

Swarthmore College

Works

Senior Theses, Projects, and Awards

Student Scholarship

Fall 2021

“The Music Did All the Talking:” Community, Resistance, and Improvisation in Louis Armstrong’s Cultural Diplomacy

Leo Posel , '22

Follow this and additional works at: <https://works.swarthmore.edu/theses>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Posel, Leo , '22, "“The Music Did All the Talking:” Community, Resistance, and Improvisation in Louis Armstrong’s Cultural Diplomacy" (2021). *Senior Theses, Projects, and Awards*. 596.

<https://works.swarthmore.edu/theses/596>

Please note: the theses in this collection are undergraduate senior theses completed by senior undergraduate students who have received a bachelor's degree.

This work is brought to you for free by Swarthmore College Libraries' Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Theses, Projects, and Awards by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact myworks@swarthmore.edu.

**“The Music Did All the Talking:” Community, Resistance, and Improvisation in Louis
Armstrong’s Cultural Diplomacy**

Abstract: This paper examines the many meanings and implications of Louis Armstrong’s role in the Jazz Ambassadors program, and his tours of West and Central Africa in the 1950’s and 60’s. Specifically, I argue that musical evidence is crucially important in a comprehensive understanding of this program, as well as the politics of creating and consuming Black American music at this time. By relying on live recordings, documentary footage, and radio interviews as well as a rich historiography that relates this music with American Cold War culture, I demonstrate the underlying connections between Armstrong’s performances and American notions of race, diaspora, and community that lie both against and beyond an analysis of state power.

On May 23rd, 1956, Louis Armstrong stepped off the plane and onto the tarmac in Accra, Ghana, faced immediately with thousands of adoring fans and musicians playing and singing in celebration of his arrival. As a circle formed, Armstrong pulled out his horn and the rest of the band began playing in response. The crowd roared, and so completely was he surrounded, that police had to clear a path through the assembled masses in order for Armstrong and company to leave the airport.¹ Accompanying Armstrong and his band was his wife Lucille, who joined them in preparation for two days of concerts, photo opportunities, and cultural exchange. Also making the trip was veteran newscaster and media personality Edward R. Murrow, who was in the process of filming a documentary about Armstrong’s travels and his experiences representing this music as an international celebrity. During his time in Accra,

¹ "Mob Louis Armstrong at Airport in Ghana," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct 14, 1960.
<https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/mob-louis-armstrong-at-airport-ghana/docview/182676507/se-2?accountid=14194>

Armstrong took meetings with state officials such as future Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, visited a school, and held jam sessions, a dance party, and several evening performances. Armstrong's time spent with Nkrumah was particularly impactful for both of them -- photographers were on hand to document each interaction, ranging from official portraits with Lucille to one image of the Armstrongs and Nkrumah playing a plastic game of American ice hockey.² Louis spent plenty of time with local musicians as well as with fans, and he would exchange Christmas cards with friends from the Gold Coast even years later.³

This tour, and others like it, were part of a program called the "Jazz Ambassadors," a series of tours that sent popular jazz musicians abroad to eastern Europe and Africa, among other places, in order to stem the tide of communism and demonstrate the superiority of American cultural values. Much has been written about these tours, and much has been made of both the media response and government intentions, in order to disentangle the ideological contradictions between how America perceived itself, and the lived experiences of its citizens across the country. Scholars have pointed to the blatant hypocrisy of allowing Armstrong to take an integrated band abroad as a representation of American artistic genius, when they would have never been allowed to perform in a Jim Crow state like Alabama.⁴ Penny Von Eschen sees Armstrong encapsulating many of the nuances and inconsistencies of the entire Jazz Ambassadors program. Armstrong, Von Eschen argues, is the embodiment of an unavoidable tension -- and oftentimes outright contradiction -- between artist and politician, state and individual, Black and white, democracy and fascism. In particular, she highlights Louis Armstrong's dual role as both an agent of subversion and change, as well as a vessel for

² Prime Minister of the Gold Coast (soon to be Ghana) Kwame Nkrumah hosts Louis and Lucille Armstrong, Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York, accessed October 15, 2021. <https://collections.louisarmstronghouse.org/asset-detail/1044820>

³ Christmas Card sent to Louis Armstrong from Nana Dimmy, Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York, accessed October 15, 2021. <https://collections.louisarmstronghouse.org/asset-detail/1003658>

⁴ Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 59.

American imperialist propaganda.⁵ Although in her book *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era*, Lisa Davenport agrees with Von Eschen's analysis and body of evidence, she argues that ultimately the problem of culture and jazz diplomacy in American foreign policy had to be addressed apart from "worldwide economic and military exigencies that had arisen during this era."⁶ She astutely points to the United States' "symbolic acknowledgment" of racial tensions by highlighting successful Black performers in response to Soviet propagandistic criticism of Jim Crow legislation. However, Davenport contends that the cultural and artistic battlefield was a discrete entity in its own right. Rather than a means to an economic or political end, American policymakers felt that there was intrinsic value in establishing some musical superiority, an advancement of moral values through art that was separate from legislation or state apparatus.

The many competing understandings of what it means to play Black American music lie at the heart of Armstrong's visit to the Gold Coast, and the relationships between state, individual, and popular culture. On one hand, Louis' tour and others like it served an explicit purpose in the minds of its organizers: to represent the United States as a culturally diverse, racially accepting democracy, pushing back against Soviet communist propaganda that highlighted Jim Crow violence and massive inequality. And yet, the aesthetic qualities of this Black American music, and the specific relationships between improviser and form, between performer and audience, serve to complicate what was intended as an imperialist or colonial project. Ultimately, nearly all of the music performed on these tours -- and, I might argue, Black American music more generally -- was protest music, developed in the face of state sanctioned racism and violence. Armstrong's experiences in Ghana, and his performances in particular, give us a path to understanding the ways that Black American music has been a site of

⁵ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 90.

⁶ Lisa Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 4.

contested memory, identity, and meaning, co-opted and repurposed for competing political and social agendas. Through looking at the various circumstances surrounding, and means of consuming, Armstrong's Jazz Ambassadors output -- live footage, a record, and attending a concert itself -- we can see the ways in which jazz both resisted and perpetuated a support of American Cold War objectives. However, that dichotomy between state and musician is perhaps too simple a framework -- while the decisions made by government officials are critical to understanding this historical moment, we cannot fully engage with the complexities of Louis' place in Cold War popular culture without looking specifically at the musical evidence that remains. The music itself, and experiences of those who played and heard it, reveal explicitly how ideas about race, nationhood, and diasporic connection were crucially formed and exchanged during this trip outside the bounds of state intervention.

Central to the various successes and failures of different aspects of this process is a battle over competing understandings of the word "jazz," and the categorization of improvising musicians and their collective output.⁷ There are as many definitions and understandings of jazz as there are people who have played it, and so this paper cannot possibly hope to define the term, or provide some aesthetic or theoretical framework that will hold for every musical example. However, the existence of tension surrounding the term can help us understand the various motivations behind tour organizers in the State Department, as well as musicians such as Louis Armstrong. Furthermore, these debates highlight the shifting constructions of race in Cold War America, and the various claims that were made towards ownership of different aspects of American culture. Simultaneously with the existence of the Jazz Ambassadors

⁷ One note about my own usage of the term: musicians and critics have always debated the utility of the word "jazz," and possible alternatives such as "Black American music." While there is not room for a complete engagement with those arguments, I have tried in this essay to avoid using "jazz" as a blanket term referring to the music that was being played, by either coupling it with Black American music or using other descriptive language altogether. Occasionally, I use it when thinking about white perceptions of the music and its culture. That said, my own views are incomplete and evolving, so I apologize in advance for any inconsistencies.

program, many musicians who went on the tour, and many who did not outspokenly pushed back against the categorization of their music by genre or discrete label. The deeply influential trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie argued, "It's no longer fashionable to say Negro, which is what the white man named us. If we want to call it jazz, we'll make them call it that. It's our music, whatever we want to call it. I don't know who made up the word *jazz*... The whites have a whitewash look at our music. Naturally they're going to try to ooze off as much as they can to the whites, but they can't, because we're documented in the records and the truth will stand."⁸ Drummer Max Roach, who was vehemently opposed to much of the U.S. government's Jim Crow policies and too heavily involved in civil rights activism to be invited on as a Jazz Ambassador, remarked, "The proper name for it, if you want to speak about it historically, is music that has been created and developed by musicians of African descent who are in America. That's a long way to explain it, but if you look at it analytically, this is what you have to say."⁹ Beyond the limits of the term as a description of actual sonic content, Roach and others were voicing frustration with efforts to erase differences between their music and white artists like Stan Kenton and Benny Goodman. Furthermore it provided a foil for critics and listeners to pit against other genres of music, creating a hierarchy of high and low art.

There has been a long tradition of musicians, critics, and scholars imagining Black American music in opposition to "classical" music, or western European art music. The former is often portrayed as immediate, bodily and unrestrained, in contrast to the latter which is understood to be more intellectual and refined than anything that has developed from west Africa or New Orleans. Penny Von Eschen quotes a *Newsweek* article which argued, "The simple emotional impact of jazz cuts through all manner of linguistic and ideological barriers, and Louis Armstrong becomes an extraordinary kind of roving American ambassador of

⁸ Art Taylor, *Notes and Tones* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 127.

⁹ Taylor, *Notes and Tones*, 110.

goodwill.”¹⁰ While music can surely transcend linguistic and ideological barriers, the idea that jazz specifically can achieve this due to its simplicity is a gross mischaracterization, and functions as a veiled critique of Black musicians in general.¹¹

The preparation for these concerts over the years preceding, as well as the press and branding afterwards, demonstrates some of the ways that officials in the Eisenhower administration and Armstrong’s manager Joe Glaser tried to walk the line between two positions, trying to represent jazz -- and thus Armstrong himself -- as simultaneously civilized by American capitalist democracy, and yet still very much a racial other by virtue of his blackness and the strange Black music that he played. The year before Armstrong’s initial visit to Ghana, he toured Europe and live cuts from those concerts were compiled and released under the title *Ambassador Satch*. On the album cover stands Armstrong, beaming with his trademark smile from ear to ear, dressed formally in tails and holding his suitcase, ostensibly prepared and excited to represent his country through his horn.¹² The liner notes, too, prepare the audience for a musician who is sophisticated and cultured in the mold of classical music. It is implied that this sophistication is owed to a culture that is distinctly American, removed from any relationship to the racialized historical process that might have developed this kind of music. In the notes, George Avakian quotes a *New York Times* article which states, “What many thoughtful Europeans cannot understand is why the United States Government, with all the money it spends for so-called propaganda to promote democracy, does not use more of it to subsidize

¹⁰ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 10-11.

¹¹ Notably, musicians on both sides of this debate have demonstrated that jazz, like many examples of the vernacular, transcend traditional systems of western music notation and cannot well be written down. That does not imply, however, a less developed or sophisticated means of musical production and understanding; rather, as critic Albert Murray has argued, there is a distinct “formal mastery and rigorous musical training at the heart of the blues idiom, against critics’ ill-informed claims that located the blues (standing generally for black culture) in a dehistoricized, primitivist notion of black authenticity. Such critics described the blues as emotionalism, suffering, restlessness—in essence, the raw, unmediated voice of the rural black proletariat.” Kevin Gaines, “Artistic Othering in Black Diaspora Musics: Preliminary Thoughts on Time, Culture, and Politics,” in *Uptown Conversations*, eds. Robert O’Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 206.

¹² Louis Armstrong, *Ambassador Satch*, recorded 1955, Columbia, vinyl LP.

the continental travels of jazz bands.” In response, Avakian continues, “Louis himself was delighted by all this. ‘I know what jazz means to people all over the world,’ he says... ‘The music did all the talking for both sides.’”¹³

While Louis certainly was delighted with the opportunity to tour and broaden his audience internationally, this writing implies a certain collaborative agenda or agreement between Armstrong and the State Department that simply did not exist. For one thing, Louis did not tour officially as a “Jazz Ambassador” until 1960. But also, and perhaps more importantly, Avakian is arguing that Eisenhower and Armstrong imagined the function and significance of Black American music in the same way -- that everybody involved with the project understood their Cold War goals as protecting democracy and the free world, and saw jazz as an effective tool to accomplish this. Avakian’s text ignores entirely the processes of political and racial formation that allowed Louis Armstrong to develop his individual harmonic and melodic language, and furthermore flattens the terms “jazz” and “democracy,” contorting them in an attempt to make them analogous. That this rhetoric was present not only on the physical record itself, but also in a publication such as the *New York Times* demonstrates just how widespread it had become, generating and reproducing an understanding of jazz that was in many ways ahistorical. By refusing to acknowledge its racial and political history, figures like Avakian and Felix Belair (who wrote the *Times* article) missed much of the nuance and emotional impact of the music, instead allowing it to become weaponized by the state. Ultimately, as Belair acknowledged, “America’s secret weapon is a blue note in a minor key.”¹⁴

Fearing the possibility of lasting effects from Soviet propaganda that exposed the brutally violent racial discrimination in the United States at the time, American policymakers and

¹³ Louis Armstrong, *Ambassador Satch*, recorded 1955, Columbia, vinyl LP.

¹⁴ Felix Belair Jr, Special to The New York Times, "United States has Secret Sonic Weapon--Jazz: Secret Weapon: A Long Blue Note. Europe Falls Captive as Crowds Riot to Hear Dixieland but Vast Propaganda Value is a Secret to Washington, Too," *New York Times*, Nov 06, 1955. <https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/united-states-has-secret-sonic-weapon-jazz/docview/113371861/se-2?accountid=14194>.

State Department officials embarked on mission to counter that messaging, creating a cultural export that would prove to the world the importance of racial equality and opportunity in American life. The “Jazz Ambassadors” tours were one aspect of this carefully orchestrated cultural imperialism, but the State Department did not limit themselves to music; this period saw choreographers like Martha Graham take American dance behind the Iron Curtain as well.¹⁵ Of course, this project was created against the backdrop of an American popular culture dealing with and reeling from the geopolitical effects of the Cold War and nuclear warfare. So totalizing was the Red Scare, the fear of a communist invasion on American soil, that many felt a duty calling upon them to actively fight back, to repress any communist ideology or hints of anti-capitalism. The domestic Cold War was not relegated to one sphere of American life either: legislators and judges, union officials and movie studio bosses, policemen and generals, university presidents and corporation executives, clergymen and journalists, Republicans and Democrats alike tried to exorcise this specter of communism from American life.¹⁶

By the late 1950’s, the process of blacklisting was in full force, ending the careers of countless artists, thinkers and Hollywood actors and screenwriters. As the political landscape changed, unsavory political messages were scrupulously removed from cultural output on threat of being blacklisted. And as a result, art in every medium was released that represented a positive, glowing image of America pitted against communism, which lurked around every darkened corner. One film, *Strategic Air Command*, had Jimmy Stewart’s character justifying to his wife a decision to leave baseball for the Air Force: “But there is a kind of war,” he explains, “We’ve got to stay ready to fight without fighting.”¹⁷ This kind of constant vigilance produced a very particular brand of American politics and culture, generating a widespread fear that

¹⁵ Victoria Phillips, *Martha Graham’s Cold War: The Dance of American Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 2.

¹⁶ Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1.

¹⁷ Peter J. Kuzick and James Burkhart Gilbert, *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 1.

communist sympathies lay around every corner, even despite various pockets of dissent or opposition to the Red Scare. Thus, historian Lisa Davenport argues, “As the Cold War challenged America’s evolving democratic system, it also obscured the plurality of American culture that made the country unique.”¹⁸ As with any other artistic medium, music -- and musicians from any country -- was certainly not immune from the effects of blacklisting, or from the general public consensus around Cold War agendas and remedies. They walked a narrow line in between public acceptance and rejection, between giving perceived support for Soviet communists, or actively working for a victory of American values worldwide. One Republican Congressman said of the 1949 Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace: “[Dimitri] Shostakovich has the same right to attend a cultural conference as a rattlesnake has to be at the altar of a church.”¹⁹ But since music in many forms became a prominent Cold War battlefield, Americans soon found their own musical heroes in various genres across the country. *Variety* magazine enthusiastically characterized Armstrong, for example, as an appealing alternative to “commie squares.”²⁰ The significance of these Jazz Ambassadors tours, however, go further than the policy that was enacted. Rather, the choice to use jazz and Black American music as a representation of American values created opportunities for individual performers and consumers to construct their own identities in relation to the music, both against and beyond state intervention.

Still, this discourse on the relationship between jazz and democracy flourished during the middle of the 20th century, and the connections continue to be demarcated today. The mission statement of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, led by Wynton Marsalis -- one of the most public and popular groups performing in 2021 -- reads, “We believe jazz is a metaphor for Democracy. Because jazz is improvisational, it celebrates personal freedom and encourages

¹⁸ Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy*, 149.

¹⁹ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 11.

²⁰ Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy*, 54.

individual expression. Because jazz is swinging, it dedicates that freedom to finding and maintaining common ground with others.”²¹ For those assembling the Cold War Jazz Ambassadors, however, establishing this link was crucially important. In the face of prolific and effective Soviet propaganda, Eisenhower and the United States Information Agency (USIA) were searching for creative ways to convince the world that American democracy was the pinnacle of an organized society; any alternative could be read as an unacceptable sympathy with communists. One way to send this message abroad was to draw concrete similarities between jazz and the American government. Willis Conover, the host of the jazz hour on Voice of America, was someone in particular who emphasized this link explicitly. “Jazz is a cross between total discipline and total anarchy,” Conover said. “The musicians agree on tempo, key and chord structure but beyond this everyone is free to express himself. This is jazz. And this is America. That’s what gives this music validity. It’s a musical reflection of the way things happen in America.”²² Similarly, the great composer Duke Ellington, when asked about the popularity of jazz in the Soviet bloc, remarked, “I thought the reason was that jazz means freedom and that today, freedom is the big word around the world... If jazz means freedom, then jazz means peace because peace can come to mankind only when man is free.”²³

The comparison between jazz and democracy raises intriguing conceptual problems. Jazz is fundamentally a collective exercise, which can succeed only when each musician is listening deeply to the band, and sacrificing individual accolades in the service of the whole. It is also necessarily conversational, finding every member of an ensemble interacting with and building off of a particular musical moment. Conover is correct that often, a harmonic and rhythmic framework is agreed upon beforehand, but only as a template to facilitate improvisation and to open unknown avenues of musical discovery. A failure to engage with each moment

²¹ “About,” Jazz at Lincoln Center, accessed November 3, 2021, <https://www.jazz.org/about/>.

²² Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 17.

²³ Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy*, 81.

honestly and without judgment often means that the collective product suffers, and one can lose the interaction and conversation between musicians that is so often sought after. These can all be useful concepts and frameworks for understanding the form and function of the music. However, when viewed in the context of the Cold War geopolitical climate, comparing “jazz” and “democracy” becomes more historically grounded and politically charged; it entails explicitly choosing a particular side in the Cold War, while rejecting a whole host of value systems and people who might support them. It is suddenly less an aesthetic observation and more so an political endorsement -- not just of democracy -- but of the American political project specifically, and their imperial agenda across the world.

The discourse of freedom in Cold War culture was also used fairly liberally during the 1950's and 60's, from radio personalities like Conover, musicians such as Armstrong or Ellington, and of course politicians at every level. As a discursive construct, the term was a hotly contested site of various meanings and implications for different people. It was utilized by many to serve a concrete purpose: Joseph McCarthy, and plenty of other policymakers, came to dictate and prescribe a fairly narrow window of acceptable American lives, producing ideals of family, gender, race, and everything else from leisure time to personal relationships. However, for many others who had always dealt with discrimination on the basis of identities like race or gender, the concept of “freedom” carried heavier weight and farther reaching implications than white Cold War policymakers like Eisenhower intended. Nina Simone famously said, “I’ll tell you what freedom means to me. No fear. I mean really, no fear,”²⁴ a definition so blunt and obviously founded on generations of racial and gender-based violence that it could not possibly be compared to Conover’s generalizations about American freedom.

²⁴ Nina Simone, interview by Peter Rodis, *Nina Simone: A Historical Perspective*, Youtube video, 1:56, 1970.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySYRI4wXUpo>

We can see this notion of freedom, both musical and otherwise -- stretching far beyond any iteration of democracy -- embodied aesthetically in Black American artistic output as well. Especially through the 1960's and 70's, as the civil rights movement and radical Black activism and literature grew, jazz evolved alongside it. In some instances, musicians such as Ornette Coleman and Sun Ra abandoned any formal structure or harmonic framework in an attempt to find some deeper, more essential level of improvisation that transcended any analogy of political system. However, even throughout the less adventurous or harmonically extreme examples of this music, there was an urge to create something that responds not only to the other musicians, but to a broader community in both past and present. It imagined a kind of freedom and connection, to be sure, but in many ways the emotional content rendered a comparison with democracy with quite limited utility. Rather, as Scott Saul has convincingly argued, jazz provided a soundtrack to the civil rights movement and notions of black liberation, advancing an idea of freedom that had little to do with consensus notions of democracy prevalent in the Cold War era. Saul writes, "The hard bop group, with its loose, spontaneous interplay and its firm sense of a collective groove, modeled a dynamic community that was democratic in ways that took exception to the supposedly benign normalcy of 1950's America."²⁵ Different groups and particular players might give voice to various unheard pockets of American life and resistance, Saul says, "But the one assurance, given the diversity of attitudes struck by hard bop groups, was this: that the music would not sound like the quietly humming consensus deemed normative during the Eisenhower era."²⁶

As the music and ideology grew with and from each other, it grounded new appeals for freedom in older idioms of black spirituality, challenging the nation's public account of itself and testifying to the black community's cultural power.²⁷ Although Saul is describing an aesthetic

²⁵ Scott Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 6.

²⁶ Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't*, 6.

²⁷ Saul, *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't*, 2.

that developed as Armstrong's period of innovation was winding down, and that was quite harmonically different as well, it would be a mistake to write off Saul's framework completely when considering Louis' output during this time. Despite being often pigeonholed as an apolitical, uncritical entertainer, Armstrong's engagement with the political debates of the time are in fact evidence that his music was resistance as well. His music is no less aesthetically complex, and certainly no less related to the issues that were at stake when Armstrong was developing his sound. And even if Armstrong made use of different tools in navigating his relationship with race in America, we must acknowledge the fact of his musical activism nonetheless.

Viewed through this lens, Louis Armstrong's performances in Ghana take on a much more complex set of responsibilities and implications, rather than merely being a mouthpiece for the State Department. How did the actual music that Armstrong played represent a creation of diaspora and of transnational identity? How did it participate in a discursive -- insofar as that word can apply here -- construction of categories of race and nationality? How did the relationships built over the course of the concerts or performances intersect with, or run opposed to, the overarching agenda of the trip as imagined by its organizers?

Tempting as it is to read Armstrong's performances as merely a subversion of the United States' geopolitical agenda, rebelling against imperialism through the very existence of Black American music, there remain many contradictions about the Jazz Ambassadors that cannot be easily resolved one way or the other. One salient incident came as Armstrong exited the plane on his initial trip to Accra: along with scores of musicians playing and singing to celebrate his arrival, and hundreds more Ghanaians present simply to watch the great man's every move, comedian Ajax Bukana was in the crowd wearing extensive makeup in the style of blackface minstrelsy. After they finish playing, Armstrong suddenly exclaims and points off-screen: "Man,

look at this cat here!”²⁸ Bukana, who was born in Nigeria but would become naturalized as a Ghanaian citizen under Kwame Nkrumah a few years later,²⁹ rushes up to Armstrong to pose for a picture; all of his movements are exaggeratedly awkward in the style of blackface minstrel performers and vaudeville acts typical of a particular American style. They exchange greetings and jokes, and a picture of Armstrong and Bukana, both grinning from ear to ear, would circulate in publications on multiple continents in the following days. As the crowd continues to cheer and applaud, Louis laughs and says to Bukana, “Man, you remind me of New Orleans.”³⁰

There is very little available in the digitized archives about even the most rudimentary details of Bukana’s life, and he is mentioned, only in passing, by very few other secondary accounts of this episode. Nonetheless, the fact that it occurred at all raises plenty of questions, none of which may be definitively answerable. Who organized this meeting, and what were their intentions? Was Armstrong aware of Bukana’s existence beforehand? Was the agenda planned down to the minute, and had he been warned that this would happen? Or was the whole idea to catch Armstrong entirely off-guard in what was an otherwise celebratory occasion? Would the meanings of such an episode resonated in the same way for Gold Coast citizens in attendance as they would for American viewers? If not, how were different understandings of the comedic form created and perpetuated? In the available footage, courtesy of Edward Murrow’s 1957 documentary *Satchmo the Great*, Bukana’s interlude is nothing more than a hilarious addition to a scene already full of elation and excitement. Everybody in the frame is laughing hysterically, and the sound is such that one cannot help but imagine the entire crowd doing the same as well. However, given the long and violently racist history of blackface minstrelsy in American

²⁸ *Satchmo the Great*, directed by Edward R. Murrow (1957; New York, NY). Youtube, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHty0Yyw-JE>.

²⁹ Joel Savage, “My Friend Ajax Bukana,” last modified April 14, 2018, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/847475/my-friend-ajax-bukana.html>.

³⁰ *Satchmo the Great*.

popular culture, it seems perhaps impossible to simply accept Murrow's interpretation as an accurate assessment of the intentions and emotional impact of this particular incident.

Nonetheless, we can consider two possible scenarios. Let us imagine, briefly, that the government employees in the United States Information Agency organized Bukana's performance. Although Armstrong was sent as an explicit symbol of American exceptionalism and cultural supremacy, an embodiment of the justification for American victory in the Cold War, racial prejudice still obviously remained pervasive. It is entirely possible that American officials wanted, somehow, to mediate Armstrong's position and responsibility, reminding him that despite his musical and cultural successes he still remained only a caricature of himself, entertaining in the service of a white agenda that mocked him rather than applauded his talents. However, it is relevant that Bukana was employed as a comedian by the government of the Gold Coast.³¹ If the administration in the Gold Coast supported this exchange, perhaps it could serve a different purpose: given that Armstrong's visit was an indication of American cultural hegemony, Bukana might signify a response that Ghanaian culture was capable of successfully assimilating and incorporating American art forms into the zeitgeist. It offered evidence that Gold Coast artists were creating and performing separately from Americans, but crucially influenced by them as well; in some sense this is then not only an artistic statement but a diplomatic one, arguing that the Gold Coast was capable of independence and allyship with American interests. The question still remains, however: why was this particular art form chosen to represent a West African contribution or relationship with U.S. culture? What does that say about Ghanaian perception of American popular culture? How did everybody involved understand the relationship of jazz (and Louis Armstrong in particular) to blackface performers?

One other important caveat for making sense of this incident is the practice and prevalence of minstrelsy and face painting throughout the Gold Coast at this time. Catherine

³¹ Joel Savage, "My Friend Ajax Bukana," last modified April 14, 2018, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/847475/my-friend-ajax-bukana.html>.

Cole has written about the practice of Ghanaian concert parties, and argues that they (even or especially when minstrelsy was involved) “helped colonial Ghanaians re-invent modernity with a critical difference... concert artists interrogated modernity’s ideological foundations and the compulsive way in which it was being adopted by Africans.” She continues, “Concert stages showed how one could modernize without *becoming* “civilized” (i.e. British, white, anti-African).”³² They were a space to wrestle with forms that may have developed in other parts of the world, but became a vehicle for messages that were distinctly Ghanaian. Potentially, then, this is no longer a mockery of Armstrong, or an attempt at assimilation, but rather a self-referential realization of the way that Gold Coast citizens understood themselves to be perceived by western European colonial powers.³³ The fact that there is little in the way of recorded response or reflection on this moment is frustrating -- we can only speculate about the various meanings that it may or may not have carried. However, this speculation may provide some insight into the context and meanings that both Armstrong and his audience may have taken from the various concerts he played just hours later.

In an attempt to capitalize on Armstrong’s international commercial success, and investigate what he saw as a particularly important historical phenomenon, Edward R. Murrow brought a production crew along in order to document the Gold Coast tour and Armstrong’s ambassadorship of what the film calls “that great free nation across the sea, where both the blues and the colored people had their first awakening.”³⁴ Murrow followed Louis as he performed at stadiums for the general public, at a dance party for tribal leaders, and even as he gave lessons at an elementary school. Throughout, Murrow portrays himself and his role as

³² Catherine Cole, *Ghana’s Concert Party Theatre*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 6.

³³ It may well be also that nobody interpreted this incident as having a political message at all: Cole writes, “Among Ghanaians I interviewed, concert party blackface is of no particular importance. Some... say that focusing on Western aspects of concert party genealogy re-enacts a colonialist obsession: Non-Africans all too often see in African practices only what is familiar and relevant to the West,” rather than an example of an authentically distinct culture. Cole, *Ghana’s Concert Party Theatre*, 19.

³⁴ *Satchmo the Great*.

merely that of a transparent window into life in the Gold Coast, imagining the medium of a documentary as one where the viewer can understand the subject with complete and unfiltered accuracy. He begins by introducing the audience to “an excursion in jazz,” where there are “no actors involved, no scenarios,” and “the only ‘historian’ involved is Daniel Louis Armstrong.”³⁵ The story that *Satchmo the Great* tells is one in which the Black man, civilized by his time in the United States, returns to his native land in order to commune with his people, demonstrate his musical gifts, and -- implicitly -- to extoll the virtues of American democratic values. Murrow even alludes to the 20th century and the 17th century reaching out and touching hands when the crowd danced to “tribal drums and an educated trumpet,” a grossly imperialist and eurocentric analogy for the interactions between Louis’ band and the Ghanaian populace.³⁶

However, despite the constant narrative choices made by the camera, the musical performance itself is one area in which Armstrong and the musicians are necessarily allowed greater agency in telling a story. There are long periods of the film in which we are simply watching the All-Stars perform -- masters at work -- and thus, a story is told and relationships are crafted between performer, live audience, and documentary viewer that Murrow and company did not realize was taking place, nor intended to display.

The first evening after Armstrong arrived in the Gold Coast, Armstrong and the band played in a concert hall in Accra, with Kwame Nkrumah present in the audience. Towards the end of the set, Louis reached for the microphone, and said, “Thank you folks. We’d like to lay this next one on the Prime Minister: Black and Blue.”³⁷ Immediately, the band begins playing at a medium tempo, with driving energy yet still subdued as well, providing enough emotional nuance to suit the depth and politics of the lyrics. Armstrong begins to sing, with his internationally trademarked grin on full display: “I’m white inside, but that don’t help my case/

³⁵ *Satchmo the Great*.

³⁶ *Satchmo the Great*.

³⁷ *Satchmo the Great*.

'Cause I can't hide what is in my face/ How would it end? Ain't got a friend/ My only sin is in my skin/ What did I do to be so black and blue?"³⁸ It is perhaps coincidental, but the arrangement of the song, although typical of much dixieland music, is notable -- there is no extended improvisation, no focus on interplay between the rhythm section or dueling soloists. Although a delineated section for improvisation is often expected of this music, and can provide significant musical and political value, that subversion of expectation arguably makes this moment even more significant; the lyrical message delivered is emphasized and intended to be received as clearly as possible. As the band concludes the tune, the entire crowd bursts into applause, and Kwame Nkrumah is not so much cheering wildly as he is spellbound; he applauds pensively as if considering the full weight of the song addressed specifically to him, while some accounts describe him crying at this point in the concert, overcome with emotion.³⁹

All the while, Armstrong smiles, embracing a personal kind of iconography that by this point had become nearly synonymous with American popular music and even culture more broadly. Critic Whitney Balliett astutely observed of this imagery, so instantly recognizable, that "Armstrong's stage presence -- a heady and steadily revolving mixture of thousand-watt teeth, marbling eyes, rumbling asides, infectious laughter, and barreling gait -- is as endearing a spectacle as we have had on the American stage."⁴⁰ And yet, at the risk of reading too deeply without historical accuracy, Armstrong seems to be implying some more subtle emotion in this performance -- the smile is not one of pure happiness, or delight, but perhaps a wry, knowing acknowledgment of the conditions faced by African-Americans at home, and the circumstances that brought him to the current moment.

³⁸ *Satchmo the Great*.

³⁹ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 63.

⁴⁰ Terry Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2009), 321.

How can we, as historian Robert G. O'Meally suggests, "read a great man's telltale smile?"⁴¹ In his essay *Checking Our Balances: Louis Armstrong, Ralph Ellison, and Betty Boop*, O'Meally offers several possibilities for interpretation. One explanation is a coping mechanism for the horrors of the Jim Crow south, and the imperialist exportation of those values abroad. O'Meally quotes Ralph Ellison who coined "Ellison's Law: "If blacks could laugh (even if only laughing to keep from crying), who could dare to frown?"⁴² O'Meally continues "Armstrong was involved, day in and day out, with the comedy at the edge of tragedy that defines the mental blues mode—wherein typically the performer counts the teeming troubles of the world and then laughs at them..."⁴³ Given the explicitly racial overtones of the lyrics, and the fact that Armstrong's performance brought Nkrumah to tears, there may be something to this perspective. Also notable is that the original 1929 lyrics relied on comic racial stereotypes and jokes about interracial romantic relationships, that might offset some of the shock or discomfort at engaging with American racial politics. In this performance, as with others, Armstrong made edits and left that to the side.⁴⁴ A part of this interaction then also involves another kind of self-aware comedy, or even of self-congratulations, knowing that these lyrics had been manipulated to serve another political message. It may well be no coincidence that Armstrong chose to perform this number in a concert hall with the audience dressed in formal western attire -- an event laden with particularly European and American characteristics -- rather than the following day, when the band met and played for tribal leaders and a wider Gold Coast public. As much as Armstrong was an innovator of a truly original art form, a Black American music that can trace its history back through the middle passage, he also drew upon harmony coming from a distinctly European tradition in an especially European setting, repurposing the master's tools in

⁴¹ Robert G. O'Meally, "Checking Our Balances: Louis Armstrong, Ralph Ellison, and Betty Boop," in *Uptown Conversations*, eds. Robert O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 279.

⁴² O'Meally, "Checking Our Balances," 281.

⁴³ O'Meally, "Checking Our Balances," 284-5.

⁴⁴ O'Meally, "Checking Our Balances," 286.

order to critique, if not dismantle, the master's house. O'Meally continues, "Here then, one might view Armstrong's jazz as a rippling, subversive comic art, deflating self and others in a cake-walking communal celebration and bash."⁴⁵ The smile, too, is an integral and unavoidable part of "Armstrong's jazz." This is not to reduce Armstrong to the role of slave mocking a plantation owner however -- his ownership and autonomy over the music, and agency in conducting performance is undeniable.

It cannot be emphasized enough that I am not making this point with reference to a generalization of all jazz, or even any other Black improvised music beyond this particular historical moment. However, it might serve to illustrate the ways that this singular historical moment, this song, and this smile, signify something in particular that was potentially missed by Murrow, and the other white organizers of this tour. "Black and Blue" is addressed and dedicated to Nkrumah in particular -- even in a crowd of thousands, there is an intimate process of building relationships and community, and possibly racial and diasporic solidarity, taking place as well. Ultimately, however, Armstrong was nothing if not a seasoned performer, and this smile is inextricably linked with his public image. In part, at least, he is simply unleashing his awesome powers of entertainment to give Gold Coast what they came to see.

Armstrong's non-musical itinerary during these few days in Ghana also illustrates the competing agendas of CBS executives, State Department officials and employees from other government agencies, and Armstrong's All-Stars. The documentary team was busy at home and abroad orchestrating a narrative of Louis' experience that would serve the structure of the film. Upon arrival in Accra, one CBS executive Gene de Poris reportedly received a cable (presumably from the United States) which read, "GET ARMSTRONG ON BEACH THINKING ABOUT HIS ANCESTORS STOP ALSO GET ARMSTRONG IN DESERTED NIGHT CLUB BY

⁴⁵ O'Meally, "Checking Our Balances," 282.

HIMSELF WITH TRUMPET AS MOOD OPENER.”⁴⁶ Thus, the creators of “Satchmo the Great” tried hard to dictate the musical and emotional flow of Armstrong’s experience.

There were, however, other social interactions as well that paint a complicated picture of the relationship between musician and politician. After Louis played for Nkrumah, the two spent much time together, often with their wives, eating and traveling around the Gold Coast, talking about music and politics and life. One photo in the archives shows a lunch date attended by -- among others -- the Armstrongs, Nkrumah, and James Moxon, an official working at the United States Information Agency, who hosted the Armstrongs for the length of their stay. The photo itself is unassuming -- seven friends gathered around a beautifully set table, some posing for the photo and others making conversation. Louis himself is dressed in a tuxedo, and Moxon in a clean white suit.⁴⁷ Other photographs show Louis and Lucille taking a variety of political meetings, including Nkrumah again, as well as the colony’s Governor Sir Charles Arden-Clarke.⁴⁸ Clearly, the political stakes of this tour were high for multiple parties, both local and international. And yet despite such widespread appeal and admiration, Armstrong was not operating on an equal playing field with those who organized these events. Still another photograph, taken at James Moxon’s house, depicts Louis and Lucille posing with Moxon’s “driver and household employees,” all of whom were Black.⁴⁹ Although we must resist the temptation to read too deeply into the circumstances surrounding the production of this picture, the very fact of its existence is striking in itself, especially when compared with the more stately images of Armstrong fulfilling his political duties. We can speculate about the preparations for the photo: perhaps this was tour organizers juxtaposing Armstrong and descendants of “his

⁴⁶ Robert Raymond, *Black Star in the Wind*, (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1960), 220.

⁴⁷ Lucille and Louis with Ghana Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York, accessed October 15, 2021.

⁴⁸ Louis and Lucille with Governor of Gold Coast, Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York, accessed October 15, 2021.

⁴⁹ Louis, Lucille, and Employees in Accra, Ghana, Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York, accessed October 15, 2021.

ancestors,” perhaps it was Moxon and others putting Armstrong in his place and reminding him of his service, or perhaps it was Armstrong himself making a connection with ordinary Ghanians. Regardless, Armstrong’s extra-musical interactions provide an additional layer of complexity in understanding the multiple impacts of his time in the Gold Coast.

Throughout the tour, Louis’ social engagements ranged from more formal concert settings to jam sessions and dance parties, where the boundaries between audience and performer became blurred. On one afternoon, Armstrong and his All-Stars arrived at Achimota college to play for a group of local tribes, and to watch traditional dances and drumming performances. Although clearly only part of the event is captured, some of the footage made it into *Satchmo the Great*, and can give us a sense of the interactions between the American musicians and Ghanaians who were in attendance. The scene opens with presenter Beattie Casely-Hayford, who introduces Louis and the band, and offers a challenge: “He [Armstrong] invites anybody who feels that he can dance to that kind of music to come forward and dance.”⁵⁰ At the mention of “that kind of music,” the crowd laughs -- perhaps supportively, perhaps dismissively. Is “that kind of music” a representation of a collective experience, a force for building community and uniting under some shared cultural or racial identity? Louis Armstrong -- with a tie open around his neck and the confidence of a performer who has distilled the entertainment of an audience to an exact science -- walks into frame, with a racially integrated band. White drummer Barrett Deems sets up an eight bar introduction, and the group is in. Musically, the energy is high from the outset, but as the camera pans around and scans the various sections of the audience, we see mostly blank stares -- perhaps interest and focus, but conceivably confusion or boredom as well. Certainly, nobody seems especially too eager or prepared to get up and dance. There is not an immediate physical connection or engagement with the music. Eventually, one by one, various members of the audience get up and begin to

⁵⁰ Louis Armstrong, “Louis Armstrong and His All-Stars in Africa,” YouTube video, 4:13. July, 1956. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5w1IWvDIQxw>

participate. One lone elder takes the lead, and Louis encourages him with shouts of “Come on, Papa!” His wife, Lucille, joins in as well as vocalist Velma Middleton; the crowd grows and grows until eventually it seems as if the entire audience is on its feet and the frame is filled with dancing, Ghanaians and Americans alike. In the moment, at least for the musicians and the dancers, are the external politics of the situation even relevant to the actual experience? Can we allow for the possibility that a musical moment might transcend whatever political or racialized motivations allowed it to take place? Or is there no way to separate the enjoyment of this music from the success of an American imperialist cultural exchange?

The answers to those questions surely depend on the contingencies of a specific historical moment or exchange -- there will be different tensions present for various people in attendance at different times. As such, a possible dimension to the production *Satchmo the Great*, one that is more charitable towards Murrow’s ambitions and cultural awareness, is worth considering. Although he relies on racial tropes and stereotypes that were common at the time, it is perhaps reductive to argue that he understood and agreed with everything presented in the film. At least, it may be unfair to judge his racial politics by the current standards. But moreover, Murrow had made a career out of a quiet rejection of anti-communist hysteria; in the years leading up to *Satchmo the Great*, he had often fought against the Red Scare and supported others who did as well.⁵¹ Possibly, then, Murrow’s racially complicated narration was carefully orchestrated to pass state censorship -- he was targeting an American public, to be sure, but the United States government was an equally important audience. Musicologist Danielle Fosler-Lussier observes that during Murrow’s interview of Armstrong in the film, their “laughing together and their casual proximity within the camera’s frame offered a companionable feeling.”⁵² She

⁵¹ Edward R. Murrow, “See It Now,” YouTube video, 27:56. March 9, 1954. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8ljil075AY>

⁵² Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in Cold War Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 150.

continues, "It seems likely that Murrow intended this style of presentation to open the eyes of white Americans to Armstrong's charisma and, more broadly, to allow the home audience to meet African Americans through the medium of television."⁵³ So while Murrow's treatment of Black Africans remained condescending or infantilizing, his critical response to the national anti-communist hysteria, as well as his celebration of Armstrong's place in American culture should not be overlooked.

Nonetheless, the undeniable racial essentialism that was surely part of the calculus for the United States government was also relied upon by many jazz musicians and fans in search of a musical pan-African diasporic community as well. Robin D.G. Kelley has extended Benedict Anderson's influential analysis of nationalism and imagined communities to ideas of diaspora and transnational musical communities which are "to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." In this context, perhaps jazz -- or "that kind of music" -- was, for many, a way that Black Americans and Africans "claimed ownership of the symbols and practices of their own imagined community."⁵⁴ Countless musicians have argued that swing, the rhythmic pulse of jazz, is a distinctly Black (and often specifically African) phenomenon. The fact that Armstrong's audience so quickly took up the invitation (challenge?) of dancing to the music could then serve as evidence for both sides: that Ghana had potential to modernize and evolve in the model of a capitalist Western nation on one hand, possibly assimilating some kind of whiteness in the process, and on the other hand that the ability to dance and feel these rhythms is a uniquely African ability, one that is innately known and cannot be taught. Armstrong himself, having noticed a dancing woman with a striking family resemblance, reportedly took this as confirmation and felt certain that he had returned to the place that his ancestors were from.⁵⁵

⁵³ Fosler-Lussier, *Music in Cold War Democracy*, 151.

⁵⁴ Robin D.G. Kelley, "Dig They Freedom: Meditations on History and the Black Avant-Garde," *Lenox Avenue: A Journal of Interarts Inquiry* 3 (1997): 14

⁵⁵ Raymond, *Black Star in the Wind*, 241.

Armstrong's conviction that his ancestors had come from the very place to which he had returned is part of a broader set of ideas of diaspora and connection through music that were prevalent during this time, and have been for as long as jazz musicians have tried to explain the significance of the music. Jazz and Black American music is fundamentally music of protest and resistance, and given that one can trace musical characteristics of the music back through slavery and the middle passage, that is one way in which musicians have often understood a shared community and culture with the broader African diaspora. In one interview, drummer and activist Max Roach declared, "We are all blessed with African blood, which is what makes us different from everybody else... Our music is rooted deeply, rhythmically and harmonically, in African music. It's a part of us."⁵⁶ Jazz musicians and critics alike often make the observation -- reductionist, to be sure, but also instructive -- that jazz is a combination of European harmony and African rhythms; groove is one particular aspect of the music that is often referenced in particular in order to make this diasporic connection. Upon arriving in the Gold Coast, Armstrong's drummer Barrett Deems remarked, "This is drummin' country, see? Drums everywhere!"⁵⁷ And yet, not everybody felt this way. Although he was impressed with Louis' trumpet playing especially, Ghanaian highlife musician E.T. Mensah reported initially low enthusiasm for the All-Stars offerings: "When they started it was bad. The music was thin for us Africans and we wanted more rhythm, and so for about the first four numbers the audience would just look at them when they finished... Some of the audience was even going to sleep. It was Trummy Young, the trombonist who saved the situation. He played reclining on his back using his legs to move the slide and got a huge applause for this."⁵⁸

Although this is not the only or even most important criteria, the misunderstanding over rhythmic significance can provide some insight into the various ways that Black Americans and

⁵⁶ Taylor, *Notes and Tones*, 109.

⁵⁷ Raymond, *Black Star in the Wind*, 237.

⁵⁸ John Collins, *Highlife Giants* (Abuja: Cassava Republic Press, 2016), 68.

Black Africans musically identified and found community (or not) with one another. Although American jazz musicians found diasporic and transnational connections based in musical characteristics, it was not necessarily a reciprocal or bidirectional relationship -- rather, this kind of music was new and different for many residents of the Gold Coast, who were familiar with different melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. Certainly there was anti-colonial and racial solidarity present, but Anderson and Kelley's "imagined communities" changed a great deal as they left the imagination and became real, tangible and interpersonal relationships. If nothing else, this is a story and a process that did not involve the American state, or at least not as Eisenhower had intended. Although present in subtext, the role and agenda of the U.S. government are not ever mentioned in Murrow's documentary. The film's historical significance -- and, separately, the performances that it shows -- then becomes to an extent less about government conspiracy and imperialism, and much more about ideas of race, nationality, and improvisation.

Kelley also argues that tensions over various Black musical aesthetics, beginning during these years and truly flourishing during the 1960's, were symbolic of the idea that "there are 'black ways' of doing things, even if those ways are contested and the boundaries around what is "black" are fluid."⁵⁹ Even if these aesthetics Kelley references had not yet fully taken hold in the mainstream, the civil rights movement was already well under way. Those same political and musical ideas did not arise into a new decade out of thin air. Rather, they had been percolating in American (Black) culture for many years in various forms, and just because Armstrong engaged with them differently than more radical musicians like Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, it would be incorrect to view Louis' music and life as apolitical or devoid of involvement with the discourse of racial justice. Perhaps, then, despite the geographic and cultural gap, the dance party allowed Armstrong and his audience both the opportunity to

⁵⁹ Kelley, "Dig They Freedom: Meditations on History and the Black Avant-Garde," 15.

participate in some claim to this distinctly Black art form. Kwame Nkrumah, for instance, was notably moved by Armstrong's visit on the precipice of Ghanaian independence. Others who witnessed these concerts presumably felt similarly. Louis himself felt strongly about helping and furthering the anticolonial movement -- there is potentially a creation of musical community and togetherness that reflects the political ambitions of the time, and a more radical imagining of the word "freedom." Alternately, though, was Ambassador Satch seen here by some as a particularly American invention, brought upon rural Ghana with the full weight of American capitalist imperialism, and the laughter is an acknowledgment of understood otherness and separation across continental borders? There is no denying the hypocrisy and violence of the American state, from which it becomes difficult to run even in the most subversive of actions. And, of course, the United States eventually "won" the Cold War, insofar as there could be declared a victor. The Soviet Union fell, and America remains an imperialist power to this day. Despite the constant controversy surrounding American cultural propaganda both domestically and abroad, it would be hard to argue that it did not have a positive effect on general American Cold War efforts. It becomes slippery to pin down exactly to what extent the Jazz Ambassadors, and Black American music, aided or contradicted government agendas. Ultimately, of course, the music can be interpreted in as many different ways as there are people to listen to it. However, there is a key tension constantly present in this case, between the "Blackness" and "American-ness" in the umbrella term of Black American music.

After Louis' return to the United States, Eisenhower's State Department was so thrilled with the results of the tour that they immediately made plans to enlist Armstrong's services again, this time with the official designation of "Jazz Ambassador." Although this question could (and should) be asked about any musician who served as a Jazz Ambassador, it is impossible not to wonder: what was it about Louis Armstrong that made him a good or necessary choice to participate in these tours? Although his musical abilities were undeniable, his particular brand of celebrity and place in the American cultural pantheon made him a palatable choice for several

reasons. By this time, Armstrong biographer Terry Teachout writes, Louis had “settled comfortably into middle-aged renown... His latest movie role was a bandstand cameo opposite Jimmy Stewart in *The Glenn Miller Story*, a predictable biopic that did predictably well at the box office,” and he made an appearance as “the mystery guest on the popular prime-time TV game show *What’s My Line?*” in order to advertise the film.⁶⁰ Appearances like these positioned Armstrong as approving of the white expropriation of jazz by figures like Glenn Miller who popularized a form of swing that was derivative of Black American music but crucially lacking African American performers, sensibilities, or core improvisational forms.

Armstrong’s days of truly altering and inventing the foundations of the music were perhaps behind him. He was still making records and touring at an extremely high level, but he was no longer at the forefront of innovation -- the language and politics of bebop were in full swing by this point, and new musical icons like Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk were pushing boundaries and creating a new improvisational lexicon. This is not to say that everybody creating Black American music at that point (and ever since) did not owe nearly their entire musical existence to Armstrong’s contributions, but rather that his most influential musical output had already come. In fact, there was a substantial rift in philosophies of both music and life between Armstrong and newer prominent musicians. In contrast to Louis -- the consummate entertainer -- Miles Davis for example often performed an entire concert with his back turned to the audience. Dizzy Gillespie told *Time* magazine that the difference between his cohort of musicians and Armstrong’s peers was that “we study.”⁶¹ In an era of Cold War conformism and reactionary hatred towards radical or even vaguely left-wing politics, Armstrong’s more

⁶⁰ Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, 305.

⁶¹ Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, 306.

accommodationist musical approach may have been perceived as implying a more conservative political outlook as well.⁶²

Another important factor in Armstrong's ambassadorship was the fact of his international celebrity status across the world. His records were bought and sold and played on radio stations on every continent, and this was thanks in no small part to the *Voice of America* radio program, a propaganda campaign broadcast across the Iron Curtain and throughout the world, giving listeners a chance to experience the glory of American culture and western capitalist values. One crucial part of the *Voice of America* -- and a catalyst for the Jazz Ambassadors as a whole -- was Willis Conover, who led the *Music USA* hour for decades. His role in the global exportation of jazz was complicated. In many ways he legitimately exposed artists to thousands of listeners and gave audience to an art form that has always struggled for acknowledgment and financial support. And yet, Conover often leaned heavily on the comparison between jazz and democracy in an effort to demonstrate the virtues of American society in the Cold War. In Conover's 1996 *New York Times* obituary, Robert Thomas Jr. wrote, "In the long struggle between the forces of Communism and democracy, Mr. Conover, who went on the air in 1955 and continued broadcasting until a few months ago, proved more effective than a fleet of B-29's."⁶³ The result was that Armstrong and his horn were broadcast uninterrupted into homes across the world. Prior to his official employment by the State Department, over 5 hours of live interviews, monologues, and Armstrong records, were broadcast on *Voice of America*. Louis talked about his artistic process, his early musical life in New Orleans, and shared anecdotes about his various gigs and musical experiences. The stories were interspersed with some of

⁶² While there is plenty of compelling evidence for this point, the State Department's rationale is somewhat more complicated by the fact that they tapped Gillespie himself (and later, other more radical civil rights activists) to participate in the Jazz Ambassador tours as well.

⁶³ Maristella Feustle, "Willis Conover's Washington," *Current Research in Jazz*, accessed Nov. 3, 2021, <https://www.crj-online.org/v8/CRJ-Conover.php>

Armstrong's most popular hits from years prior, and so by the time Ambassador Satch made his official debut, audiences abroad were already well versed in his music.⁶⁴

And by the end of 1956, although Armstrong had undeniably been a household name for decades, he was not receiving the glowing attention from the press that had once accompanied every concert and recording. *New Yorker* critic Whitney Balliet said of Louis' 1957 Newport Jazz Festival performance that it "delivered, in a manner that was close to unintentional self-caricature, a program that has become as unalterable as the calendar."⁶⁵ Many other musicians, critics, and intellectuals lamented his willingness to play for segregated audiences, and what they perceived as an entertainer with certain Uncle Tom-like characteristics. In a short story, a James Baldwin character takes offense at being compared to Armstrong, rebutting, "No. I'm not talking about none of that old-time, down home crap." And the singer Billie Holiday even remarked, "God bless Louis Armstrong! He Toms from the heart."⁶⁶ Louis' cheery persona and method of public engagement with the political issues of the day made him perhaps more palatable than some other musicians for the goals of the State Department -- he was a figure that they could use to refute Soviet propaganda about racial discrimination and hierarchy, while remaining reasonably assured that he would not bring too much attention to the hypocrisy of the state. In some ways, Eisenhower's calculation that Armstrong's more traditional style of playing meant a less explicitly radical political framework was correct. These factors, among others, led the administration to enthusiastically begin plans that would send Armstrong to perform across eastern Europe and the Soviet bloc.

Initially, he was interested. But while plans were being made to send Louis behind the Iron Curtain to eastern Europe, the American social fabric changed drastically, and Armstrong's political views were forced into the spotlight. In the fall of 1957, nine African-American students

⁶⁴ Willis Conover Collection, Series 2, Sub-series 1, Box 2, 7-11, University of North Texas Music Library, Denton, TX.

⁶⁵ Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, 321.

⁶⁶ Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, 324.

enrolled at a previously all-white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas. A mob gathered, and Arkansas Governor Orville Faubus called in the National Guard to prevent the students from entering the school building. The nation waited anxiously for Eisenhower to respond, bringing to bear a central paradox of American racial politics during this time. Was the President of the United States, as Lisa Davenport says, “committed to democracy only in theory, rather than in actual practices?”⁶⁷ Black musicians and public intellectuals across the board strongly condemned the whole event, as well as government response but perhaps the most surprising voice in the mix was Armstrong’s, who was absolutely devastated. In an interview for the *New York Times* just days after the rioting, Armstrong said that he had canceled plans for his tour in the Soviet Union: “The way they are treating my people in the South, the Government can go to hell,” he said.⁶⁸ Louis continued, “It’s getting almost so bad, a colored man hasn’t got any country.”⁶⁹ The article quoted Louis describing “two-faced” Eisenhower as having “no guts,” before acknowledging how concerned the State Department was that this incident might become fodder for Soviet Propaganda.⁷⁰ The backlash had lasting effects on Armstrong’s performing schedule, and his willingness to play venues throughout the South as well. Upon receiving an invitation to play at the University of Arkansas in the following spring, Armstrong called Faubus an “uneducated plowboy,” saying, “I’m scared Faubus’ face might be there and he might hear a couple notes. He don’t deserve that.”⁷¹ After further protest and publicity, the invitation was later rescinded, which manager Joe Glaser called “a great moral victory” over

⁶⁷ Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy*, 62.

⁶⁸ "Louis Armstrong, Barring Soviet Tour, Denounces Eisenhower and Gov. Faubus," *New York Times*, Sep 19, 1957. <https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/louis-armstrong-barring-soviet-tour-denounces/docview/114345300/se-2?accountid=14194>.

⁶⁹ "Louis Armstrong, Barring Soviet Tour, Denounces Eisenhower and Gov. Faubus," *New York Times*, Sep 19, 1957.

⁷⁰ "Louis Armstrong, Barring Soviet Tour, Denounces Eisenhower and Gov. Faubus," *New York Times*, Sep 19, 1957.

⁷¹ Jet Magazine Interview with Armstrong on 10/24/57, Clippings File, Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York, accessed October 15, 2021. <https://collections.louisarmstronghouse.org/asset-detail/1096263>

Governor Faubus.⁷² Although this development in Armstrong's political evolution was perhaps surprising, it is not unexplainable -- having just returned from a Ghanaian country on the doorstep of independence, and the increasing pull of the American civil rights movement, Armstrong had a newly established context in which to place his political commentary.⁷³

And yet, after the initial anger over the Little Rock incident subsided, Armstrong revised his original sentiments. Just a week after Faubus' attempt to maintain segregated schools, President Eisenhower retaliated, ordering the National Guard to protect the students and ensure their ability to attend Little Rock Central High School.⁷⁴ Following a performance shortly following Eisenhower's change of heart, Armstrong told the *New York Times*, "Things are looking a lot better than they did before." He even described a telegram he had sent President Eisenhower, which reportedly said, "If you decide to walk into the schools with the colored kids, take me along with you daddy. God bless you."⁷⁵

Thus, Armstrong and the State Department could work together again: plans were made, schedules were set, and Louis left with his band for a 27-city tour of West and Central Africa in 1960, funded and supported by the Eisenhower administration. This tour was politically fraught in many ways, both similar and different from the Gold Coast experience just 4 years prior. The CIA's involvement with and orchestration of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba was nearly concurrent with this tour, and with Louis' individual performances in the Congo specifically.⁷⁶ The CIA station chief in the Congo at the time expressed confusion that Armstrong would play in Elisabethville, the capital of the Independent State of Katanga, which

⁷² Jet Magazine Interview with Armstrong on 10/31/57, Clippings File, Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York, accessed October 15, 2021. <https://collections.louisarmstronghouse.org/asset-detail/1096264>

⁷³ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 63.

⁷⁴ Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*, 154.

⁷⁵ "Musician Backs Move: Armstrong Lauds Eisenhower for Little Rock Action," *New York Times*, Sep 26, 1957.

<https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/musician-backs-move/docview/113956443/se-2?accountid=14194>.

⁷⁶ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 66.

the United States did not formally recognize.⁷⁷ There is not much that remains in the way of recorded concerts from that tour, but several instructive live performances were turned into albums. *The Katanga Concert* is a selection of songs from 4 days of live performances in Elisabethville, where Armstrong and the band made a stop during their tour. Penny Von Eschen and others have written compellingly about the bitter, devastating ironies of Armstrong's particularly positive set against the backdrop of such brutal American imperialist tactics which were happening near simultaneously. American policymakers had a vested interest in limiting Soviet access to uranium mines in the region, as well as preventing the Congo from developing communist ideologies under Lumumba that might harm their Cold War strategies.⁷⁸

However, despite such destructive neocolonial agendas, Armstrong's concerts can be read in a framework entirely distinct from American geopolitics or Cold War objectives. Not only would it be inaccurate to view Armstrong as merely an empty vessel for American state propaganda, but he was in some ways operating outside the context of that propaganda altogether. The community built between Louis and his audience fostered the expression of a more personal or idiosyncratic set of values than simply an acceptance or rejection of American foreign policy, although that was certainly present as well. It is unlikely, but impossible to know for sure, whether Armstrong was even aware of the CIA operations happening behind the scenes. Rather, during these concerts, he was doing partially what he had done his entire career: entertaining and trying to bring genuine connection through the music. He even said of the tour (although ironically, to be sure), "The reason I don't bother with politics is the words is so big. By the time they break them down to my size, the joke is over."⁷⁹

The set from the Katanga concert is in many ways a collection of Armstrong's greatest hits from the previous decades. The audience clearly recognizes many of the songs; they often

⁷⁷ Susan Williams, *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2021), 327.

⁷⁸ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 66.

⁷⁹ Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, 336.

cheer and applaud in the opening seconds of a tune as they collectively realize they are already familiar with it. The band plays standards from the Great American Songbook such as “La Vie en Rose” and “I Surrender Dear,” as well as tunes more closely associated with Louis himself -- “What a Wonderful World” and “When the Saints Go Marching In,” to name just two.⁸⁰ It is important to note that while Louis often ceded control of many aspects of his performing and touring life, one thing that he insisted on was complete authority over the band and set list.⁸¹ To read this concert in light of Cold War politics is illustrative, but Armstrong was also exercising agency against and beyond the state -- his performances were an attempt at a genuine relationship with those in attendance, for both political and musical reasons.

There are also numbers that might have internally frustrated those officials hoping for an entirely apolitical set. In the middle of the concert, Louis introduces singer Velma Middleton to thunderous applause. She and Armstrong perform a duet, a sultry walking ballad entitled, “That’s my desire.” The lyrics are not explicitly sexual, but the vocal twists and impromptu ad-libs certainly imply something other than chaste romance: Middleton begins, “To spend one night with you, in our rendezvous/ and reminisce with you, that’s my desire,” and Armstrong chimes in, “Mine too!” The audience cheers and laughs, and clearly there is a visual component to this performance that we are missing by having only the audio recording. When Middleton sings, “To hear you whisper love, just when it’s time to go,” Louis rejoins enthusiastically: “I’m ready to go now baby!” Perhaps the most sexual moment in the song comes as Armstrong takes his turn singing the melody -- in a low voice, pausing for effect, he grumbles, “I feel.... The touch of your chops, all wrapped up against mine... Very juicy there baby!” The word “chops” is accented and twisted around Armstrong’s trademark throaty vocal quality for the ultimate effect,

⁸⁰ Louis Armstrong, *The Katanga Concert*, Recorded 1960, Warner Jazz, compact disc.

⁸¹ Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, 329. Teachout describes Armstrong’s furious demeanor upon learning that plans for a birthday celebration in his honor included Ella Fitzgerald instead of the usual Velma Middleton. The show went on with Middleton and the rest of Armstrong’s chosen band, “leaving his mystified guest stars waiting vainly in the wings.”

and the crowd goes wild.⁸² While never addressed outright, there is a reworking of gendered and sexual expectations in this performance, at least a wink and a nod, if not explicit social commentary. By virtue of Armstrong's Uncle Tom associations, and Velma Middleton's connection with all the stereotypes of large Black women, they were both perceived largely as desexualized, undesirable performers, especially as they both reached middle age. These sexual overtones and the knowing glances we can imagine them sharing given the audience reaction, is equal parts a reclamation of their sexuality, as well as an attempt to lean into the joke of somebody like Louis Armstrong displaying such base desires.

This set of interactions between performer, audience, and even consumer of the produced record, can be usefully understood with historian Kevin Gaines' concept of "artistic othering," a process he finds specifically within Black American music of creating a relationship between performer, audience, and a long lineage of those who have played the music before. In his essay, "Artistic Otherings in Black Diaspora Musics: Preliminary Thoughts on Time, Culture, and Politics," Gaines observes "that rhythm based black diaspora musics, or artistic othering, bridge and ultimately transcend the distinction between time immediately experienced and a more global historicism. This in turn encourages us to regard the diaspora, a historical and geographical product of enslavement, colonization, and the dispersal of African-descended peoples, also as a symbolic space for culture building."⁸³ In this light, Armstrong's performances across Central and West Africa become not only a community building exercise across space, but through time as well. It is not nostalgia, but rather a "radical situatedness," combining the universality of musical expression with all the contradictions of this individual moment in history.⁸⁴

⁸² Louis Armstrong, *The Katanga Concert*, Recorded 1960, Warner Jazz, compact disc.

⁸³ Gaines, "Artistic Othering in Black American Musics," 218.

⁸⁴ Gaines, "Artistic Othering in Black American Musics," 205.

The Katanga concert and all its representative parts -- Armstrong's interplay with Velma Middleton, the response they elicit from the crowd, the musical interaction with the rhythm section -- all constitute the construction of particular social bonds and relationships. Gaines continues, "As part of an array of black diaspora cultural practices, artistic othering is the response, if not the antidote, to the social othering, namely, the oppressive commodification and objectification of African Americans within a U.S. society shaped by institutionalized racism..."⁸⁵ For many -- if not all -- Black American improvisers, this vernacular was a method of building resistance in the face of brutal Jim Crow violence, in addition to creating a community that, although bound in many ways by violence, existed above and separately from its relation to white perception. Furthermore, perhaps these performances fostered an ideal of freedom unbound from state policy or American values, coming instead from a more personal level of connection between musician and audience.

Throughout the existence of jazz and 20th century improvised music, there has generally been an emphasis placed on learning the history of the music and understanding the language that came before, so that one can make a meaningful contribution to the existing vocabulary. However, to learn and appreciate this evolution is also to create a community through time and space, linking an improviser with those who, over the course of decades, have allowed a particular musical moment to happen. Thus, a single performance -- Louis Armstrong's All-Stars in Accra, or Katanga, for example -- entails a creation of this community in real time, one that "involve[s] listeners in a contingent yet structured unfolding of sound and memory, making listeners witnesses to an open-ended dialogue between musicians." This process not only reconstructs racial and social configurations, but also "produces material and spiritual effects in those within if not beyond its circles" as well.⁸⁶ *The Katanga Concert* in particular is a fascinating moment through which to understand artistic othering, both because of the massive moment of

⁸⁵ Gaines, "Artistic Othering in Black American Musics," 205.

⁸⁶ Gaines, "Artistic Othering in Black American Musics," 205.

geopolitical and racial uncertainty in which it occurred, and the complex and often contradictory musical and political trajectory of Armstrong's entire career.

Later in the same year that Louis' tour had concluded, he and pianist Dave Brubeck, along with Brubeck's wife Lola, wrote and composed a musical describing, critiquing, and satirizing their participation in the Jazz Ambassadors. Titled *The Real Ambassadors*, Lola's lyrics included such pithy phrases as "The State Department has discovered jazz/ It reaches folks like nothing ever has... No commodity is quite so strange/ As this thing called cultural exchange."⁸⁷ And in a later song called, "Remember Who You Are," Armstrong proclaims, "Remember who you are and what you represent/ Jelly Roll and Basie helped us to invent/ A weapon like no other nation has/ Especially the Russians can't claim jazz."⁸⁸ Throughout, Louis and the Brubecks expose the hypocrisy and evident contradictions within the notion that the American state could claim any ownership of the music that they used to represent the nation. The curiosity -- and arguably, violence -- of repurposing a Black art form for imperialist gain, was made explicit and impossible to ignore. This was an especially meaningful moment for Armstrong personally as well: finally, after years of decades of attacks levied at Armstrong's political leanings and participation, he seized the chance to articulate his relationship with the Jazz Ambassadors on his own terms.⁸⁹

And yet as we have seen, the mere fact of governmental hypocrisy is not necessarily the fullest picture of these historical events. It would be a disservice to Louis Armstrong to view his music only in the context of Cold War racism. To be sure, there is a complex relationship with race and resistance that is constantly and unavoidably present, but Armstrong himself thought more broadly of his music than that, and as listeners we have a similar obligation. To have one's cultural output evaluated on its aesthetic merit, without being viewed entirely in relation to

⁸⁷ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 81.

⁸⁸ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 84.

⁸⁹ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 89.

categories of race or gender, is a privilege often not afforded to Black artists, or anybody so closely associated with movements for racial or social equality. We often go looking for commentary through a particular lens that defines our expectations of an artist's work, so that even a departure from that framework is seen as a subversion in relation to the norm, rather than a reflection of a more nuanced set of ideas. Thus, while it is crucial to situate Louis' performances within American Cold War popular culture, we owe it to him to understand these concerts more expansively, incorporating a more personal kind of politics that spans continents and generations, stretching far beyond the physical space and discrete time period in which it occurred.

There is great significance in the ways that jazz and Black American music specifically have historically been created, distributed, and consumed that exist not only in opposition to but also beyond the state. The various meanings that were made of these experiences by Louis Armstrong, by American jazz aficionados, and by West African citizens who were being exposed to the music for the first or the hundredth time involved changing and competing definitions of blackness, of nationality, and of conceptions of freedom and democracy. While it is necessary to engage with newspaper reports, concert reviews, and other public sentiment and responses to these tours, we ultimately cannot make sense of the multiple historical implications without grappling with the music itself. Examining this evidence concretely shows these many actors wrestling with ideas about transnational community, ancestry, and racial identity, all within the music produced by the tenuous relationship between Black and American identities. Of course, we can merely guess at the intentions and internal dialogue of Louis or Murrow or anyone else, but only through Armstrong's horn can we really begin to understand the phenomenon of "Ambassador Satch."

Bibliography

"About." Jazz at Lincoln Center. Accessed November 3, 2021, <https://www.jazz.org/about/>.

Armstrong, Louis. *Ambassador Satch*. Recorded 1955. Columbia, vinyl LP.

Armstrong, Louis. "Louis Armstrong and His All-Stars in Africa." YouTube video, 4:13. July, 1956. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5w1IWvDIQxw>

Armstrong, Louis. *The Katanga Concert*. Recorded 1960. Warner Jazz, compact disc.

Belair Jr., Felix. Special to The New York Times. "United States has Secret Sonic Weapon--Jazz: SECRET WEAPON: A LONG BLUE NOTE Europe Falls Captive as Crowds Riot to Hear Dixieland but Vast Propaganda Value is a Secret to Washington, Too." *New York Times* (New York, NY), Nov. 6, 1955. <https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/united-states-has-secret-sonic-weapon-jazz/docview/113371861/se-2?accountid=14194>.

Christmas Card sent to Louis Armstrong from Nana Dimmy. Louis Armstrong House Museum. Queens, New York. Accessed October 15, 2021.

Jack Bradley Collection. Manuscript Collection. Louis Armstrong House. Queens, NY.

Jef Magazine Interview with Armstrong on 10/24/57. Clippings File, Louis Armstrong House Museum. Queens, New York. Accessed October 15, 2021. <https://collections.louisarmstronghouse.org/asset-detail/1096263>

Jef Magazine Interview with Armstrong on 10/31/57. Clippings File, Louis Armstrong House Museum. Queens, New York. Accessed October 15, 2021. <https://collections.louisarmstronghouse.org/asset-detail/1096264>

Louis and Lucille with Governor of Gold Coast. Louis Armstrong House Museum. Queens, New York. Accessed October 15, 2021.

Louis, Lucille, and Employees in Accra, Ghana. Louis Armstrong House Museum. Queens, New York. Accessed October 15, 2021.

Lucille and Louis with Ghana Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah. Louis Armstrong House Museum. Queens, New York. Accessed October 15, 2021.

"Louis Armstrong, Barring Soviet Tour, Denounces Eisenhower and Gov. Faubus." *New York Times* (New York, NY), Sep. 19, 1957. <https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/louis-armstrong-barring-soviet-tour-denounces/docview/114345300/se-2?accountid=14194>.

"Mob Louis Armstrong at Airport in Ghana." *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Oct. 14, 1960. <https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/mob-louis-armstrong-at-airport-ghana/docview/182676507/se-2?accountid=14194>.

Murrow, Edward R., dir. *Satchmo the Great*. 1957, New York, NY: Youtube, 2021.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHty0Yyw-JE>

Murrow, Edward R. "See It Now." YouTube video, 27:56. March 9, 1954.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8ljl075AY>

"Musician Backs Move: Armstrong Lauds Eisenhower for Little Rock Action." *New York Times* (New York, NY), Sep. 26, 1957.
<https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/musician-backs-move/docview/113956443/se-2?accountid=14194>.

Nina Simone. *Nina Simone: A Historical Perspective*. By Peter Rodis. Youtube video, 1:56. 1970.

Prime Minister of the Gold Coast (soon to be Ghana) Kwame Nkrumah hosts Louis and Lucille Armstrong. Louis Armstrong House Museum. Queens, New York. Accessed October 15, 2021.
<https://collections.louisarmstronghouse.org/asset-detail/1044820>

Taylor, Art. *Notes and Tones*. New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1977.

Willis Conover Collection. Series 2, Sub-series 1, Box 2, 7-11. University of North Texas Music Library. Denton, TX.

•

Cole, Catherine. *Ghana's Concert Party Theatre*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Collins, John. *Highlife Giants*. Abuja, Nigeria: Cassava Republic Press, 2016.

Davenport, Lisa. *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009.

Feustle, Maristella. "Willis Conover's Washington." *Current Research in Jazz*. Accessed Nov. 3, 2021.
<https://www.crj-online.org/v8/CRJ-Conover.php>

Fosler-Lussier, Danielle. *Music in Cold War Democracy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015.

Gaines, Kevin. "Artistic Othering in Black Diaspora Musics: Preliminary Thoughts on Time, Culture, and Politics," in *Uptown Conversations*. Edited by Robert O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Kelley, Robin D.G. "Dig They Freedom: Meditations on History and the Black Avant-Garde." *Lenox Avenue: A Journal of Interarts Inquiry* 3 (1997)

Kuzick, Peter J., and Gilbert, James Burkhart. *Rethinking Cold War Culture*. Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001.

O'Meally, Robert G. "Checking Our Balances: Louis Armstrong, Ralph Ellison, and Betty Boop," in *Uptown Conversations*. Edited by Robert O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Phillips, Victoria. *Martha Graham's Cold War: The Dance of American Diplomacy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Saul, Scott. *Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Savage, Joel. "My Friend Ajax Bukana." Last modified April 14, 2018, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/847475/my-friend-ajax-bukana.html>.

Teachout, Terry. *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2009.

Von Eschen, Penny. *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Whitfield, Stephen J. *The Culture of the Cold War*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Williams, Susan. *White Malice: The CIA and the Covert Recolonization of Africa*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, 2021.