

Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance

A review by Itibari M. Zulu

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Turner, Joyce Moore (with the assistance of W. Burghardt Turner, and an introduction by Franklin W. Knight). *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005. 336 pp, 35 photographs. ISBN 0-252-02996-8. \$55.00 [cloth]; ISBN 0-252-07241-3. \$25.00 [paper].

Joyce Moore Turner's *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance* is a eighth-chapter study of the often untold emergence of African American radicalism in Harlem, drawn on the papers and writings of Hermina Huiswoud, Cyril Briggs, the Rev. E. Ethelred Brown, Langston Hughes, and Richard B. Moore (the Caribbean crusaders), as well as interviews and biographies of related contemporary figures. Hence in painstaking research the study incorporates census records, hundreds of documents from the recently opened Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, and FBI files released through the Freedom of Information Act that were ironically of limited use due to extensive deletions and incorrect accounts of event.

Set within the context of Harlem with the cultural ethos of Caribbean migration, and personal dignity, the book outlines how the journalism and oratory of Otto Huiswoud and Hermina Dumont Huiswoud contributed to the Harlem Renaissance and socialist thought via Otto Huiswoud, a native of Guiana whose father had been born an enslaved person, and later becomes the sole African American charter member of the Communist Party and participates in the complex developments within the socialist and communist parties on the question of race that transfers to other parts of the world (Europe, Africa, and the USSR) to reveal the breadth, depth, and nearly global reach of the African-Caribbean activist community.

Often viewed as a cultural Mecca, Harlem in this project takes the stage as a political base for the Black middle class and intelligentsia, and interjectionally states in detail how location (Harlem) “...provided the conduits that facilitated the crosscutting of the fundamental American social cleavages of race, color, class, and condition” and thus represents a place where people encountered life changing opportunities via a Harlem ‘state of mind’ that give it its ‘qualitative distinctiveness’ (xix).

Turner has indeed contributed a new dynamic to understanding the African-Caribbean/African-American role in twentieth century political thought and action with *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance*, and secondly, through its biographical emphasis, demonstrated (via Otto and Hermina Huiswood) the uniqueness of protracted political activism in the face of racism and wholesale colonialism. Students and scholars of political thought and science will find this work rewarding (in addition to the main text, introduction by John Hopkins University professor Franklin W. Knight, and assistance from State University of New York at Stony Brook professor emeritus of history W. Burghardt Turner [also, the husband of the author], the book has preface, a prologue, an epilogue, notes, a selected bibliography, and an index to complete its presentation).

