIT

During the 1938-39 period, as the black press refocused its aviation campaign from simply imploring the members of the race to become pilots to publicly demanding that the government open fully-funded pilot programs with technical and mechanical courses at black colleges, the three newspapers analyzed here published almost 400 texts and photographs on aviation. Given the fact that they were weeklies, the numbers are staggering; but they are also not surprising any more. Despite having been barred from many aviation schools around the country, the black aviation community had by 1939 developed its own institutions, a network of local instructors, and segregated airfields for training. Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles – as well as Port au Prince and Addis Ababa, where Robinson again taught aviation in the 1940s and the 50s – were black aviation hubs with decorated aviation pioneers operating schools and airports as well as organizing regular air events. By early 1939, there were 81 active licensed black pilots in the country – a sevenfold increase compared to 1932. The number of black aviation students waiting to receive their license was probably considerably higher, too, as the applications to segregated CPTP institutions during late 1939 and early 1940 suggest.

Most importantly, by 1939, as Schuyler's final novella was exciting readers with its fantastical tale of a black aviator helping liberate Ethiopia and its skies, aviation no longer possessed the image of a white technological field; it had been transvalued and recontextualized by the black press. The hundreds of articles, photographs, as well as dozens of air events, long-distance and local flights, and the historic feats achieved by the pilots discussed in this dissertation had turned black aviation into a nationwide phenomenon. Having gone from depicting early black aviators as martyrs for a marginal cause to presenting black pilots as technologically and technically up-to-date New Negroes and as members of a highly-skilled community, the black press had transformed its aviation campaign into an

unprecedented educational and political movement with admired race leaders and role models. While detailed information in reports about flying machines and their equipment may have been seen as oddities in the early stages of the aviation coverage, they were by 1939 widely discussed among the black populace which had gradually begun to attend black air meetings and events.

Exploration of the Harlem Renaissance print culture presented in this dissertation demonstrates that the era's black press – represented here in the form of its three most widely read papers, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *New York Amsterdam News* – was heavily invested in black aviation throughout the two decades. Black aviation constituted one of the most robust racial-uplift and civil-rights causes advocated in black newspapers during that time. The black press sought to support black aviation and its leading figures in their attempts to represent the African American community in the field which stood for modern America, its ingenuity and innovativeness, as well as its leadership among machine civilizations. In this way, the aviation campaign paralleled in its ultimate objectives, volume, and omnipresence the promotion of African American arts and literature known as the Harlem Renaissance. Proving African Americans' humanity, skills and prowess, as well as civility, proving that New Negroes could serve as Locke's vanguard of progress and civilization among Africa-descended peoples, lay at the heart of both the Harlem Renaissance and the black aviation campaign.

Black aviators were provided space in papers to promote their achievements, lament about the lack of funding as well as about segregation, and were often depicted as technically-gifted crusaders for a cause which their community would come to appreciate only in the future. Throughout the years, the black press promoted a racially uplifting and internationally-minded goodwill message of aviation, which emphasized technical and mechanical education as well as future job opportunities in aviation if only African Americans could seize them. In

this way, black aviation pioneers such as Bessie Coleman, Hubert Julian, Joel Foreman, William J. Powell, James H. Banning, Charles E. James, James Holt Peck, Janet Waterford, John W. Greene, Charles Alfred Anderson, Albert E. Forsythe, and John C. Robinson – along with Cornelius Coffey and Willa Brown in the 1938-39 phase – were depicted as and had by 1939 become race leaders and New Negro models. Although they have not been read by scholars as black aviation-inspired texts so far, George S. Schuyler’s novellas, written by perhaps the most vocal advocate for black aviators and serialized in the newspaper most supportive of black aviation, transpose these very same tropes and themes – as well as some of the popular black flyers’ characteristics – into fantastical stories of a new civilization of color, the Black Empire, and an ancient Christian nation, Ethiopia, led and protected by New Negro aviators.

Indeed, Schuyler’s serialized novellas are by no means the only African American texts dealing with flying. Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* (1977), for example, weaves flying into a complex matrix of symbols to depict Milkman’s escape and liberation from oppression and personal issues as Morrison taps into the mythical story of Igbo Landing, a tale of slaves ‘flying’ to freedom. W.E.B. DuBois’s *Dark Princess* (1928), which Schuyler deemed “a masterful piece of work” in a letter to DuBois, also depicts flying – in a brief fantastical scene – as an escapist, liberating activity. In the scene, the novel’s main character, Matthew Towns, is being transported by a plane from Chicago to Richmond, Virginia, to reconnect with Princess Kautilya who has conceived their child and now awaits Matthew to return to become the rightful “Maharajah of Bwodpur and Maharajah” and the “Messenger and Messiah to all the Darker Worlds” (311). During the flight – a literal and symbolic race against time as Matthew must arrive in Virginia within hours to be crowned – Matthew realizes that there is no prejudice, only freedom in the skies:

They left the great smudge of the crowded city and swept out over flat fields and sluggish rivers. Fires flew in the world beneath and dizzily marked Chicago. Fires flew in the world above and marked high heaven. [...] Matthew could hear the beating and singing of wings rushing by in the night as though a thousand angels of evil were battling against the dawn. [...] His soul was afraid of this daring, heaven-challenging thing. [...] He was alone in the center of the universe [and] the place rocked gently like a cradle [as] suddenly the whole thing became symbolic. He was riding Life above the world. He was triumphant over Pain and Death. [...] He spurned the pettiness of earth beneath his feet. He tried to sing again the song of Emancipation [but as] the living plane circled and spurned [and prepared to land] Matthew's heart fell. He grew sick and suddenly tired [as] the sorrows of earth seemed to rise and greet him. He was no longer bird or superman. (303-5)

When the plane lands, Matthew must walk three miles to Richmond because a plane with a black passenger is presumably not allowed to touch down in the former second capital and permanent seat of the Confederacy. Matthew's dejection from the flight's abrupt ending is further exacerbated when he boards a Jim Crow car, "up by the engine, small, crowded, and dirty" (306). The airplane's heaven-like, and, more importantly, liberating atmosphere is suddenly replaced with the earthly, ominous reality of Jim Crow. DuBois establishes flying as a spiritual experience as Matthew realizes that the skies are segregation free. He juxtaposes the earthly dirt and despair of Chicago and the South with the heaven-like air that Matthew is briefly embalmed in. DuBois' is not a complex treatment of aviation like Schuyler's, but the scene does provide a fascinating glimpse into the technology's potential for liberation as Matthew enters a spiritual dimension which transcends time, distance, and the racially-determined geography of the United States; only for him to come down from the skies to the present time and its grounding reality of racial tensions and segregation.

Ralph Ellison's "Flying Home" (1944), a short story about Todd, a Tuskegee Airmen, crashing his plane, portrays aviation not merely as a means of liberation, but also as a means of representing African Americans as modern and worthy of flying for the United States Air Force. Upon his accident, Todd is tended to by an old black sharecropper – and Ellison here sets up dichotomy, which frames the text, of a young modern Northerner and a rural Alabaman who "done heard about you boys but I haven't never *seen* o' you all" (154). "Caint tell you how it felt to see somebody what look like me," tells the anonymous "old Negro man" to Todd excitedly. But the pilot has little appreciation for the man's kind words as Ellison explores, in a deeply discomfoting study, the burden of race representation Todd feels on his shoulders.

When Todd comes to after the crash, his first thoughts race to his plane; he "must get the plane back to the [air]field before his officers were displeased" (148), for Todd's "real appreciation lay with his white officers; and with them he could never be sure" (152). Todd's uncertainty stems from the fact that, even though he repeatedly displays his flying prowess and ingenuity, he is also aware that "you must have them [white people] judge you, knowing that they never accept your mistakes as your own but hold it against your whole race – that was humiliation. Yes, and humiliation was when you could never be simply yourself; when you were always part of this old black ignorant man" (150). As in *Dark Princess*, the liberating skies where one is free are juxtaposed with the reality of Jim Crow and long-standing stereotypes.

Through Todd's burden of representation Ellison sheds light and expands on DuBois's double consciousness, "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (*Souls* 2). Todd feels "cut off from them [the older generation of African Americans] by age, by understanding, by sensibility, by technology, and by his need to measure himself against

the mirror of other men's appreciation" (Ellison 152). He feels as if the accident "knocked [him] back a hundred years [since] with all I've learned, I'm dependent upon this 'peasant's' sense of time and space" (151). And when the old man asks "how come you want to fly way up there in the air," Todd muses that flying is "the most meaningful act in the world...because it makes me less like you" (153). At the same time, thinks the pilot, "this was the question all Negroes asked, put with the same timid hopefulness and longing that always opened a greater void within him than that he had felt beneath the plane the first time he had flown" (153-4).

Todd's education and skills distance him from many African Americans, and yet still place his worth directly in the hands of his white officers. Despite his prowess, Todd must wait for the confirmation of his worth; he must wait to be allowed to fight for his country. At the same time, he feels like he "could never make [the old man] understand" his burden. His existence, signaling double consciousness, is that of despair and hope at the same time: "Can I help it because they won't let us actually fly? Maybe we are a bunch of buzzards feeding on a dead horse, but we can hope to be eagles, can't we? *Can't we?*" (161). Ellison's point that Todd lives in "two worlds" (quoted in Lucy 257), between feelings of superiority and inferiority, between proven prowess as well as humanity and omnipresent stereotypes, is driven home in the story's final moments when the pilot almost ends up in a psychiatric ward. "This nigguh belongs in a straitjacket, too, boys. I knowed that the minnit Jeff's kid said something 'bout a nigguh flyer," proclaims the white owner of the field where Todd lies injured and immobile. "You all know you caint let the nigguh git up that high without his going crazy. The nigguh brain ain't built right for high altitudes" (171). In the story's ambivalent ending, Todd, humiliated by the accident and the white owner's racist explanation for it, realizes that the old sharecropper is his "sole salvation in an insane world of outrage and humiliation" (173); it is also the old man that Todd is ultimately trying to liberate, represent, and make proud with his flying prowess.

Schuyler's *The Black Internationale*, *The Black Empire*, and *Revolt in Ethiopia* violently and straightforwardly reject the nuance of double consciousness and the feeling of inferiority it implies. They put, to use Schuyler's review of Powell's autobiography, "the Negro in aviation." The three aviation-inspired novellas – published between late 1936 and early 1939 – are products, extensions, and a fictionalized climax of the almost-two-decade-long campaign for black aviation in the black press. They reflect the campaign's themes and tropes as they imagine an all-black machine civilization whose very existence is won, defended, and maintained by an all-black air force, by its control of the skies. DuBois depicts aviation as abstract, a means of existing in a dimension devoid of racism and segregation, while Ellison explores the sense of isolation and disconnect Todd, a Tuskegee airman, feels towards both his community and white America which refuses to acknowledge him for the educated and skilled pilot that he is. The reality of Jim Crow, segregation, and omnipresent stereotypes which define and interpret the texts' protagonists' existence is what the two authors always revert to. Schuyler's heroes and heroines, however, do not ask for confirmation or permission. Rather, like the aviators Schuyler and other black journalists discussed in his columns, they create their own opportunities without asking and assertively define themselves as modern and civilized New Negroes.

Schuyler's novellas exploit the public fascination with daredevil New Negro aviators – especially John C. Robinson, William J. Powell, Bessie Coleman, and Willa Brown – and tease popular imagination with depicting their protagonists, first, as measuring up to white colonial aviators and, second, as surpassing them through ever-improving skills, determination, and, most importantly, technical, technological, and scientific ingenuity and inventiveness. Just like for the aforementioned black aviators, there seems to be no obstacle too insurmountable for Schuyler's heroes to find a solution for. Where Powell and Robinson established schools or broke racial barriers to teach mixed classes at premier educational

institutions in real life, Belsidus' pilots, technicians, and mechanics set up large and efficiently-run all-black garages, hangars, workshops, and training fields to build an army. Where Robinson manages to convince local institutions to accept his Challengers group as a paramilitary aviation squadron within the Illinois National Guard, Patricia oversees the building of the first ever all-black armed fleet. And where Robinson had to fight and protect the Ethiopian empire on his own as political circumstances and personal reasons prevented him from assembling an all-African American squadron flying under the banner of the Imperial Ethiopian Air Force against the vaunted *Regia Aeronautica*, Schuyler's texts imagine a literary vengeance with fury raining from the skies as Patricia's air force destroys Italian colonial structures across its African territories. In *Revolt*, too, Dick, the brain, and Yamrou, the skilled Ethiopian aviator, devise ways to overcome Italy's dominance in the skies above Ethiopia and succeed in delivering hope, weapons, and fighting planes to the oldest Christian civilization, so revered by African Americans.

Schuyler's novellas are romances of aviation and journalism, reflecting the extraordinary symbiosis between black aviators and the black press during the Harlem Renaissance era. They reflect Schuyler's, the journalist and public intellectual's, deeply held beliefs in and about African Americans pursuing careers in technical, technological, mechanical, and scientific fields as a way of making their mark and contributing to America's rapidly developing, modernizing mechanical civilization. Aviation, throughout his columns, is repeatedly discussed as Schuyler's favorite example of people of color – African Americans and West Indians – participating and representing, as well as making their communities proud, in the very field denoting America's progress and ascendance as a leading aviation country with its own empire of the air in Central and Latin America. The novellas then add Ethiopians and an entire organized and militant front of characters of color, led by African Americans, to depict aviators of color establishing their own empire of the air in Africa's

skies, while Carl, a journalist, and Dick, an observer, narrate and relay the aviators' fantastical successes to the readers, most probably well-versed in the existing aviation campaign.

Black aviation in Schuyler's novellas also makes possible a black trans-nationalist dream, put forward by Alain Locke, Marcus Garvey, or DuBois during the Harlem Renaissance, of black America and Africa uniting, as well as of African Americans serving the vanguard role among people of color worldwide. Colonial airlines and airplanes are destroyed by Belsidus' army and air force; it is the Black Internationale-owned airports and underground facilities which provide the infrastructure for unifying Africa through the air. This is also captured in the 1991 edition of *Black Empire* in a map, created by UCLA's Tim Seymour, where planes dominate, survey, and defend the skies over the Black Empire spanning the entire African continent. Dick and Ettara's quest in *Revolt* also signals that colonial airways are no use in liberating Ethiopia and connecting African Americans with Ethiopians. It is through Yamrou's flying skills that Dick's group is able to complete its quest of delivering weapons to Ethiopia and of joining African American and Ethiopian forces to stand up against, and potentially defeat, colonial, technologically-advanced Italian armies on their purportedly "civilizing" mission. Aviation in the texts brings people of color together.

Finally, Schuyler's novellas also address, deal with, and offer a shocking solution to the survival anxiety which black journalists and aviators expressed and felt from the very beginning of the aviation campaign in the black press. Patricia's fleet in *Black Empire* avenges Tulsa, lynchings, colonial atrocities; and, in doing so, also bridges and eventually closes the very racial technological gap that was at the root of African Americans' survival anxiety after Tulsa. When colonial air forces attack the Black Empire, its existence and survival are at risk – a sense of doom pervades some of the final chapters of *The Black Empire* and remind readers that Tulsa's Greenwood, the "Black Wall Street," an exemplary thriving New Negro neighborhood, was also destroyed in an aerial attack, dashing the locals'

hopes of prosperity in the face of Jim Crow. However, black scientists' ingenuity and black aviators' prowess combine under Patricia's command to surpass "white science" and render European technology, its omnipresent threat of annihilation, useless. In *Revolt*, Yamrou's precise flying and the Ethiopians' mastery of modern technology and weapons also repeatedly saves the day whenever Dick's group seems to be cornered and is fighting for survival. Overall, the novellas – much like the aviation campaign in the black press – argue that if people of color, particularly African Americans, are given a chance to use and operate modern machinery, technology, or weapons, they will master it; they will even be able to innovate it and exceed the skills and knowledge of the allegedly "civilized" Western countries. They will live up to and embody the philosophy of the New Negro by subverting and even violently rejecting stereotypes of their technical, technological, and scientific ineptitude.

In "The Rise of the Black Internationale," written for *The Crisis* shortly after the end of *Black Empire*, while the initial installments of *Revolt* were being published in the *Courier*, and while black papers were reporting on African American aviators preparing a nationwide organization, Schuyler ominously predicts – in a tone far more militant than Alain Locke's – that "the New Negro is here. Perhaps no more courageous than the Old Negro [...] but better informed, privy to his past, understanding of the present, unafraid of the future. No longer blindly worshipful of his rulers, he yet has learned to respect and study the intelligence and accumulation of power that has put them where they are." Schuyler asserts, as do his New Negro characters such as Belsidus, Patricia, Carl, Ettara, Dick, and Yamrou, that the New Negro knows and "believes that to combat this White Internationale of oppression a Black Internationale of liberation is necessary. [...] No longer ignorant, terrorized or lacking confidence, he waits, and schemes and plans. He is the Damoclean sword dangling over the white world. Everywhere he is on the march, he cannot be stopped, and he knows it." In his aviation-inspired novellas, Schuyler envisions precisely this sword hanging in the air in the

form of an all-black air force in *Black Empire* and the incredibly-skilled and ingenious Ethiopian pilot, Yamrou, standing up against and overpowering colonial fleets. Knowledgeable, prepared, confident, and skilled New Negroes take into the air – or devise and organize plans for aerial missions and attacks – to establish, defend, and maintain a black empire of the air.

WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

Newspaper Articles

- “10 Race Women, 93 Men Qualify as Aviators.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 Oct 1937, p. 12.
- “10,000 Cheer Aviators as They Start Their Flight from Coast to Coast.” *Chicago Defender*, 5 Mar. 1927, p.1.
- “100 Scholarships to Be Given Race Aviation Students.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Sep 1936, p. A3.
- “1100 Memphis Students Hear Noted Flyer.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Mar 1937, p. 3.
- “12 Race Pilots Invited.” *Chicago Defender*, 24 Sep. 1938, p. 4.
- “12 White American Aviators Ready to Fight for Ethiopia.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Jul 1935, p. 1.
- “2,000 View Circus Staged at Airport.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 14 Oct 1931, p. 1.
- “3 Haitians Learning to Fly the U.S. Way at TAFS.” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 3 Apr 1943, p. 5.
- “3,000 See Julian in Stunt Flying.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Aug 1931, p. A1.
- “5,000 Pay Tribute to Robinson.” *New York Amsterdam*, 30 May 1936, p. 11.
- “55 Hold U.S. Air Licenses, Report Shows.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 May 1936, p. 9.
- “A Christmas Package of Wit and Fun.” *New York Times Book Review*, 6 Dec. 1942, pp. 28.
- “About Us.” *Amsterdam News*, 30 Aug. 2018, www.amsterdamnews.com/about.
- “Ace Foreman Lived Eventful Life; Death Was Sad, Tragic End.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Aug. 1929, p. 2.
- “Ace Foreman, Los Angeles Aviator, Back Home Again.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Jul. 1927, p. 1.
- “Advertisement.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Dec 1932, p. 1.
- “Advertisement.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Oct 1932, p. 1.

“Aero Club to Buy 100 Planes.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 May 1929, p. 5.

“Aero Organization Begins at Meeting.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 16 Dec 1931, p. 9.

“Aero Organization Begins at Meeting.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 16 Dec 1931, p. 9.

“Aid for Ethiopia.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 13 Jul. 1935, p. 12.

“Aided by Father of His White School Chum, Ohio Youth Studies Aviation, Gets Transport License.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 Aug 1937, p. 2.

“Air Ace Flies to Memphis.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Feb 1937, p. 20.

“Air Conqueror.” *Chicago Defender*, 31 Mar. 1928, p. A1.

“Air Exhibition Planned.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Aug 1932, p. 22.

“Airman and Wife Die in Crash.” *Chicago Defender*, 8 Jul 1933, p. 1.

“Airman Returns.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 Oct 1932, p. 1.

“Airmen Land in Bahamas.” *Chicago Defender*, 17 Nov 1934, p. 1.

“Air-Minded!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Jul 1937, p. 13.

“Air-Minded.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Jul 1935, p. A2.

“Air-Minded.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 Aug 1930, p. A9.

“Airport for Pilots Named.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Oct. 1939, p. 3.

“Alice Takes to the Air.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Apr. 1930, p. 6.

“All Harlem in Tribute to Julian.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 Dec. 1930, p. 4.

“All Ready.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Aug 1937, p. 7.

“All Roads Led to Chicago.” *Chicago Defender*, 1 Sep 1934, p. 5.

“Along the Rialto.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Nov. 1928, p. 15.

“Alphas in Air.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Nov 1935, p. 3.

“Amelia Earhart Discusses the Negro.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 Feb. 1929, p. A2.

“America’s Orgy in Haiti.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 Feb 1929, p. 16.

“American Aviation School.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 May 1930, p. 4.

“American Correspondent and Pilot.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 Nov 1935, p. 4.

“Amsterdam News Purchases New Plane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 Aug. 1930, p. 2.

“An Ode to Banning.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Feb 1933, p. B2.

“Another Evidence of the Race’s Soaring Interest in Aviation.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Mar 1933, p. A1.

“Another on Julian.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Nov 1931, p. A2.

“Arizona – Phoenix.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Jan. 1930, p. 15.

“Arkansas Airplane Pilot Gets License.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Dec 1932, p. 5.

“Arkansas May Get Licensed Negro Pilot.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Dec 1937, p. 2.

“As Americans Should Die.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 15 May 1926, p. A2.

“Ask ‘Hub’ Mayor to bar Julian.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Feb 1936, p. 3.

“At Checkerboard Field.” Letter. *Chicago Defender*, 31 Aug. 1929, p. A2.

“Atlantic City Pays Tribute to Its Flyers.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Sep 1933, p. 13.

“Attempt to Raise Funds for Young Aviator.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 Oct. 1929, p. 9.

“Aviateur Leon Desire Paris.” *Le Matin*, 28 Apr 1932, 1.

“Aviation Boom Sweeps West ; 75 Now Pilots.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 May 1936, p. A8.

“Aviation College is Opened Here by Col. John Robinson.” *Chicago Defender*, 10 Oct 1936, p. 11.

“Aviation School Draws Line.” *Chicago Defender*, 27 Oct. 1928, p. 1.

“Aviation School Opens.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 May 1930, p. 2.

“Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 3 Apr 1937, p. 17.

“Aviation.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Sep. 1930, p. A2.

“Aviation.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 Sep. 1930, p. A2.

“Aviator Arrives in Haiti.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 May 1932, p. A7.

“Aviator Dies in Crash.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Sep 1932, p. 1.

“Aviator Dies in Crash; Fog Blurred Path.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Jan 1932, p. 2.

“Aviator Hurt When Plane Falls.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Aug. 1923, p. 10.

“Aviator James Buried.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Sep 1932, p. 13.

“Aviator James Gets New Plane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 May 1932, p. 2.

“Aviator James Has Sunday Air Circus.” *Chicago Defender*, 10 May 1930, p. 11.

“Aviator Narrowly Escapes Death in Crash.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 May 1935, p. 4.

“Aviator Paris Will Come Back to United States.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Jul 1932, p. 2.

“Aviator Seeks \$8,000.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Apr. 1924, p. 14.

“Aviator Sued.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Aug. 1929, p. 7.

“Aviator Takes Part in Four California Races.” *Chicago Defender*, 29 Sep. 1928, p. 2.

“Aviators Abused.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 2 Mar. 1935, p. 3.

“Aviators Drop in on Commencement at Tuskegee Inst.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Jun 1934, p. 2.

“Aviators End First Cross-Country Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Oct 1932, p. 1.

“Aviators Hop Off This Week on Pan-American Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Nov 1934, p. 1.

“Aviators in Crash; Plane Falls in Yard.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Dec 1934, p. 2.

“Aviators Land in Abilene, Texas.” *Chicago Defender*, 5 Jul. 1930, p. 13.

“Aviators Map Course for Latin American Flight.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Sep 1934, p. 2.

“Aviators Pause Here to Tell Chicagoans of Flight.” *Chicago Defender*, 1 Sep 1934, p. 1.

“Aviators School Open.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Jan 1933, p. 5.

“Aviators Talk to ‘Lindy’.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Sep 1934, p. 1.

“Aviatrix Hurt.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Oct 1932, p. 3.

“Aviatrix in ‘Tail Spins’ Test Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 Jan. 1939, p. 13.

“Aviatrix is Cited in ‘Time.’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Oct. 1939, p. 13.

“Aviatrix Must Sign Away Life to Learn Trade.” *Chicago Defender*, 8 Oct. 1921, p. 2.

“Aviatrix Thrill Elks.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 Sep. 1930, p. A9.

“Aviatrix.” *Chicago Defender*, 3 May 1930, p. 13.

“Aviatrix.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Feb 1931, p. 4.

“Banning Dies in Air Crash.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Feb 1933, p. 1.

“Banning, Allen to Fly Courier Plane at Game.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Nov 1932, p. 4.

“Beautiful Dancing Party at Aero Challenge Club.” *Chicago Defender*, 24 Dec 1932, p. 6.

“Bessie Coleman Aero Club.” *Chicago Defender*, 20 Jun 1931, p. 6.

“Bessie Coleman Club Planes to Tour.” *Chicago Defender*, 29 Jun. 1929, p. A1.

“Bessie Coleman Clubs Get New Airplane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 May 1929, p. A6.

“Bessie Coleman Leaves New York for France.” *Chicago Defender*, 25 Feb. 1922, p. 2.

“Bessie Coleman Makes Initial Aerial Flight.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Oct. 1922, p. 3.

“Bessie Coleman Says Good Will Come from Hurt.” *Chicago Defender*, 10 Mar. 1923, p. 3.

“Bessie Coleman, Aviatrix, Killed.” *Chicago Defender*, 8 May 1926, p. 1.

“Bessie Coleman.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 14 May 1927, p. A2.

“Bessie Coleman’s Spirit Must Live.” *Chicago Defender*, 24 Sep. 1927, p.3.

“Bessie Gets Away; Does Her Stuff.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 Sep. 1922, p. 3.

“Bessie to Fly Over Gotham.” *Chicago Defender*, 26 Aug. 1922, p. 1.

“Bidding the Eagle Good Luck.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 Jun 1934, p. 3.

“Big Aerial Meet to Draw Cream of Aces to Chicago.” *Chicago Defender*, 10 Aug. 1929, p. 4.

“Big Air Chute Company Employs Colored Expert.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 Jun. 1930, p. 2.

“Black American Aviators to Enter \$35,000 Non-Stop Hawaiian Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 Jul. 1927, p. 5.

“Black Eagle Appeals for Donations of 5 Gallons of Gas.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Jun 1934, p. 3.

“Black Eagle Hurts Arm on Way to China.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Oct 1937, p. 3.

“Black Eagle in Air Carnival.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 Aug. 1931, p. 13.

“Black Eagle is Admitted to U.S.” *Chicago Defender*, 8 Feb 1936, p. 24.

“Black Eagle Julian is Hurt When Chair, Not Plane, Crashes in Paris.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Oct 1937, p. 24.

“Black Eagle to Make Ocean Try Again, Is Claim.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Apr 1931, p. 1.

“Blame White Flier in Quiz of Banning’s Death.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Feb 1933, p. 1.

“Bluebird Aero Club.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Jun. 1929, p. 7.

“Bob Church Greets Flyer.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Mar 1937, p. 1.

“Booker T. Washington to Soar Over Americas.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 Sep 1934, p. 5.

“Breaks Record.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Feb 1931, p. 22.

“Brilliant Military Honors Accorded Fallen Aviatrix.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 May 1930, p. 1.

“Brown Condor at Tuskegee Institute.” *Chicago Defender*, 11 Jul 1936, p. 24.

“Brown Condor Lands Plane in Memphis.” *Chicago Defender*, 6 Mar 1937, p. 6.

“Brown Condor.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Apr 1936, p. 3.

“Business Men Inspect Modern Airports.” *Chicago Defender*, 18 Mar 1933, p. 4.

“California Aviators Make Rapid Progress.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Jul 1936, p. 12.

“California News.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Feb 1932, p. 17.

“California News.” *Chicago Defender*, 14 Apr 1934, p. 20.

“California News.” *Chicago Defender*, 26 Dec 1931, p. 19.

“California News.” *Chicago Defender*, 29 Jun. 1929, p. A4.

“California News.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 Jun 1934, p. 18.

“California Women Become Airminded.” *Chicago Defender*, 12 May 1934, p. 19.

“Californians Take Lead in Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 23 May 1936, p. 20.

“Call of the Wings.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 June 1931, p. B2.

“Calvin ‘Taken for a Ride.’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Oct. 1931, p. 11.

“Calvin Makes First Flight in Airplane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Oct. 1929, p. 9.

“Calvin’s Digest.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Oct 1932, p. A2.

“Ce Qu-Il Faudrait Faire Pour Desire Paris.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 10 May 1932, p. 1.

“Chanting His Annual Song!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 May 1934, p. 3.

“Chanting Throng Parades in Harlem.” *New York Times*, 2 Apr. 1934, p. 3.

“Chatting with Lou Swartz.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Jul 1937, p. 18.

“Chicago Aviation Enthusiasts.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Jun. 1938, p. 3.

“Chicago Aviators Planning Goodwill Flight to Tuskegee.” 19 May 1934, p. 11.

“Chicago Defender Flood Relief Plane Warms up for Flight South.” *Chicago Defender*, 20 Feb 1937, p. 1.

“Chicago Girl is a Full-Fledged Aviatrix Now.” *Chicago Defender*, 1 Oct. 1921, p. 1.

“Chicago Goes Air-Minded.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Jun 1929, p. A10.

“Chicago Pays Parting Tribute to Brave Bessie Coleman.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 May 1926, p. 2.

“Chicago Pays Tribute to Transcontinental Flyers.” *Chicago Defender*, 29 Jul 1933, p. 13.

“Chicagoans Fly to Detroit.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Aug. 1929, p. A4.

“Chinese in Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 1 Oct. 1927, p. B3.

“Christens Julian’s Plane.” *Chicago Defender*, 7 Oct 1933, p. 4.

“Citizens Entertain Senorita Fuentes.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 25 Jan. 1928, p. 3.

“City Fliers Make Appeal to Mayor Kelly.” *Chicago Defender*, 1 Apr. 1936, p. 6.

“Cleo Desmond Gets Break in Movies and Makes Good.” *Chicago Defender*, 5 Aug 1933, p.

5.

“Clothes, Shoes and Bedding Sent by Chicagoans Big Factor in Rehabilitation of Flood

Victims.” *Chicago Defender*, 6 March 1937, p. 5.

“Coast-to-Coast Aviator Thrills Hundreds with Daring Air Stunts at Bettis Field.” *Pittsburgh*

Courier, 26 Nov 1932, p. 1.

“Coast-to-Coast Flyers Feted by Governor.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 Sep 1933, p. 13.

“Coast-to-Coast Via the Aerial Highways.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Nov 1932, p. A1.

“Coast-to-Coast Via the Aerial Highways.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Oct 1932, p. A1.

“Coast-to-Coast Via the Aerial Highways.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 Oct 1932, p. A1.

“Coast-to-Coast Via the Aerial Highways.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Nov 1932, p. A1.

“Coffey Named Chairman for National Air Meet.” *Chicago Defender*, 17 Jun. 1939, p. 24.

“Col. J. Robinson Makes Flight to Sommerville.” *Chicago Defender*, 25 Sep 1937, p. 7.

“Col. John C. Robinson Honored at Luncheon.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Oct 1937, p. 14.

“Col. John C. Robinson to Fly Relief Aid to Flood Zone for Chicago’s *Defender*’s

Committee.” *Chicago Defender*, 6 Feb 1937, p. 1.

“Col. John Robinson Checks Plan of War.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 Nov 1935, p. 1.

“Col. John Robinson Opens Aviation College.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Sep 1936, p. 5.

“Col. Julian and Partner Plan Flight to India.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 Apr 1932, p. 4.

“Col. Julian Honored by Actor Vets.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Nov 1931, p. 3.

“Col. Julian in California to Show Them How to Fly.” *Chicago Defender*, 5 Dec 1931, p. 3.

“Col. Julian Leaves Ethiopia for U.S.” *Chicago Defender*, 23 Nov 1935, p. 2.

“Col. Julian Passes Test for Pilot’s Rank.” *Chicago Defender*, 8 Aug 1931, p. 13.

“Col. Julian Plans Hop from from New York to Paris.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Mar 1933, p.

2.

“Col. Julian Restored to King’s Favor.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Sep 1935, p. 24.

“Col. Julian to Make ‘Goodwill’ Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 Jul 1933, p. 1.

“Col. Robinson Downed by Bad Weather on Mission of Mercy to Flooded Area.” *Chicago Defender*, 27 Feb 1937, p. 1.

“Col. Robinson is Feted at Poro College.” *Chicago Defender*, 6 Jun 1936, p. 6.

“Col. Robinson is Guest of Hartmans.” *Chicago Defender*, 7 Aug 1937, p. 24.

“Col. Robinson Named Aviation Consultant.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Oct 1939, p. 5.

“Col. Robinson Orders Six New Planes for Chi Flyers to Fight for Ethiopia.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Jan 1936, p. 7.

“Col. Robinson Pays Visit to New Orleans.” *Chicago Defender*, 31 Jul 1937, p. 6.

“Col. Robinson Speaker at Du Sable.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 May 1936, p. 20.

“Col. Robinson Stages Air Duel in Clouds with Enemy Planes!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 Dec 1935, p. 1.

“Col. Robinson Starts Own Aviation College.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 3 Oct. 1936, p. 24.

“Col. Robinson, Ethiopian Air Ace, Returning.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 May 1936, p. 3.

“Col. Robinson, Ethiopian Air Hero, Tells Story in Three Eastern Cities.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Jun 1936, p. A1.

“Col. Robinson, Mrs. Malone, Speakers.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Dec 1937, p. 7.

“Col. Robinson’s National Air College Stages Gala Opening.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Oct 1936, p. 5.

“Colonel Hubert Julian Prepares for His Sea Flight.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 Sep 1933, p. 13.

“Colonel Hubert Julian to Carry Good Will Letters on Hop to Abyssinia.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 Jun 1934, p. 2.

“Colonel Julian Has Story.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Dec 1935, p. 24.

- “Colonel Julian May Fly the Atlantic.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 Sep 1933, p. 9.
- “Colonel Robinson in Harlem Monday.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 16 May 1936, p. 1.
- “Commercial News.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Jul. 1930, p. A3.
- “Commercial News.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 Dec. 1929, p. 11.
- “Committee Planning Meeting to Push Interest in Paris’ Caribbean Flight.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 Mar 1932, p. 3.
- “Community Crusaders and Fliers Spread Goodwill Message.” *Chicago Defender*, 12 Nov. 1938, p. 10.
- “Congratulations!” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Jul. 1938, p. 1.
- “Correspondent Tells of Lindbergh’s Arrival.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 8 Feb. 1928, p. 1.
- “Costs of Flying Has Reached High Altitude, Says California Aviatrix.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 May 1932, p. 3.
- “Craftsmen of Black Wings at Work.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Jul 1936, p. 2.
- “Craftsmen of Black Wings Designing New Planes.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Aug 1937, p. 22.
- “Crash Ends Good-will Tour.” *Chicago Defender*, 29 Dec 1934, p. 4.
- “Cross-Country Aviators Down.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Mar. 1927, p. 1.
- “Cross-Country Flier Addresses Youth Meet.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Aug 1934, p. 3.
- “Cross-Country Flight Now On.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Jul 1933, p. 4.
- “Cross-Country Flyer to Continue Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Mar. 1927, p. A1.
- “Cross-Country Flyers Stop in City on Fast Return Trip to Seashore.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 Jul 1933, p. 1.
- “Current Events.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Jun. 1921, p. 2.
- “‘Cuts Capers’ in Air.” *Chicago Defender*, 3 Sep. 1938, p. 1.

“Dans le Theatre.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 17 May 1932, p. 3.

“Daring Air Pilots Forced Down.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 Nov. 1929, p. 1.

“Daring Aviators Near Goal.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Oct 1932, p. 1.

“Daring Kansas City Aviator Victim of Crash.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Jan 1932, p. A2.

“Daring.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Jul. 1930, p. 3.

“Dashing Colonel Julian Returns with Corpse, Princess and Monocle.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 4 Dec. 1937, p. 1.

“Death-Defying Bird-Woman.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Sep. 1923, p. 3.

“Defender Scribe Greet Robinson.” *Chicago Defender*, 23 May 1936, p. 1.

“Defender Sports Editor Inspects W.Va State’s Air Pilots’ Program.” *Chicago Defender*, 23 Dec. 1939, p. 7.

“Defender’s Goodwill Flyer is Warmly Received in Memphis.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Mar 1937, p. 19.

“Defender’s Goodwill Flyers Inspired Wings at West Virginia State.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Oct. 1939, p.6.

“DePriest Takes Ride in Airplane.” *Chicago Defender*, 12 Oct. 1929, p. 1.

“Desire Paris est Nommé Premier Lieutenant.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 2 June 1932, p. 1.

“Died in Crash.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 31 Dec. 1938, p. 20.

“Dixie Youth Sees Future in Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 7 Dec 1935, p. 3.

“Doctor Wins Aviation Award.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Sep. 1939, p. 1.

“Don’t Forget the Negro Soldiers.” Editorial. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Jul 1934, p. 10.

“Dorothy Darby to Make Leap at 15,000 Feet.” *Chicago Defender*, 27 Jun 1936, p. 8.

“Dr. Renfroe Passes Air Examination.” *Chicago Defender*, 14 Sep 1935, p. 2.

“Dr. Stanley Lucas Off on South American Tour.” *Chicago Defender*, 31 Mar 1934, p. 4.

“Dutch Aviator Will Teach Race to Fly.” *Chicago Defender*, 24 May 1924, p. 1.

“Echos.” *Le Matin*, 13 Oct 1932, p. 1.

“Editor Abbott in Tribute to Robinson.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 May 1936, p. 2.

“Eight Licensed Pilots.” *Chicago Defender*, 14 Sep. 1929, p. A2.

“Emancipation Anniversary Observed by West Indians.” *Chicago Defender*, 11 Aug 1934, p. 13.

“Emperor and Air Hero Are Honored in Song.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 May 1936, p. 11.

“Emperor Gets Special Plane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Jan 1936, p. 5.

“Encourages Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 11 Mar 1939, p. 2.

“Epochal Air Trip to Start Thursday.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Nov 1934, p. 1.

“Ethiopia Airman Returning Home.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 Apr. 1936, p. 1.

“Ethiopia Banishes Julian After Plane Crash.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Nov. 1930, p. A1.

“Ethiopia Gets Check for \$100 from Pilgrim.” *Chicago Defender*, 18 Jan 1936, p. 24.

“Ethiopia Gets Huge Load of Machine Guns – Bullets.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Apr 1935, p. 1.

“Ethiopia Glad to Be Rid of Julian.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Mar 1936, p. 3.

“Ethiopia Making Own Airplanes and Gas Masks, Rogers Reveals.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Apr 1936, p. 1.

“Ethiopia Seeks Negro Doctors: Technicians, Nurses Also Sought Here.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 Jul 1935, p. 1.

“Ethiopia Welcomes U.S. Volunteers on Eve of War with Italy.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 Jul 1935, p. 1.

“Ethiopia’s Black Condor.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 26 Oct. 1935, p. A1.

“Ethiopian Air Ace Outwits Italian Planes in Battle.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Oct 1935, p. 4.

“Ethiopian Air Chief.” *Chicago Defender*, 1 Sep 1935, p. 1.

“Ethiops Plan Battle from High Ravines.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 12 Oct. 1935, p. 1.

“Expect Big Crowd at Paris Meeting.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 16 Mar 1932, p. 6.

“Expected to Feature in Big Air Circus.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Dec 1931, p. A1.

“Experienced Rare Thrill.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 Dec. 1929, p. 9.

“Ex-Slave, 103, Takes Joyride in Plane.” *Chicago Defender*, 26 Sep 1931, p. 1.

“Famous Trials.” *Famous Trials*, 30 Aug. 2018, www.famous-trials.com/sheriffshipp/1084-lynchingsyear.

“First Race Airport Celebrates Opening.” *Chicago Defender*, 18 Sep 1937, p. 4.

“Flier is Ready for Hop to Joe Louis Camp.” *Chicago Defender*, 18 Jun. 1938, p. 2.

“Fliers Heads East on Record Hop.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Oct 1932, p. 4.

“Fliers Made History.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Dec 1932, p. A2.

“Fliers Who Scattered Leaflets on Chicagoans.” *Chicago Defender*, 19 Nov. 1938, p. 1.

“Flies Fifty Miles with Julian.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Oct 1931, p. 11.

“Flies from Business League Meeting.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 Sep. 1929, p. A6.

“Florida Aviator to Tour Southland.” *Chicago Defender* 17 Oct 1931, p. 4.

“Flyer Burns to Death in Plane Crash.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Sep 1932, p. 1.

“Flyer is Ready.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Jul 1935, p. A2.

“Flyer.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Nov 1933, p. A3.

“Flyers Forced Down in Salt Lake.” *Chicago Defender*, 12 Mar. 1927, p. 3.

“Flyers Get Their Wings.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 Mar 1935, p. 3.

“Flyers Nearing Goal.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Jul 1933, p. 1.

“Flyers Score Men Who Mock Their Efforts.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Jun. 1927, p. 3.

“Flying Hoboes Start Back.” *Chicago Defender*, 19 Nov 1932, p. 22.

“Flying Minister Disappoints Delegation of Greeters.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 Jan. 1936, p. A10.

“For Air Service.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Jul 1935, p. A2.

“Ford Tells President Plans for Air Force.” *Chicago Defender*, 7 Aug. 1926, p. 3.

“Form Flying Club.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Oct. 1928, p. 1.

“Forsythe – Anderson Arrive on Coast After Record Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Jul 1933, p. 1.

“Forsythe, Anderson Continue Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Dec 1934, p. 4.

“Found Aviation School.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 Jun 1934, p. 3.

“Fox Studio May Shelve Air Story.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 May 1934, p. A8.

“Free Flights Make Chicago Air Conscious.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Apr. 1939, p. 7.

“From an Aviator.” Letter. *Chicago Defender*, 21 May 1927, p. A2.

“From Operative 22’s Mail.” *Chicago Defender*, 14 Mar 1936, p. 24.

“Fulton Alexander’s ‘Flying High’ at Dave’s Café Good Entertainment, Says Courier’s Theatrical Critic.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 May 1936, p. A6.

“Future Aces at Grave of Bess Coleman.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Jun 1932, p. A1.

“Future Flyer.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Jan. 1927, p. B8.

“Future Flyers.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Mar. 1929, p.22.

“Gets Pilot’s License.” *Chicago Defender*, 19 Sep 1931, p. 13.

“Gets Wings.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 15 Aug 1936, p. 9.

“Gets Wings.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 Aug 1930, p. 11.

“Girl Flyer is Injured as She Leaps from Plane.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Oct 1932, p. 13.

“Girl Flyer to Head Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 Feb. 1929, p. 4.

“Girl Wins Place in White Flying Club.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 May 1929, p. 1.

“Girl, A Year Out of School, is Plane Pilot.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Nov. 1929, p.10.

“Give Air Circus as a Tribute to Bessie Coleman.” *Chicago Defender*, 26 Sep 1931, p. 2.

“Gives Aviation Show in Texas.” *Chicago Defender*, 23 Aug. 1930, p. 3.

“Gives Us a Chance.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 25 Feb. 1928, p. A2.

“Going up for Charity.” *Chicago Defender*, 28 Nov 1931, p. 22.

“Good Will Flyers Crash.” *Chicago Defender*, 26 May 1934, p. 1.

“Good Will Hop to Pan America Budding.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 Mar 1934, p. A7.

“Good Will Hop to Pan America Budding.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 Mar 1934, p. A7.

“Good-Will Aviators Ready for Take-Off.” *Chicago Defender*, 10 Nov 1934, p. 1.

“Goodwill Fliers Have Bad Luck; Forced to Land.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 Nov 1934, p. 2.

“Goodwill Fliers Honored in Haiti.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 Nov 1934, p. 2.

“Goodwill Flight Program Booms as Plans Progress.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Sep 1934, p. A1.

“Goodwill Flyers Safe in Haiti.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Apr. 1939, p. 1.

“Goodwill Flyers to Get Royal Welcome.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Aug 1934, p. A3.

“Governor to Attend Big State-Wide Fair at Columbus.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Sep. 1929, p. 9.

“Group Lauds Paris for Proposed Hop.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 23 Mar 1932, p. 11.

“Hail New York Flyer on Good Will Trip to Haiti.” *Chicago Defender*, 7 May 1932, p. 1.

“Haile’s Future Talk of London.” *The Pittsburgh Courier* May 28 1938. Print.

“Haiti Celebrates on Lindbergh Visit; Hop to Cuba Today.” *New York Times*, 8 Feb 1928, p. 1.

“Haiti Extends Warm Welcome to Lindbergh.” *Chicago Defender*, 11 Feb 1928, p. 2.

“Haiti Invites Black Americans.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Sep 1934, p. 12.

“Haiti to Give Flier Relic of Columbus.” *New York Times*, 1 Feb 1928, p. 2.

“Haitian Army Officer Decorated with Black Eye by Widow’s Escort.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 Nov 1937, p. 1.

“Haitian Birdman Weds Rich Texan.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 1 Apr 1939, p. 1.

“Haitian Opposition Wars on Lindbergh.” 4 Feb 1928, p. 4.

“Haitian Passes U.S. Tests for License to Fly Plane.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 Aug 1930, p. 11.

“Haitian Trade Project Gets Native’s Okeh.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Sep 1934, p. 23.

“Haitian Treasury Secretary Honored by Harlem Leaders.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 Oct 1934, p. 3.

“Haitians Boycotted Lindbergh as Wall St. Traveling Salesman.” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 11 Feb 1928, p. 6.

“Haitians Open Academy.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 24 Sep 1930, p. 11.

“Hands Across Sea.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Jan 1936, p. 1.

“Harlem ‘Hitler’ Killed.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 Aug. 1938, p. 1.

“Harlem Publisher Backs Cross-Country Hop.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Mar 1932, p. 2.

“Harlem Trains ‘Black Legion’ with the Infantry Regiments.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Aug 1935, p. 4.

“Harlem Turns Out En Masse to Greet N.A.A.-Defender Cross Country Flyers.” *Chicago Defender*, 20 May 1939, p. 6.

“Harlem’s Air Squadron.” *Chicago Defender*, 17 Aug 1935, p. 5.

“Harlem’s New Ace Ready for Flight”. *New York Times*, 21 Mar 1932, p. 17.

“Harlem’s Pride Ready for Air!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Aug 1935, p. 3.

“Harten Says He’s First Flying Parson.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Mar. 1936, p. 10.

“Harten Uses Plane to Speed His Work.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 May 1934, p. 11.

“Hazards Dot Route of Good Will Fliers.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Dec 1934, p. 3.

“Heads Flyers.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 12 Oct 1935, p. 1.

“Herbert Julian Not an Aviator Detectives Say.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 May 1924, p. 1.

“High Cost of Flying.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 June 1931, p. B2.

- “History-Making is Seen in Newsreel.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 May 1930, p. A6.
- “Home Folks Honor Flyer.” *Chicago Defender*, 11 Jul 1936, p. 18.
- “How Black Troops Won War for Italians Exposed by Col. Robinson in Speech Here.”
Chicago Defender, 6 Jun 1936, p. 1.
- “Hubert Julian Cables the *Courier* about ‘Exciting Days’ Prevailing in Ethiopia.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Aug 1935, p. 4.
- “If Hubert Julian Can Hop Three Ifs Then He’ll Hop Ocean.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Jul 1931, p. 1.
- “Il Duce’s Sons Challenged to Air Duel by Sons of Ethiopian Minister.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 Nov 1935, p. 1.
- “Il Faut des Actes.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 11 May 1932, p. 1.
- “In Plane Crash.” *Chicago Defender*, 26 Nov 1932, p. 3.
- “In Sympathy with Ethiopian Cause, Whites Ask to Go.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Jul 1935, p. A2.
- “In U.S. Again.” *Chicago Defender*, 11 Dec 1937, p. 24.
- “Interview de F.D. Paris.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 27 Apr 1932, p. 1.
- “Invitation.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 Mar 1932, p. 7.
- “Invite Girl Flier to San Diego Expo.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 May 1935, p. 3.
- “Italy Ready for Peace; Africa Mobilizes Men, Women for Hostilities.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Apr 1935, p. 3.
- “Italy’s Greed.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 Mar 1935, p. A2.
- “J. Herman Banning.” Editorial. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Feb 1933, p. 10.
- “Jackson, Mississippi.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Oct 1937, p. 22.
- “James, Harlem Aviator, Killed.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 31 Aug. 1932, p. 1.
- “Japan May Aid Ethiopia.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Jul 1935, p. 1.

“Japan Seen Forcing Hand.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 Jul. 1935, p. 11.

“Jo Baker Takes Daily Trips in Her Own Plane.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Nov 1935, p. 8.

“Josephine Baker Marries French Broker and Aviator.” *Chicago Defender*, 12 Dec 1937, p. 6.

“Josephine Baker to Attempt Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 3 Aug 1935, p. 12.

“Julian ‘Sold Out’ for \$1,250, Alleged.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Jan 1936, p. 1.

“Julian Always Good Copy, Says New York Daily.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Feb 1935, p. 3.

“Julian Arrives in London on Way to Ethiopia.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 Mar 1935, p. 5.

“Julian Back from Boston Flight.” *Chicago Defender*, 14 Oct 1933, p. 13.

“Julian Becomes Ethiopian Citizen.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Jul 1935, p. 1.

“Julian Brings \$8,000 Airplane to Harlem.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Jun. 1924, p. 13.

“Julian Drops Flowers from Airplane.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 26 Aug. 1931, p. 1.

“Julian Names Plane Black Eagle.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 Mar. 1928, p. A1.

“Julian Pays \$9,000 on New \$15,000 Plane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Aug. 1926, p. 1.

“Julian Quits Ethiopia.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 Nov 1935, p. 4.

“Julian Reported Again in Air Corps.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 Jul. 1935, p. 13.

“Julian Secures Pilot’s License.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 5 Aug. 1931, p. 2.

“Julian Seeks Funds for Fine Plane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Oct 1931, p. 3.

“Julian Seeks Testimony of Abyssinian Emperor.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 Mar 1931, p. 5.

“Julian Starts First of His Exhibition Flights.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Aug. 1931, p. 5.

“Julian to Name Plane Pgh. Courier.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 May 1932, p. 1.

“Julian, with Monocle and Princess, Back in Harlem.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Dec. 1937, p. 12.

“Junior Club Member Reports Airplane Ride.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 July 1930, p. SM10.

“Just Landed.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Jan 1932, p. 22.

- “Kansas Aviation Field Bars Physician’s Plane.” *Chicago Defender*, 20 Oct. 1928, p. 3.
- “Kansas City Boy in Solo Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Nov 1931, p. A1.
- “Kansas City Physician Purchases Airplane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Mar. 1928, p. 12.
- “Kariéra Černého Letce.” *Moravské noviny: Příloha Brněnských Novin*, 22 Aug. 1930, p. 1.
- “L’aviateur Paris Nous Visite.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 2 May 1932, p. 1.
- “L’aviateur Paris sur Jacmel.” *Le Matin*, 4 May 1932, p. 2.
- “L’aviateur Paris.” *Le Matin*, 30 Apr 1932, p. 1.
- “La Chambre et Desire Paris.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 3 May 1935, p. 1.
- “La Modestie de Desire F. Paris.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 28 Apr 1932, p. 1.
- “Ladies’ Flying Club Drawing National Attention.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Sep. 1930, p. 6.
- “Lauds *Courier* for Part in Boosting Aviation to Race.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 Jan 1936, p. A2.
- “Le Courier des Etats-Unis et L’aviateur Paris.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 12 May 1932, p. 1.
- “Le Festival de Samedi Soir.” *Le Matin*, 17 May 1932, p. 2.
- “Le Lieutenant Desire Paris.” *Le Matin*, 20 May 1932, p. 3.
- “Leaders Should Encourage Field of Aviation, Says.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 Nov 1936, p. 14.
- “Leon Desire Paris s’en va.” *Le Matin*, 31 May 1932, p. 2.
- “Leon Paris Will Make Flight to Haiti.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 2 Mar 1932, p. 3.
- “Let Us Fly.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 30 Sep. 1922, p. A2.
- “Let’s Go!” *Chicago Defender*, 28 Mar 1936, p. 1.
- “Let’s Not Forget.” Editorial. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 Sep 1931, p. 10.
- “Letters to the Editor.” Editor. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Nov. 1930, p. 10.
- “Letters to the Editor.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Mar. 1929, p. A8.
- “Letters to the Editor.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 Jun. 1930, p. A10.

“Liberian Army Trainer Takes Aviation Course.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 Sep. 1928, p. 1.

“Licensed Air Pilot.” *Chicago Defender*, 23 Apr 1932, p. 1.

“Lieut. Herbert Julian Finally Receives His U.S. Aviator’s License.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 Mar. 1925, p. 9.

“Lieut. Powell to Teach L.A. School Children to Fly.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Jul 1934, p. 2.

“Lieutenant Edison Badly Hurt in Fall.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Aug. 1923, p. 4.

“Lincoln Payne, Flying Mail Carried Dead.” *Chicago Defender*, 31 Oct 1936, p. 20.

“Lindbergh and Haiti, the Country of a Great Liberator.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 18 Jan. 1928, p. 5.

“Lindbergh and Lynching.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Jun. 1927, p. A8.

“Lindbergh Arrives at Santo Domingo in Hop on Birthday.” *New York Times*, 5 Feb 1928, p. 1.

“Lindbergh at St. Thomas.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 8 Feb. 1928, p. 8.

“Lindbergh Lands at Port au Prince as New Discoverer.” *New York Times*, 7 Feb 1928, p. 1.

“Lindbergh Looks on His Cuban Hop as Forerunner of Air Mail Service.” 9 Feb 1928, p. 1.

“Lindbergh Reaches Goal at Havana.” *New York Times*, 9 Feb 1928, p. 1.

“Lindbergh Receives Honors and Acclaim at Santo Domingo.” *New York Times*, 6 Feb 1928, p. 1.

“Lindbergh, in 3 Hops, Visits Two Capitals, Reaches Porto Rico.” *New York Times*, 22 Sep 1929, p. 1.

“Little Rock Sees Its First All-Race Air Circus.” *Chicago Defender*, 28 Nov 1936, p. 24.

“Local Airport Officials Pay Flyer Fine Tribute.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Feb 1933, p. 1.

“Local Fliers Organize to Foster Meet.” *Chicago Defender*, 18 Mar. 1939, p. 7.

“Local Youth Wins Pilot’s License.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Mar. 1930, p. 4.

“Los Angeles Mayor Sends New York Mayor Letter by Negro Cross Continental Flyer.”

Pittsburgh Courier, 12 Feb. 1927, p. A2.

“Los Angeles Residents Lose Money in Effort to Aid Aviation Among Our Race.” *Chicago*

Defender, 18 Oct. 1930, p. 10.

“Loses Pal.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Feb 1933, p. 1.

“Louis Rushes to Detroit to See Big Fight.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Sep. 1937, p. 2.

“Louisville Hails Chicago Aviatrix.” *Chicago Defender*, 12 Aug. 1939, p. 11.

“Makes First Solo Flight in Four Hours.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Feb 1937, p. 4.

“May His Spirit Never Die.” Cartoon. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Feb 1933, p. 10.

“May Open Flying School at Xavier.” *Chicago Defender*, 14 Aug 1937, p. 4.

“McEnheimer to Stage Air Show at Butler Airport Oct. 30.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Oct.

1930, p. 1.

“McEnheimer’s Air Show Proves Big Thriller, Gay Crowd.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Nov.

1930, p. 3.

“Memphians Throng to Pilot.” *Chicago Defender*, 27 Mar 1937, p. 4.

“Memphis Officially Welcomes Col. John C. Robinson.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Mar 1937,

p. 23.

“Memphis Pharmacist and Wife Take Air Trip.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Dec 1932, p. 6.

“Mississippian Flies Here with Colonel.” *Chicago Defender*, 28 Aug 1937, p. 6.

“Mme. Malone, Poro Head, Takes to Air.” *Chicago Defender*, 24 Jul 1937, p. 9.

“More about Aviation.” Letter. *Chicago Defender*, 12 Nov. 1927, p. A2.

“Mourned Aviator’s Wife is Destitute.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Feb 1933, p. A1.

“Move to Halt Recruiting for Ethiopia is Launched.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Jul. 1935, p. 1.

“Mrs. John Hope is Taken for a Ride.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 Jan 1932, p. 3.

“Mrs. Malone, Head of Poro, Takes to Air.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Jul 1937, p. 7.

“Mrs. Moton Christens Airplane.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 Sep 1934, p. 2.

“N.Y. Aviator Plans Haiti Hop.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Mar 1932, p. 1.

“N.Y. Aviators Give Stunt Exhibition.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Jun 1932, p. 2.

“Name Ethiopia Air Fund for Local Aviator.” *Chicago Defender*, 19 Oct 1935, p. 10.

“National Guard Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 8 Oct. 1927, p. A2.

“Negress an Air Pilot.” *Washington Post*, 4 Jul. 1922, p.1.

“Negro Aviator Returns to Atlanta.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Jan 1932, p. 2.

“Negro Aviator Starts School.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Sep. 1927, p. 5.

“Negro Aviator to Fly over Atlanta.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 Nov 1931, p. A7.

“Negro Aviatrix Arrives.” *New York Times*, 14 Aug. 1922, p. 14.

“Negro Flier on Ripley Program.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 May 1937, p. 5.

“Negro Pilot Earns ‘Wings:’” *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 Aug. 1939, p. 11.

“Negroes to Welcome Lindbergh.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 25 Jan. 1928, p. 12.

“Never Too Old to Fly.” *Chicago Defender*, 25 Feb 1939, p. 1.

“New York Gives Welcome to Pan-American Flyers.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 Mar 1935, p. 13.

“New Yorkers Make Trip to Chicago by Plane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Aug. 1931, p. A2.

“Newark to Honor Famous Aviators.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Sep 1933, p. A1.

“Newspapers: The Amsterdam News.” *PBS*, 30 Aug. 2018,
www.pbs.org/blackpress/news_bios/newbios/nwsprr/amsterdam/amstrdm.html.

“Newsy Newsettes.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Oct 1932, p. A6.

“No Flight by Bessie Coleman; Flight Interferes.” *Chicago Defender*, 8 Sep. 1923, p. 2.

“No U.S. Race Aviators.” Letter. *Chicago Defender*, 24 Nov 1934, p. A2.

“Noted Aviators in Exhibition at Bettis Airport.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 Nov 1932, p. 1.

“Noted Aviatrix to Teach Kiddies How to Fly Planes.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Apr 1935, p.

15.

“Noted Aviatrix to Teach Kiddies How to Fly Planes.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 May 1935, p.

16.

“Noted Aviatrix to Teach Kiddies How to Fly Planes.” *Chicago Defender*, 25 May 1935, p.

15.

“Noted Flyer on Southern Lecture Tour.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Oct 1936, p. 6.

“NRA Gives Teachers ‘Break’.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 Feb 1934, p. 5.

“Number 55 of Race as Holding Pilot Licenses from U.S.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 May 1936,

p. 2.

“Ol Satchmo Flies to Hollywood Friday.” *Chicago Defender*, 22 May 1937, p. 20.

“On Julian.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Aug 1935, p. A2.

“On Julian.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Nov 1931, p. A2.

“On Negro Pilots.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 Oct 1931, p. A2.

“One Girl and Three Men Graduated from Chicago Aeronautical College.” *Pittsburgh*

Courier, 2 Mar 1935, p. 2.

“*Opportunity Magazine Awards 22 Literature Prizes.*” *New York Amsterdam News*, 5 May

1926, p. 1.

“Opportunity to Learn Aviation.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Apr. 1929, p. B2.

“Organize Aviation Association in N.Y.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Jun. 1929, p. 3.

“Our Duty to Aviation.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 18 Feb 1933, p. 12.

“Our Regiments.” Editorial. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Sep 1931, p. 10.

“Our Women Advancing in Aviation.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 Jul. 1938, p. 13.

“Overcome with Joy.” Letter, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 Aug. 1938, p. 14.

“Pan-America Flyers to Name New Plane ‘Booker T. Washington’.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Sep 1934, p. 4.

“Pan-American Fliers Complete Water Hop.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Dec 1934, p. 6.

“Paper to Aid Negro Flyers.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 Aug 1934, p. 1.

“Parachute Jumper Quits Uptown Aviation School.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 Jul. 1930, p. 10.

“Parachute Man Sued by Wife.” *Pittsburgh Courier*,

“Paris Reaches Cuba in Flight to Haiti.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Apr 1932, p. 1.

“Paris Ready for Last Leg of Hop.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 Apr 1932, p. 20.

“Paris Survole Jacmel.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 2 May 1932, p. 1.

“Pastor Flies to Capital Revival.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 May 1934, p. 20.

“Patriotism.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 30 Nov. 1929, p.14.

“Philadelphian, Pilot on Goodwill Flight to Hawaii.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Apr. 1939, p. 2.

“Philly’s First Transport Pilot.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Mar 1932, p. 2.

“Pilot.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Apr. 1929, p. 1.

“Pilots Wander.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 Nov. 1929, p. 2.

“Pioneers Who Made Chicagoans Air-Minded.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 Sep. 1939, p. 13.

“Plan Big Aerial Exhibit.” *Chicago Defender*, 3 Aug. 1929, p. 12.

“Plan Big Aviation Carnival in Atlanta.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 Jan 1932, p. 3.

“Plan Monument to Banning.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Feb 1933, p. A4.

“Plan Transatlantic Flight.” *Chicago Defender*, 27 Feb 1932, p. 1.

“Plane Given Name of Miss Harlem.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 7 May 1930, p. 3.

“Plane of Forsythe, Anderson Wrecked.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Dec 1934, p. 1.

“Plans Coast to Coast Flight.” *Chicago Defender*, 23 Jul. 1938, p. 1.

“Plans Long Air Voyage.” *Chicago Defender*, 14 Nov 1931, p. 22.

“Plenty of Thrills Here.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 Sep 1933, p. 4.

“Pontiac, Mich.” *Chicago Defender*, 27 Jun 1936, p. 23.

“Powell Fails to Land in Cleveland.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Sep 1932, p. 1.

“Powell, C.B.” *Black Past*, 30 Aug. 2018, www.blackpast.org/aah/powell-c-b-1894-1977.

“Pretty Jo Baker, Home Again, Brings the Elusive Charm of Paris.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Oct 1935, p. 8.

“Prince Kojo of Dahomey Pays Tribute to Lincoln.” *Chicago Defender*, 25 Oct. 1924, p. 2.

“Progress in Aviation.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 24 Aug. 1929, p. A2.

“Promises His Best.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 Mar 1932, p. 3.

“Propos Humides.” *Le Matin*, 21 May 1932, p. 2.

“Proud of Flyers.” Letter. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Jan 1935, p. A2.

“Que Fait-On de Paris.” *Le Nouvelliste*, 9 May 1932, p. 1.

“Queen of the Air.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Jun 1932, p. 1.

“Questions and Answers.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Nov. 1936, p. A2.

“R.R. Moton to Christen Plane of Noted Flyers.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Sep 1934, p. 4.

“Race Aviator Flies for Hospital Fund.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 Sep. 1925, p. 5.

“Race Aviator Flies U.S. Air Mail Route.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 May 1938, p. 1.

“Race Aviator Make Take Part in Air Derby in Fall.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Apr. 1928, p. A6.

“Race Aviators Flying to Cleveland.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Aug 1932, p. 1.

“Race Aviators to Give Air Show Decoration Day.” *Chicago Defender*, 19 May 1934, p. 5.

“Race Flyers in Texas Give Exhibitions.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Jul. 1930, p. 4.

“Race Flyers Plan South American Good Will Tour.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Aug 1934, p. 3.

“Race Neglects Opportunities in Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 17 Nov 1934, p. 10.

“Race Neglects Opportunities in Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 24 Nov 1934, p. 12.

- “Rally to Buy Col. Robinson a New Plane.” *Chicago Defender*, 13 Jun 1936, p. 24.
- “Ready for Their Hop to South America.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Sep 1934, p. A1.
- “Ready to Fly Again.” *Chicago Defender*, 18 Mar 1933, p. 2.
- “Recalls Exploits of Brave Bessie Coleman on 10th Anniversary of Tragedy.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 May 1936, p. 12.
- “Reporter Tells of Powell Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Sep 1932, p. A9.
- “Retired Mortician Buried in District.” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 4 Dec. 1965, p. 19.
- “Rev. Austin Takes Airplane Ride with Col. Hubert Julian.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Nov 1931, p. 1.
- “Rev. Austin, in Plane, Sees Way to Pearly Gates.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Nov 1931, p. 1.
- “Reveal Six Attempts to Kill Condor.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 May 1936, p. 20.
- “Rioting Marks Demonstration for War Ace.” *Chicago Defender*, 23 May 1936, p. 1.
- “Roanoke Youth.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Oct. 1927, p. 1.
- “Robinson Flies a New Plane to City.” *Chicago Defender*, 28 Aug 1937, p. 4.
- “Robinson Tells All in The Bombing of Adowa.” *Chicago Defender*, 12 Oct 1935, p. 4.
- “Robinson’s Chi Air Ass’n Names Officers.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Jan 1936, p. 5.
- “Rogers at Front.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Dec 1935, p. 1.
- “Rogers Pays Tribute to Colonel Robinson.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Sep 1936, p. A2.
- “San Diego to Get Aviation School.” *Chicago Defender*, 21 Feb 1931, p. 2.
- “Says England Will Lose India.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 Aug. 1935, p. A2.
- “Says Japan May Defend Ethiopia.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 Jul. 1935, p. 20.
- “Seamstress Gives up Her Duties to Become Aviatrix.” *Chicago Defender*, 2 Jan 1932, p. 13.
- “Second to Get Pilot’s License.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Sept 1931, p. 3.
- “Seek Support for Airplane Project.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Jul 1933, p. 2.

“Sees Future in Aviation for Negro Youths.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Aug 1936, p. 14.

“Select Two Race Colleges for Civil Aviation Courses.”

“Sick, Wounded Burned Alive by Italian Bombs.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 Dec 1935, p. 1.

“Sissle and Band Fly to England.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Nov. 1930, p. A8.

“Sister Sees Pilot Die in Crash.” *Chicago Defender*, 18 Jul 1936, p. 1.

“Skillful Piloting Prevents Death.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 Aug. 1929, p. A1.

“Snowstorm Forces Flyer to Come Down.” *Chicago Defender*, 19 Mar. 1927, p. 3.

“So it Seems.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Apr. 1930, p. 2.

“Socialites Greet Hero at Airport.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 May 1936, p. 7.

“Solo Licenses Go to 2 Women.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 23 Jul. 1938, p. 4.

“Son of Tuskegee President Plans to Fly Atlantic.” *Chicago Defender*, 5 Dec 1936, p. 4.

“Sons of Warring Fathers May Meet in Air Battles.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Nov 1935, p. 23.

“Speakers Offer Solutions for Unemployment and Housing Ills.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 28 May 1930, p. 3.

“Spencer Thrills Huge Crowd.” *Chicago Defender*, 1 Oct. 1938, p. 1.

“Sponsor.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 Apr 1936, p. 2.

“Stalled Plane Landed Safely in Chi Park.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Jul 1933, p. 3.

“Stepin Fetchit Made Over \$62,000 Last Year.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Apr 1936, p. A6.

“Storm Destroys Airport.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 May 1933, p. 2.

“Study Plans for National Air Meet in Chicago.” *Chicago Defender*, 4 Mar. 1939, p. 3.

“Swing Music Goes to Haiti and the Youngsters Love It.” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 16 Oct 1937, p. 11.

“Takes Plane Ride to Inspect Troops.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Oct 1935, p. 20.

“Teaches Air-Minded.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 Sep 1932, p. A9.

“Tells of Italy’s Efforts to Have Haile Selassie Return to Throne of Ethiopia.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Dec 1937, p. 5.

“Texas State News.” *Chicago Defender*, 7 Aug 1937, p. 9.

“The Brown and Jones Girls...First Sepia Airport Hostesses.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 Oct 1936, p. 8.

“The Colonel Gets Victory Trophy.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 May 1936, p. 11.

“The Good Will Fliers in the West Indies.” *Tuskegee Messenger*, Dec 1934, p. 3.

“The Goodwill Flight.” Editorial. *New York Amsterdam News*, 25 Aug 1934, p. 8.

“The Lindbergh Question.” Letter. *Chicago Defender*, 15 Oct. 1927, p. A2.

“The New Order.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 29 Nov. 1930, p. A2.

“The Race and Aviation.” Letter. *Chicago Defender*, 6 Oct 1934, p. 12.

“The Social Institute.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 Mar 1937, p. 22.

“The Stuff of which Lindberghs Are Made.” Letter. *Chicago Defender*, 17 Sep. 1927, p. A2.

“The Week: Avout Aviation.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 26 Sep. 1929, p. 1.

“The Week: Debarring Aviators.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 3 Nov. 1928, p. 1.

“The Week: Heroes of the Air.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 21 May 1927, p. 1.

“The Week: Lindbergh in Haiti.” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 25 Feb 1928, p. 1.

“The Week: Nerve and Courage.” Editorial. *Chicago Defender*, 28 May 1927, p. B1.

“The World This Week.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Nov 1934, p. 1.

“The World This Week.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Apr 1937, p. 1.

“The World This Week.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Nov 1935, p. 1.

“Thousands Cheer Fliers in Nassau, Havana and Santiago.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Nov 1934, p. 1.

“Throng at Dedication of Airship.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 30 Mar 1932, p. 3.

“Throng Greet Air Aces with Tremendous Ovation.” *Chicago Defender*, 5 Aug 1933, p. 2.

“Throngs Hear Rev. Austin In Brilliant Sermon.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 Nov. 1930, p. 4.

“Through the Lorgnette of Geraldyn Dismond.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Jun. 1927, p. A1.

“Thrusts and Lunges.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 May 1925, p. 9.

“To Christen Plane Oscar DePriest.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 Jul. 1929, p. 5.

“To Fly Soon.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 Mar 1935, p. 13.

“To Fly to Bridge Tourney.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 May 1937, p. 24.

“To Help Us.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 May 1936, p. 15.

“To Honor Outstanding Pilot at Air Meet.” *Chicago Defender*, 19 Aug. 1939, p. 4.

“To Make Air Tour.” *Chicago Defender*, 26 Sep 1931, p. 22.

“To Make Leap.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Oct 1931, p. 19.

“To Open Airport Near Washington.” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 Dec. 1933, p. 3.

“To Organize Junior Birdmen.” *Chicago Defender*, 16 May 1936, p. 15.

“To Study.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 8 May 1937, p. 1.

“To Study.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 May 1937, p. 1.

“To Stunt at Texas Exposition.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Aug 1937, p. 23.

“Tornado Plays Prank with Airplane.” *Chicago Defender*, 6 May 1933, p. 3.

“Train 500 Ethiopian Pilots in Japan.” *Chicago Defender*, 24 Oct 1936, p. 24.

“Train for Aviation.” Letter. *Chicago Defender*, 3 Jul 1937, p. 12.

“Transcontinental Flyer Hops Off on First Leg of California-New York Journey.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Mar. 1927, p. 1.

“Trio Fly to Cleveland to Attend Air Races.” *Chicago Defender*, 10 Sept 1932, p. 19.

“Tuskegee Alumni Map \$12,000 Endowment Plan.” *Chicago Defender*, 25 Aug 1934, p. 5.

“Twenty Thousand Greet Brown Condor on Return.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 May 1936, p. 1.

“Two Fly from Coast to Coast in an Old Plane.” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Oct 1932, p. 2.

“Two Race Birdmen in Flight to California.” *Chicago Defender*, 19 Nov 1932, p. 11.

“Two Young Haitians Take to Air in Attempts to Earn Pilots’ Licenses.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 Apr 1930, p. 1.

“Two Young Haitians Take to Air in Attempts to Earn Pilots’ Licenses.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 Apr 1930, p. 1.

“U.S. Air Corps May Soon Admit Race Applicants.” *Chicago Defender*, 11 Feb. 1939, p. 16.

“U.S. Law Blocks Enlistment.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Jul 1935, p. 1.

“U.S. Marine Rule in Haiti Seen as Colossal Failure.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 Dec 1929, p. 1.

“U.S. to S. America Flyers Stop at County Airport.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Aug 1934, p. 1.

“Un Quart d’Heure avec Paris.” *Le Matin*, 29 Apr 1932, p. 2.

“Une Soirée Desire Paris.” *Le Matin*, 11 May 1932, p. 2.

“Up in the Air.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Nov 1932, p. 7.

“Urges Race to Become Airminded.” *Chicago Defender*, 7 Dec 1936, p. 17.

“Want Race Students to Learn Flying.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Apr. 1930, p. SM11.

“Wanted: Aviators and Mechanics.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 Mar. 1929, p. A8.

“Wants to Fight Italian Bombers.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Jan. 1936, p. 1.

“War Department Bars Negroes from Air Corps.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Sept 1931, p. 3.

“War in Ethiopia by September!” *Chicago Defender*, 15 Jun 1935, p. 1.

“War News... Airplanes... Japan.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Jul 1935, p. 1.

“Watchtower: John C. Robinson.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 23 May 1936, p. 12.

“We’re Up in the Air.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Nov. 1929, p. A11.

“Welcome Good Will Flyers in South America.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Dec 1934, p. 6.

“Wells and Powell on Long Flight; To Visit Pittsburgh.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Aug 1932, p. 4.

“West Indies Air Line Open.” *New York Times*, 25 Feb 1928, p. 31.

“Westerners Joyous at Flyers’ Success.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Aug 1933, p. 7.

“What Will the Negro Contribute to Aviation.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 22 Jun. 1927, p. 13.

“What Will the Negro Contribute to Aviation.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Jun. 1927, p. A1.

“When Soldiers Meet.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 22 May 1937, p. 2.

“Where There’s a Will-.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 Jun. 1930, p. 10.

“Where Trail of Plane Ended.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 Sep 1932, p. 1.

“Who Said Ethiopia Didn’t Have Airplanes.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Jul 1935, p. 1.

“Who’s Who in Aviation.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 May 1930, p. A2.

“Will a Negro Ever Fly Them.” Editorial. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Dec 1938, p. 10.

“Will Fly Back Home.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 2 Mar 1932, p. 3.

“Will Rogers Joins Vidal in Boost to Aviation.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 Jan 1935, p. 7.

“Win Contest Prizes for Literature: ‘Opportunity’s’ Annual Marked by Many Fine Contributions.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 May 1926, p. 1.

“Wing Way to Virgin Islands.” *Chicago Defender*, 5 Jan 1935, p. 3.

“Winging Way to South America.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Nov 1934, p. 3.

“Wins Degrees.” *Chicago Defender*, 1 Aug 1936, p. 3.

“Woman Dives 2,000 Feet from Plane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 May 1930, p. 2.

“Woman Flyer Is Awarded Pilot License in Chi.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 2 Jul. 1938, p. 4.

“Work Started on Big Aviation School in East.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Feb 1932, p. 3.

“Yesterday in Negro History.” *Jet*, 13 Aug. 1964, p. 11.

“Young Aviator, Pretty Wife Dead in Plane Crash.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Jul 1933, p. 7.

“Young Oklahoman Wins Flying Permit; Called Only Qualified Race Flyer in State.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Jan 1937, p. 2.

- “Young Woman Flyer Gets Pilot’s License.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 Jul. 1938, p. 11.
- “Youthful Aviator Makes Flight.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Feb. 1930, p. 2.
- “Youths Must Prepare for Aviation Age.” *Chicago Defender*, 29 Oct. 1927, p. A1.
- Adi, Hakim, Marika Sherwood. *Pan-African History: Political Figures from African and the Diaspora since 1787*. Routledge, 2003.
- Banning, James Herman. “The Negro and the Airplane.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 Nov 1932, p. 5.
- . “The Day I Sprouted Wings.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Dec 1932, p. A3.
- Charlton, Rosanne D. “Book Review.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 Oct 1934, p. 10.
- Dismond, Binga H. “Negroes, Despite Handicaps, Make Rapid Progress in Various Fields of Aviation.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 Nov. 1925, p. 3.
- Janet. “John Robinson Wings His Way Down to Tuskegee.” *Chicago Defender*, 9 May 1936, p. 12.
- . “The Race and Aviation.” *Chicago Defender*, 30 May 1936, p. 5.
- Levette, Harry. “Call of the Wings.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 May 1931, p. 10.
- . “Herman Banning: A Tribute to a Great Aviator.” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 Feb 1933, p. B1.
- Mencken, H.L. “About Books: Wings of Ethiopia.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 17 Nov. 1934, p. 8.
- Ottley, Roi. “Hectic Harlem.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 23 May 1936, p. 13.
- Pickens, William. “Lindberghing from Los Angeles to San Diego.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 21 Mar. 1928, p. 13.
- . “Reflections: Up in the Air.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 6 Apr. 1932, p. 8.
- Poston, Sybil Bryant. “Lindbergh and the Negro Question.” *New York Amsterdam News*, 15 Jun. 1927, p. 14.

Robinson, John C. "Robinson's Own Story of Epic Flight." *Chicago Defender*, 6 Mar 1937,
p. 1.

Rogers, J.A. "Up in the Clouds." *New York Amsterdam News*, 15 Aug. 1928, p. 16.

---. "J.A. Rogers Goes Up in the Air in Paris." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 Aug. 1928, p. A2.

---. "The Paris Pepper-Pot." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Jun. 1929, p. A1.

---. "Enemy Bombers Unable to Find Selassie Troops." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Dec 1935, p.
1.

---. "J.A. Rogers Gets Exclusive Interview with Col. Robinson, Ethiopia's Brown Condor."
The Pittsburgh Courier January 4 1936. Print.

---. "Italians Retreating: Rogers Cables." *The Pittsburgh Courier* January 18 1936. Print.

---. "Rogers Takes 'Death Ride' with Robinson." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 Feb 1936, p. 6.

---. "Rogers Pays Tribute to Colonel Robinson." *The Pittsburgh Courier* September 5 1936.
Print.

---. "Ethiopia Has Just Started to Fight." *The Pittsburgh Courier* May 21 1938. Print.

Rouzeau, Edgar. T. "Plan Flying School for Harlem Youth." *New York Amsterdam News*, 11
Apr. 1928, p. 3.

---. "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 May 1926, p. 2.

---. "Art and Propaganda." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 Aug. 1926, p. 10.

---. "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 Sep. 1930, p. 10.

---. "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Nov. 1930, p. 10.

---. "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 Aug 1931, p. 10.

---. "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 Oct 1931, p. 10.

---. "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Jul 1934, p. 10.

---. "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 Dec 1934, p. 12.

---. "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Mar 1935, p. 10.

- . "Views and Reviews." *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Aug. 1935, p. A10.
- . "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Sep 1935, p. 10.
- . "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 Nov. 1935, p. 10.
- . "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 Dec. 1935, p. 10.
- . "Views and Reviews." *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 Feb. 1936, p. 10.
- . "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 Jan 1937, p. 10.
- . "Views and Reviews." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 Apr 1937, p. 10.
- . "Views and Reviews." *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 Jan. 1942, p. 10.
- . "Looks at Books: A Prophet Honored by Time." *Chicago Defender*, 27 Mar. 1943, p. 7.
- Speedy, Nettie George. "Sepia Air Pilots Thrill World's Fair Visitors." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 Jul 1933, p. A3.
- Vann, Robert L. "The Camera." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 May 1927, p. 1.
- Waterford, Janet Harmon. "Race Interest in Aviation Begins with Advent of Bessie Coleman." *Chicago Defender*, 28 Mar 1936, p. 3.
- Waterford, Janet. "The Real Story of Col. John Robinson." *Chicago Defender*, 4 Apr 1936, p. 1.
- . "Robinson Organized Brown Eagle Aero Club in Effort to Interest Race in Flying." *Chicago Defender*, 11 Apr 1936, p. 6.
- . "Robinson Arouses Interest in Aviation." *Chicago Defender*, 18 Apr 1936, p. 3.
- . "Robinson Excelled as an Instructor." *Chicago Defender*, 25 Apr 1936, p. 12.
- . "First Race Airport Was Destroyed in Big Storm." *Chicago Defender*, 2 May 1936, p. 12.

Book, Journal Articles, Websites, and Other Sources

- Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem. *On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey through the Harlem Renaissance*. Simon & Schuster, 2007.
- Adi, Hakim, Marika Sherwood. *Pan-African History: Political Figures from African and the Diaspora since 1787*. Routledge, 2003
- Ali, Duse Mohamed. *Ere Roosevelt Came: A Record of the Adventures of the Man in the Cloak*. Serialized in *The Comet*, March 3 – October 13, 1934.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2016.
- Anderson, Daniel. *The Culture of Sports in the Harlem Renaissance*. McFarland, 2017.
- Armandi, Matteo. “Francesco de Pinedo: A Flight across the Atlantic and the Two Americas.” *Aste Bolaffi*, 30 Aug. 2018, www.astebolaffi.it/en/articles/francesco-de-pinedo-un-volo-attraverso-l-atlantico-e-le-due-americhe.
- Asante, S.K.B. *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941*. Longman, 1977.
- Bain, Alexander M. “*Shocks Americana!*: George Schuyler Serializes Black Internationalism.” *American Literary History*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2007, pp. 937-63.
- Bain, Read. “Technology and State Government.” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 2, no. 6, 1937, pp. 860.
- Baldasty, Gerald J., and Mark E. Lapointe. “The Press and the African-American Community: The Role of the ‘Northwest Enterprise’ in the 1930s.” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, vol. 94, no. 1, 2003, pp. 14-26.
- Baldwin, Davarian L., and Minkah Makalani. *Escape from New York: The New Negro Renaissance beyond Harlem*. U of Minnesota P, 2013.

- Barbour, George Edward. "Early Black Flyers of Western Pennsylvania, 1906-1945." *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1986, pp. 95-119.
- Barker, A.J. *The Civilizing Mission*. New York: Dial, 1968.
- Bayen, Malaku E. *The March of Black Men, Ethiopia Leads*. Voice of Ethiopia, 1939.
- Berch, Victor R. *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War: This Ain't Ethiopia, but It'll Do*. GK Hall, 1991.
- Bieze, Michael. *Booker T. Washington and the Art of Self-Representation*. Peter Lang, 2008.
- Bike, William S., editor. *Essays on Earl Renfroe: A Man of Firsts*. UIC College of Dentistry P, 2001.
- Bragg, Janet Harmon. *Soaring above Setbacks: The Autobiography of Janet Harmon Bragg, African American Aviator*. Edited by Marjorie M. Kriz. Smithsonian Institute P, 1996.
- Broadnax, Samuel L. *Blue Skies, Black Wings: African American Pioneers of Aviation*. Praeger, 2007.
- Bruce, Dickson D., Jr. *The Origins of African American Literature, 1680-1865*. UP of Virginia, 2001.
- Brundage, Fitzhugh F. *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930*. UNC, 2011.
- Bullock, Henry. *A History of Negro Education in the South from 1619 to the Present*. Praeger, 1970.
- Bunch, Lonnie. "In Search of a Dream: The Flight of Herman Banning and Thomas Allen." *The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 7, no. 1-2, 1984, pp. 100-3.
- Buni, Andrew. *Robert L. Vann of The Pittsburgh Courier: Politics and Black Journalism*. U of Pittsburgh P, 1974.

- Burkett, Randall K. "The Baptist Church in Years of Crisis: J.C. Austin and Pilgrim Baptist Church, 1926-1950." *African American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, edited by Timothy Earl Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, Psychology P, 1997, pp. 312-39.
- Caprotti, Federico. "Visuality, Hybridity, and Colonialism: Imagining Ethiopia Through Colonial Aviation, 1935-1940." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 101, no. 2, 2011, pp. 380-403.
- Carpio, Glenda R., and Werner Sollors. "Five Harlem Short Stories by Zora Neale Hurston." *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2010, pp. 557-60.
- Carroll, Brian. *When to Stop the Cheering: The Black Press, the Black Community, and the Integration of Professional Baseball*. Routledge, 2007.
- Cayton, Horace R. *Long Old Road*. U of Washington P, 1974.
- Chmiel, Juraj. "Československý Zbrojársky Priemysel a Taliansko-etioipský Konflikt." *Historie a vojenství. Časopis Historického ústavu Československé armády*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1991, pp. 40-64.
- Clark Hine, Darlene, and John McCluskey, Jr. *The Black Chicago Renaissance*. U of Illinois P, 2012.
- Colby, Jason M. *The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America*. Cornell UP, 2011.
- Collier-Thomas, Bettye. "Annie Turnbo Malone." *Black Heroes, Points of View*, 2001, pp. 459-62.
- Collings, Kenneth Brown. "America Will Never Fly." *American Mercury*, July 1936, pp. 290-5.
- . "Mr. Collings Replies." *The American Mercury*, Dec. 1936, pp. 328.

- Corn, Joseph J. *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950*. OUP, 1983.
- Davis, Charles T., and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Slave's Narrative*. OUP, 1991.
- Detweiler, Frederick. *The Negro Press in the United States*. U of Chicago P, 1922.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. Edited by William L. Andrews and William S. McFeely, Norton, 1997.
- Douhet, Giulio. *The Command of the Air*. Coward-McCann, 1942.
- Drake, St. Clair, and Horace R. Cayton. *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. U of Chicago P, 2015.
- DuBois, W.E.B. "Criteria of Negro Art." *The Crisis*, vol. 32, no. 6, 1926, pp. 296-7.
- . *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover, 1994.
- . *Dark Princess*. Banner, 1995.
- Dunn, Elwood D. *The Annual Messages of the Presidents of Liberia 1848-2010, State of the Nation Addresses to the National Legislature: From Joseph Jenkins Roberts to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf*. De Gruyter, 2011.
- Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Harvard UP, 2003.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Flying Home: and Other Stories*. Vintage, 1998.
- Fabre, Genevieve, and Michel Feith. *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance*. Indiana UP, 2001.
- Fanon, Frantz. "This is the Voice of Algeria." *A Dying Colonialism*, Grove, 1994.
- . "On Violence." *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove, 2004.
- Farrar, Hayward. *The Baltimore Afro-American: 1892-1950*. Praeger, 1998.

- Ferguson, Jeffrey B. *The Sage of Sugar Hill: George S. Schuyler and the Harlem Renaissance*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005. Print.
- Field, Allyson Nadia. *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity*. Duke UP, 2015.
- Flamming, Douglas. "The New Negro Renaissance in Los Angeles, 1920-1940." *The Harlem Renaissance in the American West: The New Negro's Western Experience*, edited by Cary D. Wintz and Bruce A. Glasrud, Routledge, 2012.
- Foner, Nancy, editor. *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York*. U of California P, 2001.
- Forsythe, Roger Albert. *Black Flight: Breaking Barriers to Blacks in Aviation*. Allcourt, 2002.
- Franz, Kathleen. "The Open Road: Automobility and Racial Uplift in the Interwar Years." *Technology and the African American Experience: Needs and Opportunities for Study*, edited by Bruce Sinclair, MIT P, 2004, 131-54.
- Freydberg, Elizabeth Hadley. *Bessie Coleman, the Brownskin Lady Bird*. Garland, 1994.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. OUP, 1989.
- , and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. *African American Lives*. OUP, 2004.
- , and Nellie McKay, editors. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Norton, 2014.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 1993.
- Gladden, Wendell P. "Bessie Coleman Famous Aviatrix Will Be Seen in Person and in Movies in YMCA Benefit." *California Eagle*, 29 Apr 1924, p. 5.
- Gould, Philip. "The Economies of the Slave Narrative." *A Companion to African American Literature*, edited by Gene Andrew Jarrett, Blackwell, 2010, pp. 90-103.

- , "Early Print Literature of Africans in America." *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*, edited by Maryemma Graham and Jerry W. Ward, Jr., CUP, 2011, pp. 39-52.
- Goyal, Yogita. "Black Nationalist Hokum: George Schuyler's Transnationalist Critique." *African American Review*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2014, pp. 21-36.
- Gray, Thomas R. *The Confessions of Nat Turner: An Authentic Account of the Whole Insurrection*. CreateSpace, 2015.
- Greenberg, Cheryl Lynn. *To Ask for an Equal Chance: African Americans in the Great Depression*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.
- Gruesser, John Cullen. *Black on Black: Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa*. UP of Kentucky, 2000.
- Gubert, Betty Kaplan, et al. *Distinguished African Americans in Aviation and Space Science*. Oryx, 2002.
- Guerrant, Edward O. *Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy*. U of New Mexico P, 1950.
- Hamilton, John Maxwell. *Journalism's Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Corresponding*. LSUP, 2009.
- Harahan, Joseph Patrick, and Richard H. Kohn. "Editors' Introduction. *The Command of the Air*, by Giulio Douhet, 1942, U of Alabama P, 1998, pp. i-iv.
- Hardesty, Von. "Introduction." *Black Wings*, by William J. Powell, edited by Von Hardesty, Smithsonian, 1994, pp. xi-xxvi.
- . *Black Wings: Courageous Stories of African Americans in Aviation and Space History*. New York: Harpers, 2008. Print.
- Harris, Joseph E. *African American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941*. LSUP, 1994.
- Haynes, Elizabeth Ross. *The Black Boy of Atlanta*. House of Edinboro, 1952.
- Heinl, Robert. *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1995*. UPA, 2005.

- Henderson, Alexa Benson. "Richard R. Wright and the National Negro Bankers Association: Early Organizing Efforts among Black Bankers, 1924-1942." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 117, no. 1, 1993, pp. 51-81.
- Hill, Robert A. Introduction. *Ethiopian Stories*. By George S. Schuyler. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1994. 1-50. Print,
- , R. Kent Rasmussen. Afterword. *Black Empire*. By George S. Schuyler. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1991. 259-310. Print.
- Hogan, Lawrence D. *A Black National News Service: The Associated Negro Press and Claude Barnett, 1919-1945*. Associated UP, 1984.
- Horne, Gerald. *Storming the Heavens: African Americans and the Early Fight for the Right to Fly*. Black Classic 9, 2018.
- Howison, Jeffrey D. "'Let Us Guide Our Own Destiny: Rethinking the History of the Black Star Line.'" *Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2005, pp. 29-49.
- Huggins, Nathan Irving. *Harlem Renaissance*. OUP, 2007.
- Hughes, Langston. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Nation*, 23 Jun. 1926, p.128-9.
- . *The Big Sea: An Autobiography*. Hill and Wang, 1993.
- Jacob, Frank. *Japanism, Pan-Asianism, and Terrorism: A Short History of the Amur Society (The Black Dragons), 1901-1945*. Academica, 2014.
- Jakeman, Robert J. "America's Black Air Pioneers: 1900-1939." MA Thesis. Air Command and Staff College, 1988. Print.
- . *The Divided Skies: Establishing Segregated Flight Training at Tuskegee, Alabama, 1934-1942*. The U of Alabama P, 1992.
- Jařab, Josef. *Masky a Tváře Āerné Ameriky*. Odeon, 1985.
- Johnson, James Weldon. "Self Determining Haiti." *The Nation*, 28 Aug. 1920, p. 130.

- . *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. Book Jungle, 2008.
- Johnson, Violet M. "What, Then, Is the African American: African and Afro-Caribbean Identities in Black America." *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2008, pp. 77-103.
- Jones, William W. "Man Sprouts Wings." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 Jan 1933, p. A2.
- Kellner, Bruce. *The Harlem Renaissance*. Greenwood, 1984.
- Kessner, Thomas. *The Flight of the Century: Charles Lindbergh and the Rise of American Aviation*. OUP, 2010.
- Kohli, Amor. "But That's Just Mad! Reading the Utopian Impulse in *Dark Princess* and *Black Empire*." *African Identities*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2009, pp. 161-75.
- Laguerre, Michel S. *American Odyssey: Haitians in New York City*. Cornell UP, 1984.
- . *The Military and Society in Haiti*. Palgrave, 1993.
- Lester, Neal A. *Understanding Zora Neale Hurston's Their eyes were watching God: a student casebook to issues, sources, and historical documents*. Greenwood, 1999.
- Levinson, David, and Melvin Ember. *American Immigrant Cultures: Builders of a Nation*. Macmillan, 1997.
- Lewis, David Levering. *When Harlem Was in Vogue*. Penguin, 1997.
- Lindbergh, Charles A. "Aviation, Geography, and Race." *Readers' Digest*, 1939, pp. 64-67.
- Locke, Alain LeRoy. "Enter the New Negro." *Survey Graphic*, vol. 6, no. 6, 1925, pp. 631-4.
- Lubin, Alex. *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary*. U of North Carolina P, 2014.
- Lucy, Robin. "'Flying Home:,' Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and the Black Folk during WWII." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 120, no. 477, 2007, pp. 257-83.
- Lupack, Barbara Tapa. *Richard E. Norman and Race Filmmaking*. Indiana UP, 2014.

- MacKenzie, Donald A., Judy Wajcman. "Introductory Essay." *The Social Shaping of Technology*. Open UP, 1999.
- Magubane, Bernard M. *The Ties that Bind: African American Consciousness of Africa*. Africa World P, 1987.
- Markey, Morris. "Profiles: The Black Eagle I." *New Yorker*, 11 Jul. 1931, p. 20-3.
- . "Profiles: The Black Eagle II." *New Yorker*, 18 Jul. 1931, p. 20-3.
- Maxwell, William J. *F.B. Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015. Print.
- McDowell, Deborah E. "Telling Slavery in 'Freedom's' Time: Post-Reconstruction and the Harlem Renaissance." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, edited by Audrey A. Fisch, CUP, 2007, pp. 150-167.
- McKay, Claude. *Amiable with Big Teeth*. Edited by Jean-Christophe Cloutier and Brent Hayes Edwards, Penguin Classics, 2017.
- McKenzie, Janet. "The Art of Romare Bearden." *Studio International*, 30 Aug. 2018, <https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/the-art-of-romare-bearden>.
- Meriwether, James Hunter. *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961*. U of North Carolina P, 2002.
- Michaeli, Ethan. *The Defender: How the Legendary Black Newspaper Changed America*. Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2016.
- Mockler, Anthony. *Haile Selassie's War: The Italian-Ethiopian Campaign, 1935-1941*. New York: Random House, 1984. Print.
- Modesto, Kevin. "Won't Be Weighted Down:" Richard R. Wright, Jr.'s Contributions to Social Work and Social Welfare." *The Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2004, pp. 69-89.

- Moody-Turner, Shirley. "Folklore and African American Literature in the Post-Reconstruction Era." *A Companion to African American Literature*, edited by Gene Andrew Jarrett, Blackwell, 2010, pp. 200-12.
- Morial, Marc. "The Amsterdam News: 100 Years as the Voice of Harlem." *New York Amsterdam News*, 17 Dec. 2009, p. 13.
- Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*. Vintage, 2005.
- Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. *Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History*. CUP, 1998.
- Muhammad, Baiyina W. "The Baltimore *Afro-American's* Pan-African Consciousness Agenda, 1915-1941." *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 5, 2011, pp. 7-25.
- Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. Transaction, 1995.
- O'Daniel, Patrick. *Memphis and the Superflood of 1937: High Water Blues*. The History Press, 2010.
- O'Kelly, Charlotte G. "Black Newspapers and the Black Protest Movement: Their Historical Relationship, 1827-1945." *Phylon*, vol. 43, no. 1, 1982, pp. 1-14.
- Ostreich, Alan M. "H. Binga Dismond, MD – Pioneer Harlem Physician and Much More." *Journal of the National Medical Association*, vol. 93, no. 12, 2001, pp. 497-502.
- Ottley, Roi. *New World A-Coming*. The World Publishing, 1943.
- Pamphile, Leon D. *Haitians and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope*. UP of Florida, 2001.
- . *Contrary Destinies: A Century of America's Occupation, Deoccupation, and Reoccupation of Haiti*. UP of Florida, 2015.

- Parker, Jason. "‘Capital of the Caribbean’: The African American-West Indian ‘Harlem Nexus’ and the Transnational Drive for Black Freedom, 1940-1948." *The Journal of African American History*, vol. 89, no. 2, 2004, pp. 98-118.
- Patterson, Martha H. "Fascist Parody and Wish Fulfillment: George Schuyler’s Periodical Fiction of the 1930s." *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4.1 (2013): 76-99. *Project MUSE*. 18 November 2015.
- Patterson, Orlando. "Rethinking Black History." *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1971, pp. 297-315.
- Patton, June O. "And the Truth Shall Make You Free:" Richard Robert Wright, Sr., Black Intellectual and Iconoclast, 1877-1897." *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 81, no. 1, 1996, pp. 17-30.
- Patton, Venetria K, and Maureen Honey, editors. *Double-Take: A Revisionist Harlem Renaissance Anthology*. Rutgers UP, 2010.
- Peterson, Bernard L, Jr.. *Profiles of African American Stage Performers and Theatre People, 1816-1960*. Greenwood, 2001.
- Pickens, William. *Bursting Bonds*. U of Notre Dame P, 2005.
- Pierson, Don. "Black Star." *Chicago Defender*, 23 Nov 1935, p. 11.
- Plummer, Brenda Gayle. "The Afro-American Response to the Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934." *Phylon*, vol. 43, no. 2, 1982, pp. 125-43.
- Powell, William J. *Black Wings*. Edited by Von Hardesty, Smithsonian, 1994.
- Pride, Armistead S., and Clint C. Wilson II. *A History of the Black Press*. Howard UP, 1997.
- Pursell, Carroll. *A Hammer in Their Hands: A Documentary History of Technology and the African-American Experience*. MIT P, 2005.
- Putnam, Aric. *The Insistent Call: Rhetorical Moments in Black Anticolonialism, 1929-1937*. U of Massachusetts P, 2012.

- Renda, Mary A. *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*. U of North Carolina P, 2001.
- Rich, Doris L. *Queen Bess: Daredevil Aviator*. Smithsonian, 1993.
- Rogers, J. A. *The Real Facts About Ethiopia*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1982. Print.
- Rogers, W. Sherman. *The African American Entrepreneur: Then and Now*. Praeger, 2009.
- Roorda, Eric Paul. "The Cult of the Airplane Among U.S. Military Men and Dominicans during the Occupation and the Trujillo Regime." *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, edited by Joseph M. Gilbert, Duke UP, 1998, pp. 269-310.
- Roy, Edouard. "Haiti's Air Force." *Popular Aviation*, 1940, pp. 49, 86, 87.
- Salvatore, Ricardo D. "Imperial Mechanics: South America's Hemispheric Integration in the Machine Age." *American Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 3, 2006, pp. 662-91.
- Schuyler, George S. "The Negro Art Hokum." *The Nation*, 16 Jun. 1926, p. 122.
- . "New Job Frontiers for Negro Youth." *The Crisis*, November 1936, pp. 328-9.
- . "Negroes in the Air." *The American Mercury* Dec. 1936, pp. 326.
- . "The Rise of the Black Internationale." *The Crisis*, vol. 45, no. 8, 1938, pp. 255-6.
- . *Black Empire*. Ed. Robert A. Hill and R. Kent Rasmussen. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1991. Print.
- . *Ethiopian Stories*. Ed. Robert A. Hill. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1994.
- Scott, Lawrence P., and William M. Womack, Sr. *Double V: The Civil Rights Struggle of the Tuskegee Airmen*. Michigan State UP, 1994.
- Scott, William R. *A Study of Afro-American and Ethiopian Relations: 1896-1941*. Dissertation, Princeton University. UMI, 1971.
- . *The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993. Print.

- Segre, Claudio G. *Italo Balbo: A Fascist Life*. U of California P, 1990.
- Sherrard-Johnson, Cherene. *A Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*. Wiley, 2015.
- Simmons, Charles A. *The African American Press: A History of News Civerage During National Crises, with Special Reference to Four Black Newspapers, 1827-1965*. McFarland, 1998.
- Simmons, Thomas A. *The Man Called Brown Condor: The Forgotten History of an African American Pilot*. Herman Graf, 2013.
- Sinclair, Bruce, editor. *Technology and the African-American Experience: Needs and Opportunities for Study*. MIT P, 2004.
- Snider, Jessi M. "Flying to Freedom: African-American Visions of Aviation, 1910-1927." Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1995.
- "George Nettie Speedy." *Notable Kentucky African Americans Database*, 30 Aug. 2018, www.nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/3192.
- Spivey, Donald. *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1865-1915*. Greenwood P, 1978.
- . *The Politics of Miseducation: The Booker Washington Institute of Liberia, 1929-1984*. UP of Kentucky, 1986.
- Stauffer, John, et al. *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American*. Liveright, 2015.
- . "Frederick Douglass's Self-Fashioning and the Making of a Representative American Man." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*, edited by Audrey A. Fisch, CUP, 2007, pp. 201-17.
- Stepan, Nancy Leys, and Sander L. Gilman. "Appropriating the Idioms of Science: The Rejection of Scientific Racism." *The 'Racial' Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*, edited by Sandra Harding, Indiana UP, 1993, pp. 170-93.

- Suggs, Henry Lewis. "The Response of the African American Press to the United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934." *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 73, no. 1, 1988, pp. 33-45.
- Taketani, Etsuko. "Colored Empires in the 1930s: Black Internationalism, the U.S. Black Press, and George Samuel Schuyler." *American Literature*, vol. 82, no. 1, 2010, pp. 121-49.
- Taketani, Etsuko. *The Black Pacific Narrative: Geographic Imaginings of Race and Empire between the World Wars*. Dartmouth College P, 2014.
- Tal, Kali. "'That Just Kills Me': Black Militant Near-Future Fiction." *Social Text*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2002, pp. 65-92.
- Thompson, Mark Christian. "The God of Love: Fascism in George S. Schuyler's *Black Empire*." *CLA Journal*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2004, pp. 183-99.
- Thompson, Mark Christian. *Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture between the Wars*. U of Virginia P, 2007.
- Timkins, Calvin. "Profiles: Putting Something Over Something Else." *The Jazz Cadence of African American Culture*, edited by Robert O'Meally, Columbia UP, 1998, pp. 224-43.
- Tucker, Phillip Thomas. *Father of the Tuskegee Airmen: John C. Robinson*. Potomac, 2012.
- "Tuskegee Airmen Pilot Listing." *Tuskegee University*, 8 May 2017, http://www.tuskegee.edu/about_us/legacy_of_fame/tuskegee_airmen/tuskegee_airmen_pilot_listing.aspx.
- United States, Congress, Senate, Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo. *Inquiry into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo*. Government Printing Office, 1921. 67th Congress, 1st session, Senate Report 112.

- Van Vleck, Jenifer. *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy*. Harvard UP, 2013.
- Veselá, Pavla. "Neither Black Nor White: The Critical Utopias of Sutton E. Griggs and George S. Schuyler." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 38, 2001, pp. 270-87.
- Washburn, Patrick Scott. *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom*. Northwestern UP, 2006.
- Washington, Booker T. *Up from Slavery*. Dover, 1995.
- Washington, M.J. "U.S. Approves Flight of Goodwill Aviators." *Chicago Defender*, 3 Nov 1934, p. 3.
- Waters, Enoch P. "Black Wings Over America." *Chicago Defender*, 26 Sep. 1942, p. B15.
- Watson, Thomas W. "Robinson in Big Ovation in New York." *The Chicago Defender* May 30 1936. Print.
- Wells, Ida B. *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. Edited by Alfreda M. Duster. U of Chicago P, 1970.
- Williams, Alvyn. "Jazz and the New Negro: Harlem's Intellectuals Wrestle with the Art of the Age." *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2002, pp. 1-18.
- Williams, John A. Foreword. *Black Empire*. By George S. Schuyler. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1991. ix-xv. Print.
- Wilson, Ivy. "'Are You Man Enough?': Imagining Ethiopia and Transnational Black Masculinity." *Callaloo*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2010, pp. 265-77.
- . "The New Negro Iconoclast, or, the Curious Case of George Samuel Schuyler." *A Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by Cherene Sherrard-Johnson, Wiley, 2015, pp. 155-70.
- Wilson, James F. *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Choloate Babies: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance*. U of Michigan P, 2011.

- Wintz, Cary D., and Paul Finkelman. *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*. Taylor & Francis, 2004.
- ., and Bruce A. Glasrud. *The Harlem Renaissance in the West: The New Negro's Western Experience*. Routledge, 2011.
- Wolseley, Roland E. *The Black Press, U.S.A.* Iowa State UP, 1990.
- Wolters, Raymond. *Negroes and the Great Depression: The Problem of Economic Recovery*. Greenwood, 1970.
- Wright, Richard. *Native Son*. Harper, 2008.
- Yenser, Thomas. *Who's Who in Colored America*. Who's Who in Colored America Corporation, 1941.
- Yeuell, Gladstone H. "The Negro Press as a Factor in Education." *Journal of Educational Sociology*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1928, pp. 92-8.
- Yingling, Charlton W. "No One Who Reads the History of Hayti Can Doubt the Capacity of Colored Men: Racial Formation and Atlantic Rehabilitation in New York City's Early Black Press, 1827-1841." *Early American Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2013, pp. 314-48.