

Celebrate Black History Month

Miami's unique charm stems from being rich in culture. Check out this exhibit to learn about the African diaspora that contributed to the building and success of the city.



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at Expel

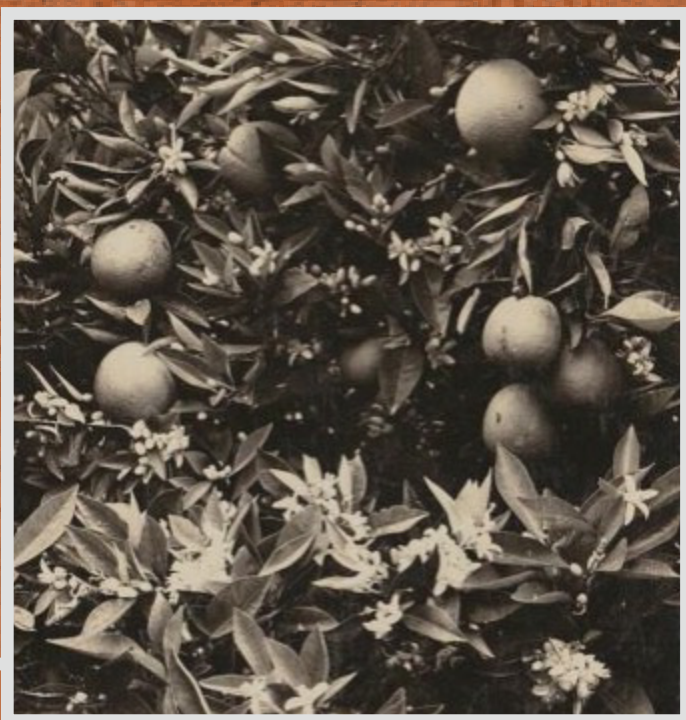
Key West was a significant port city and trade route to the Caribbean. There was a large population of white Bahamians, who migrated after the 1834 British emancipation of the enslaved population, and black Bahamians, followed the growing seafaring-related industries.

In 1870's the first wave of immigration into Coconut Grove started, with most coming from NE United States and whites from the Bahamas. By the 1890s, Bahamians, especially **Black Bahamians**, started moving north to Miami. When US emancipation of slaves happened in 1865, Blacks from north Florida, Georgia, and Alabama moved to Miami for work and built the city's physical infrastructure alongside black Bahamians.

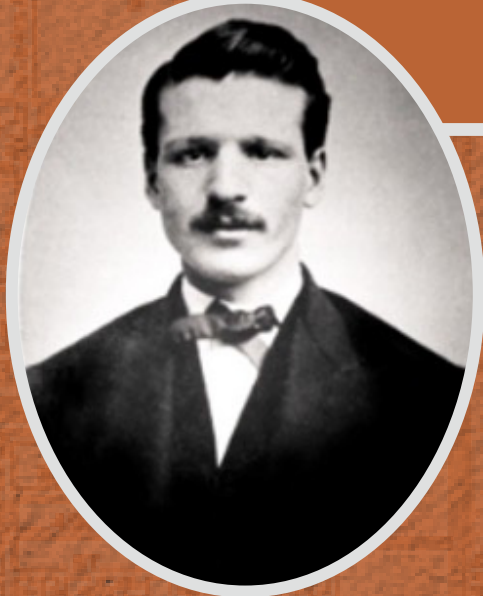
The **Bay View Inn**, built in 1882 was the first hotel in Coconut Grove and was mostly staffed by black Bahamians.



In the early 1880s, what we know as **Miami Beach** was simply a barrier island, featuring swarms of mosquitoes, acres of sand spurs and a shore dominated by thick mangrove growth. However many **Native Americans** inhabited this land in the early 1800s including the Tequesta people and Seminoles.



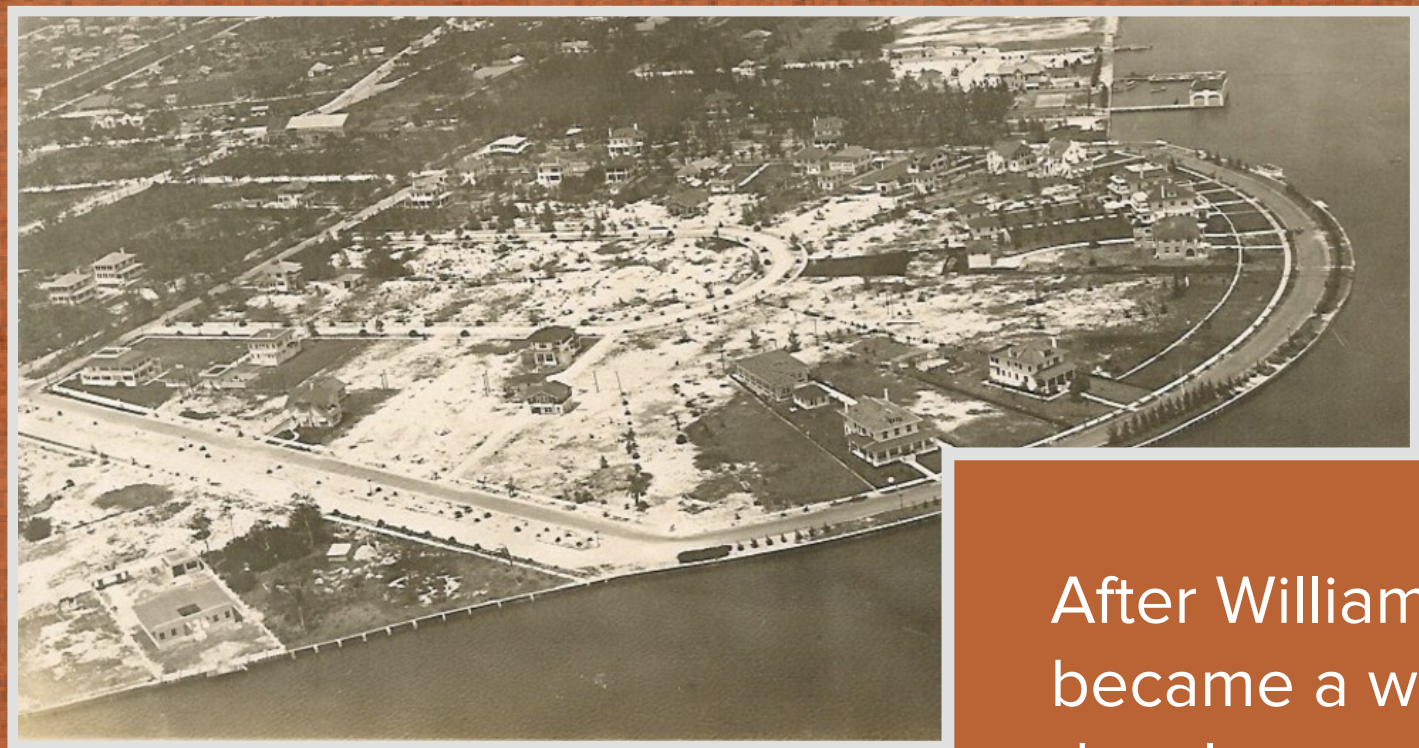
William and Mary Brickell, a wealthy couple formerly living in Ohio, moved to Miami in 1871 and was Julia Tuttle's neighbor on the south side of the Miami River. They built a sprawling home called the **Brickell Mansion**. The pioneering entrepreneur William and his wife Mary, a bright and bold investor, bought 6,427 acres of land extending from Coconut Grove to Palm Beach. She also knew that the railroad was pivotal to continue development of Miami. Along with Tuttle, she gave Flagler the rights to a strip of land from Palm Beach to Miami to bring the railroad to Miami, putting it on the map for trade and tourism.



In 1891 **Julia Tuttle**, a wealthy widow from Ohio, moved to the shores of Biscayne Bay and Miami River (today considered the heart of Downtown Miami). In addition to inherited land, she purchased a large citrus plantation on 640 acres. The house, **Fort Dallas**, had two previous occupants, the owner of a slave plantation and then used as an officers quarters during the Seminole wars.

She envisioned Miami as a gateway for international trade and development. With only 900 residents, she realized the area would never prosper unless it was reached by the railroads. She began an aggressive campaign to convince Henry Flagler, founder of the Florida East Coastal Railway, that the railroad tracks should continue to Fort Dallas. Although he wasn't convinced immediately, in 1894 she persuaded him after the Great Freeze. Most of Florida's orange groves were wiped out except the area around Miami River. Tuttle sent Flagler a **fragrant branch of orange blossoms** proving Miami would be spared such devastation. Flagler then agreed to extend the railroad to Miami.

Miami history



After William Brickell passed, Mary Brickell became a well known real estate developer, changing the landscape of the neighborhood south of Downtown Miami.

She built what became **Miami's Millionaire Row** in the early 1900s.



Unfortunately Flagler exploited two labor systems that blanked the South: **convict leasing and debt peonage**, both targeted African Americans who built his railroad tracks and hotel.

Flagler's **Royal Palm Hotel**, was Miami's first luxury hotel. During the **clearing**, there was a large mound that needed to be flattened. As they began to level the mound they found 50-60 skulls and other human remains. They were later determined to be the burial ground for the Tequesta people, a native American tribe. The remains were destroyed or given away.

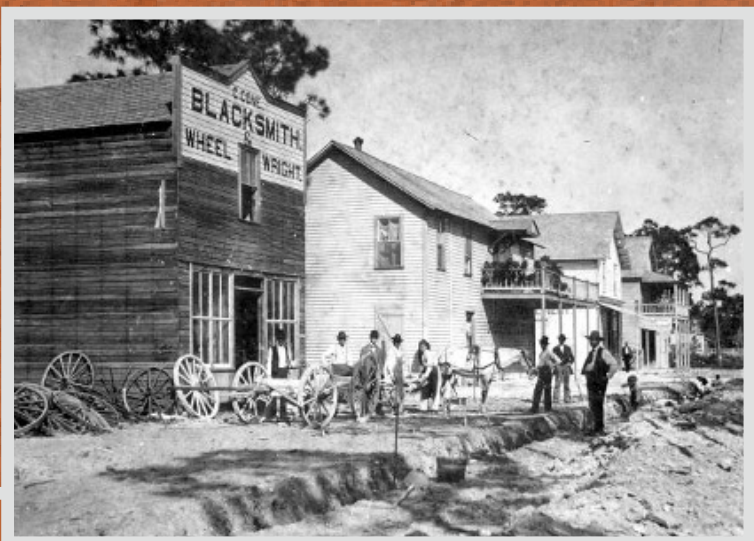


Today Miami is vibrant city and becoming one of the largest international business hubs in the world. Each neighborhood reflects its diverse communities and adds to the character of the Miami.

A view of downtown Miami where Julia Tuttle and the Brickell estate sat.



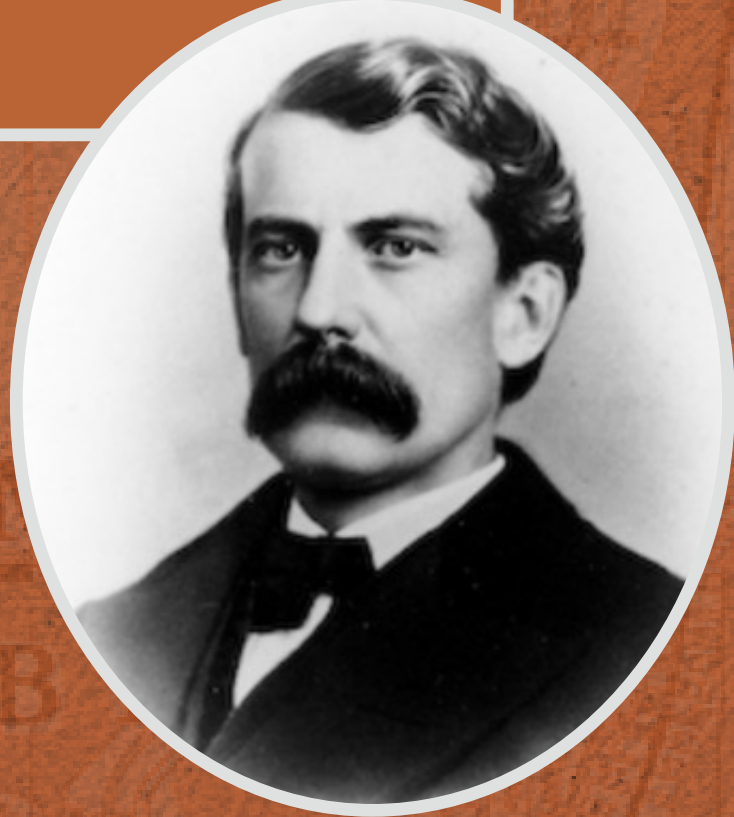
The interstate 195 over the Biscayne Bay named Julia Tuttle causeway.



Henry Morrison Flagler was an American industrialist from New York. He founded and operated several business, including Standard Oil, along with John D. Rockefeller, and the **Florida East Coast Railway**. He was also a key figure in the development of the Atlantic Coast of Florida.

Once Julia Tuttle and Mary Brickell deeded him the land, he began laying tracks and the **first train arrived** in the area on April 22, 1896.

When the town incorporated later in 1896, Flagler **dredged a channel, built streets, instituted the first water** and power systems, and financed the town's first newspaper, the Metropolis.



After emancipation, African Americans enjoyed a period when they were allowed to vote, actively participate in the political process, acquire the land of former owners, seek their own employment, and use public accommodations.

The **Lobby Pool Hall** is where Miami was incorporated in 1896. Of the 368 men who did cast their vote, 162 were the city's Black pioneers, many of whom worked for Flagler clearing the streets and leveling the grounds for the Royal Palm Hotel. Black men, formerly enslaved, were used as voters since the required number of white male registered voters did not participate.

After that, opponents of progress, soon rallied against the former slaves' freedom and began to find means for eroding the gains for which many had shed their blood.

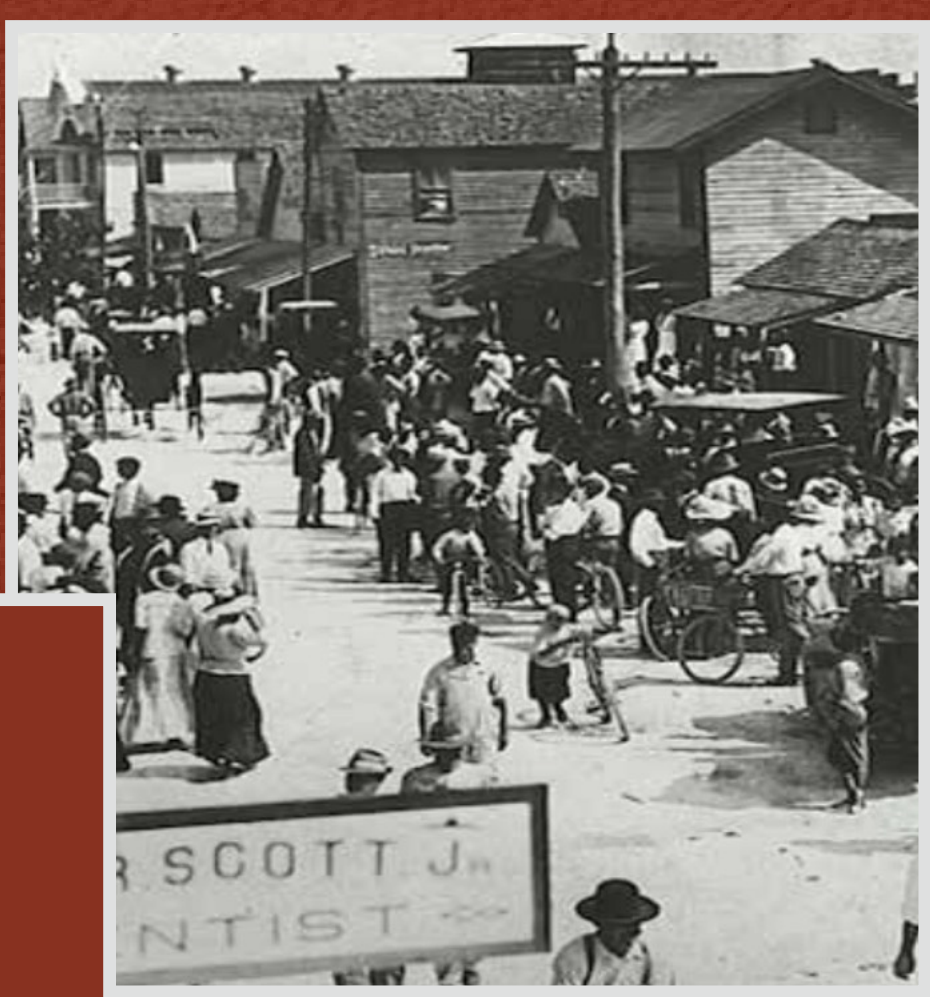


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Named **Color Town** in 1899, was originally designated by railroad magnate, Henry Flagler, for Miami's Black laborers. The town was built by the same black laborers who also helped build the rest of Miami and the county's section of the Florida East Coast Railway.

As in most Southern cities around the turn of the century, Blacks were not allowed to live in the same neighborhoods as whites. Black Code along with Jim Crow laws, forced them to build their homes on the less desirable side of Flagler's new railroad tracks.

Colored Town, today known as Overtown, was deprived of services, including paved streets, sewage systems, and other infrastructure. The town became city blocks built up mostly with **shotgun shacks and slum housing**.



Over time the people developed a thriving community of their own. In spite of limitations, **Colored Town** grew and developed into a vibrant community. Schools, churches and businesses flourished. Most of the goods and services in the community were provided by the residents.

As early as 1904, the official City of Miami directory listed businesses owned and operated by Black people, including general goods and services, a medical doctor, 26 laundresses, and several hundred laborers.

Dana A. Dorsey, better known as D.A. Dorsey, was a Georgia man who came to Miami in 1896 to work as a carpenter on Flagler's railroad. He saw a need among fellow workers for housing, so he got into real estate. Dorsey purchased land in Colored Town and redeveloped it into **affordable housing**.

Through years of development, reinvestment and entrepreneurship, Dorsey became Miami's first Black millionaire. Dorsey held property in Dade and Broward counties, Cuba and the Bahamas. He built the Dorsey Hotel, the first Black-owned hotel in the city that burned down in 1891, and founded the first Black bank. Dorsey even bought and sold present-day Fisher Island.

The **Dorsey House** is now a historical landmark.



Despite segregation, between 1904-40s early Colored Town prospered in many ways. By the 1920's, the name of the town changed to Overtown. All the performers would say "I'm headed over town" to party and sleep on the other side of the railroad tracks after performing in the segregated nightclubs in Miami Beach. Hence the name changed to Overtown.

The economic and social isolation created a cohesive community where a real Black middle class arose, and some Overtown Black business owners became relatively wealthy. It was a self-sustaining community filled with hotels, **shops, groceries**, law offices, and a **hospital**.

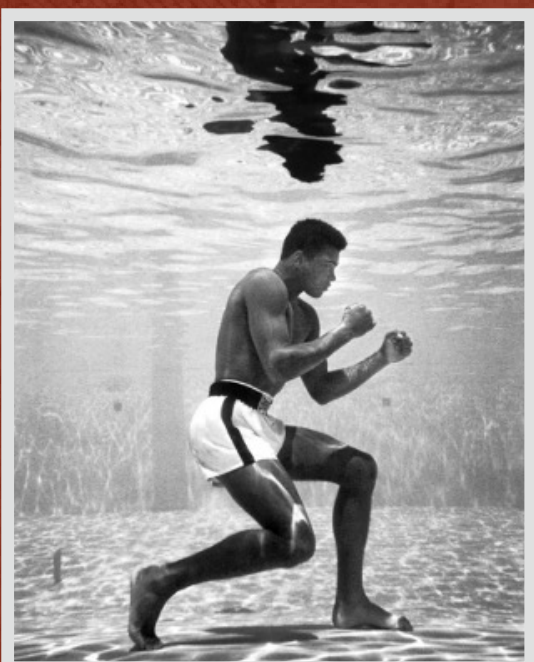
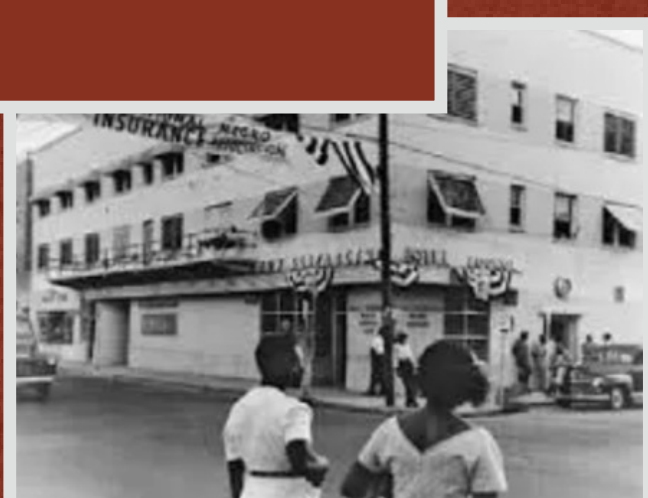


Colored Town/ Overtown



Overtown's 2nd Avenue Corridor of music halls, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment venues came to be known as 'Little Broadway'. On this street, you'd find Rockland Palace, **The Ritz Theater, The Harlem Square Club, The Calvert Club and The Mary Elizabeth Hotel & Birdland Fiesta**.

Mary Elizabeth Hotel was built in 1921 by Dr. William B. Sawyer. The hotel was operated by his wife, Alberta Sawyer. The Mary Elizabeth was the tallest building in Overtown at the time with ninety rooms. It was considered a well-equipped edifice with elevator service and an inter-communication system that connected the rooms to the desk clerk in the lobby. The hotel had private bathroom facilities available for thirty-seven of the rooms. There were two lounges: the Flamingo Room and the Zebra Lounge. Often frequented by W.E.B. DuBois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Thurgood Marshall, and Adam Clayton Powell.



The Lyric Theater opened in 1931 and became a major entertainment center for blacks in Miami. It also served the community as a movie and vaudeville theater for almost fifty years.

The **Sir John Hotel** was originally built as the Lord Calvert Hotel in 1951. The hotel's bustling pool was a popular hangout for visiting artists and prominent Black leaders, and the scene of **Muhammad Ali's** most famous posed photo.



Icons like boxer **Joe Louis**, and singer/actress **Josephine Baker**, mingled in Overtown. The community hosted many black travelers and legends of its day including comedian Redd Foxx, jazz icon Duke Ellington, scholar W.E.B. DuBois, author Zora Neale Hurston, among others.



Overtown flourished until the 1960's when two new highways - **I-95 and I-395** - were built right over the heart of the thriving neighborhood. The highway displaced over 15,000 people. Systematic isolation and economic marginalization resulted in dozens of business closures and the **influx of poverty** and its related issues.



Today Overtown is in the midst of being redeveloped. The bridge is being replaced with higher, thinner columns crossing Overtown, opening up the dark, underutilized space. This project coincides with a revitalization of the neighborhood that is underway. Community leaders are working to ensure that Overtown's Black history and culture are preserved in the process.



Restaurants are moving into the area, like the **Red Rooster**, owned by famed chef Marcus Samuelsson, and the newly renovated **Lyric Theater**, once the epicenter of Miami's Little Broadway, lives on today as one of the crown jewels of Historic Overtown.



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La Pequeña Habana "Little Havana" got its name from the hundreds of thousands of Cubans who fled their homeland between the late 1950s and early 1970s and settled in what originally was a lower-middle-class Southern and Jewish neighborhood. By the early 1970s, the Cubans had changed the landscape. Little Havana became the social, economic and political center for Cuban exiles. Thousands of Cuban small businesses lined **Calle Ocho** - 8th Street.



In the 1959 the **first wave of Cubans** arrived in Miami. They were supporters of the ousted Fulgencio Batista. They were soon followed by upper and middle class Cubans fearing imprisonment, violence, or worse, leaving all of their possessions behind. Most did not expect exile to last long, and believed Cuba would soon be liberated. They chose Miami because of its close proximity to Cuba and its similar climate.

The next wave of Cubans fled to Miami between 1965 and 1973, as Fidel Castro aligned himself with communist Soviet policies. This next wave was known as the **Freedom Flights** and they were the middle and lower classes, and skilled labor. Many of them were relatives of those who came over previously.

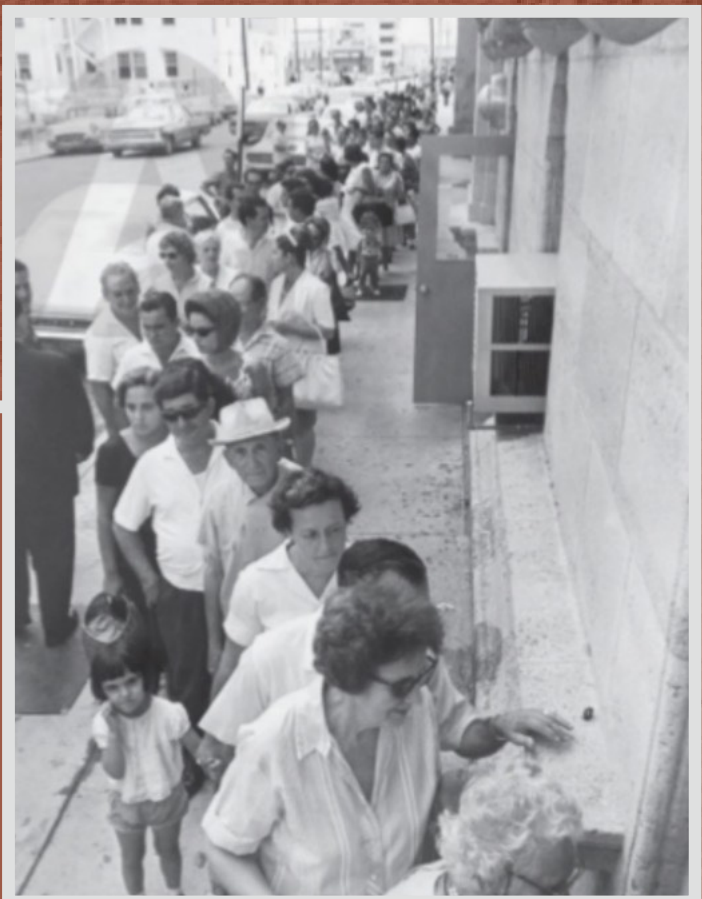


The bipartisan Cuban Adjustment Act, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on November 2, 1966, granted work authorization permits and lawful permanent residency (green card status) to any Cuban native or citizen who settled in the United States for at least one year.

The Cuban Refugee Center, inside the Freedom Tower, helped Cubans with everything from health care to housing, finances, and education (**English classes and training** to obtain employment.) The University of Miami graduated 2,346 **Cuban doctors** between 1961 and 1975.



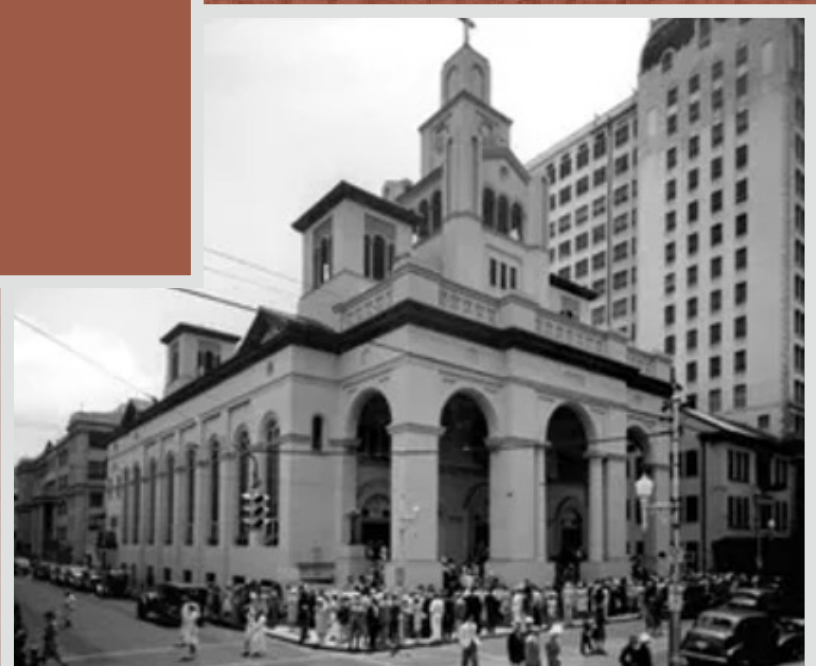
In July 1962, the federal government, facing overwhelming numbers of refugees, leased the Miami News Tower's four main floors to provide assistance to refugees. Later, it got a new name: **Freedom Tower or "El Refugio"**. Over the next 12 years, **650,000 refugees** passed through its doors. The U.S. Department of the Interior even dubbed the building the "Ellis Island of the South."



Cubans wanted to settle in pedestrian-friendly areas. Downtown Miami and its adjacent neighborhoods offered a concentrated infrastructure with churches, hospitals, and entertainment venues. This sector offered affordable real estate and many took residence along Flagler street, and **opened businesses** on 8th Street - giving way to the neighborhood's most famed road: Calle Ocho.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, **Gesu Church** was a center of peace for those Cubans that had lost everything. Gesu Elementary School educated Cuban children that later went on to college.

Films at the **Tower Theater** served not only as entertainment, but as an introduction to American culture. The theater altered its programming to feature English-language films with Spanish subtitles, and eventually Spanish-language films.



The 3rd wave of Cuban immigrants came to Miami in 1980. After a bus crashed the gates of a Peruvian Embassy in Havana, Castro removed the security post and thousand of Cubans rushed to the **Maríel Harbor**. He allowed 125,000 Cubans to board a decrepit fleet of boats, know as the Mariel Boatlift. This new group of Cubans were unskilled and uneducated but not all criminals as reported by the media.

The 4th and last wave of Cubans to immigrate, were called **Balseros (rafters) or the Cuban rafter crisis**. Once the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the Cuban economy was destroyed. Again, Fidel let any who wanted to leave Cuba go.

This new group of Cubans were uneducated, unskilled, didn't speak English and many were non-white. They found it hard to find jobs and even fit into their own Cuban communities.



Little Havana is the place to indulge in Cuban fare, **a strong cafecito**, and **a good Cuban cigar**. The **Tower Theater** was restored in 1994 and holds multicultural films, live performances, and cultural and educational programs.



Little Havana



Little Havana is still the thriving and lively mecca of Hispanic culture with its colorful streets. It's a place that's wholly separate from the lavish South Beach hotels or modern downtown high-rises. In 2017, Little Havana was declared a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, an important step in safeguarding the area's historical and cultural significance. Much of it is concentrated on **Calle Ocho** within four blocks and it even has its own **Walk of Fame** celebrating Cuban celebrities.



Over time Little Havana has still been home to a large Hispanic population, but it's expanded beyond Cuban Americans to immigrants from other parts of the Caribbean and Central America, including a growing Nicaraguan and Honduran population.



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From 1950 until mid 80's, Haiti was led by a dictator, **François Duvalier**, that ruled by brutality and force. In addition to creating a government death squad, he used his status as a practitioner of voodoo to inspire fear by taking advantage of Haitians deep religious beliefs.

The first Haitians arrived by boat to Miami in 1963. By 1970's, the first mass arrivals of Haitian refugees flee to South Florida. By 1980's over 50,000 Haitians migrated to Miami. They were disparagingly referred to as **"Haitian boat people."**



In 1973, **Viter Juste**, an immigrant from Haiti, settled in the Miami area. He is considered the father of Little Haiti ensuring the welfare of Haitians in Miami was priority.

In 1974 he met with the Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh of the Roman Catholic Church in effort to help the refugees. This meeting resulted in the creation of the Haitian-American Community Association of Dade, the first social services organization founded to cater to the needs of the Haitians in Miami. This launched his career as an advocate and activist helping Haitians learn English, get jobs, and apply for asylum.

In the 1980's, Juste wrote an article in the Miami Herald and called the area from NW 54th St. to NW 62nd St. "Little Port-au-Prince". The Herald thought the name was too long and changed it to Little Haiti and the name stuck.

Little Haiti

Juste was the first person in Miami to establish a French-language weekly newspaper targeted to Haitian Americans. His newspaper, which consisted of twelve pages, cost readers just 25 cents. Juste also opened **Les Cousins Records** and Books, which was the first store in Miami to sell Haitian Creole and Frans-language music and books.

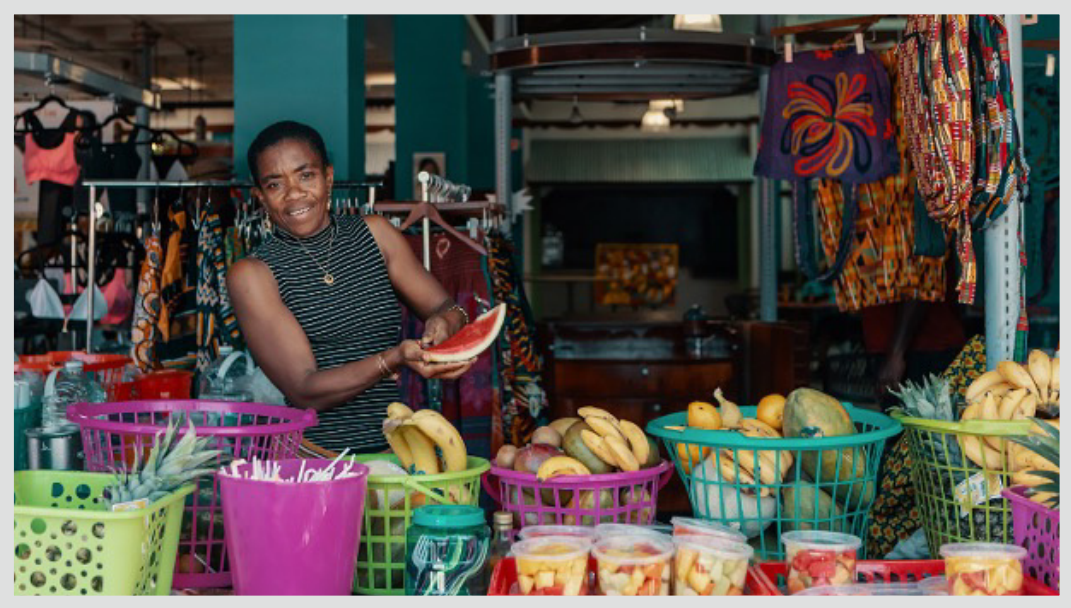


Haitians represented a triple minority in Miami: Black, immigrants, and linguistically isolated, as the majority of Haitians spoke Kreyòl, their native language. Haitians continued to find it challenging to secure stable employment throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Those who did find employment held low-level jobs and didn't often advance in the workplace. Unfortunately Haitians didn't receive the same level of access and opportunities as the Cubans, causing many **protests**.



Little Haiti remains an iconic ethnic enclave, a point of pride for the greater Haitian population as a whole that's become firmly ingrained in Miami's rich cultural tapestry. The area is characterized by its French-Creole designations, with its street life, restaurants, art galleries, dance, music, theatre performances, family owned enterprises, and other cultural activities.

Miami is food, which serves as a powerful symbol of Haitian identity and perseverance. The growth of the food community also parallels the strides it's made in overcoming barriers to inclusion.



Little Haiti's **Caribbean Market** is a replica of Haiti's famous iron market, gingerbread architecture of Port-Au-Prince.

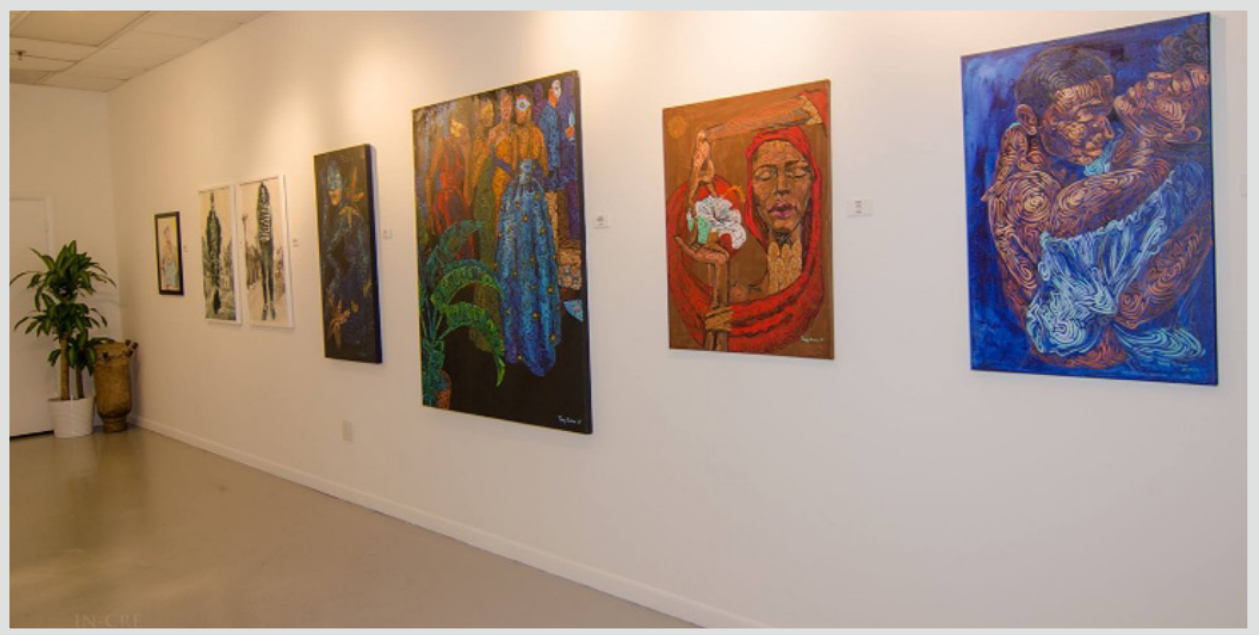
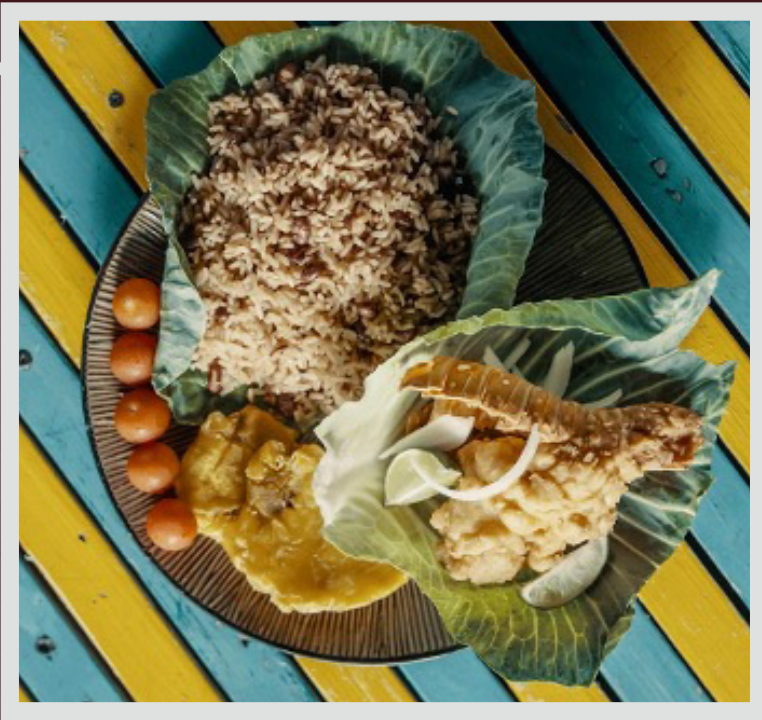
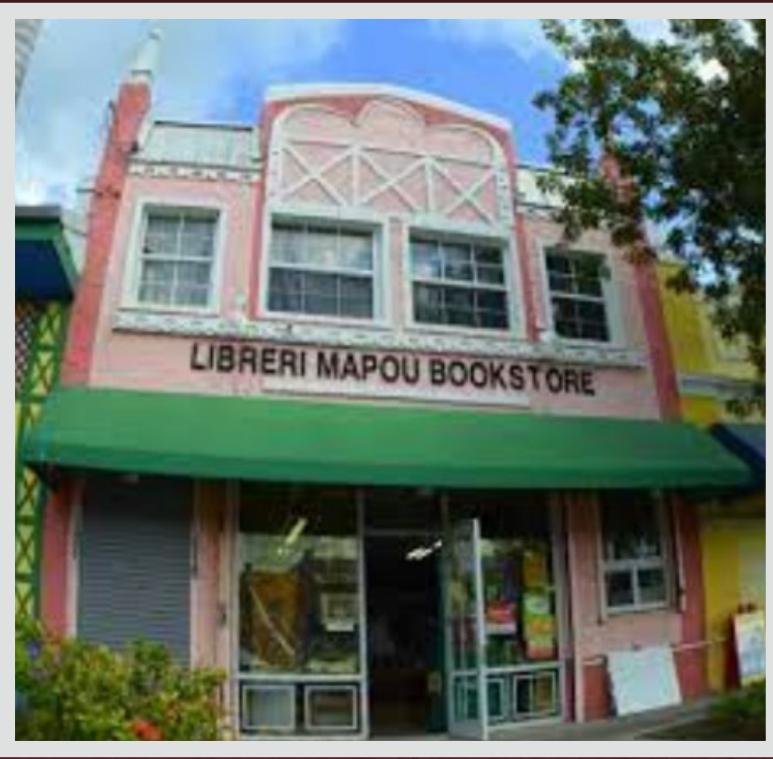
Local artisans sell their goods during special events. Monthly they host Sounds of Little Haiti, an Afro-Caribbean party where all are welcome to immerse themselves in Haitian culture through live music, transporting visitors to the streets of Port-au-Prince.



Librerì Mapou is recognized as a Haitian cultural institution by the Library of Congress, and has one of the largest collections of Haitian literature, poetry, and history books outside of Haiti.

Haitian Heritage Museum highlights and preserves Haiti's rich cultural heritage through art, historical artifacts, music, film and literary works.

Chef Creole, a restaurant by Chef Wilkinson "Ken" Sejour, features signature **Haitian recipes** with a focus on seafood.



Serge Toussaint is a painter renowned for his many murals in the Little Haiti district through which he represents the culture and history of his native island. He is best known for his mural of the **Heat** basketball team.



Notre Dame D'Haiti Catholic Church was founded in 1981. It sits in the heart of Little Haiti and services the largest Haitian community. The church has gained international recognition as one of the most important agencies serving the Haitian community, especially for developing, promoting, and administering programs that assist Haitian refugees to become self-sufficient.



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In the 1890s, Jews from Russia and Romania began migrating to the States to either New York or South Florida. When Miami was incorporated in 1896, 25 of the residents who voted for incorporation were Jewish. Among them was **Isidor Cohen**, the first documented Jewish resident of Miami. He lived in Miami's first prominent Jewish community, Shenandoah, near today's Little Havana.

Another couple, **Joe and Jenny Weiss** moved to the southern end of Miami Beach to run a "snack bar" in 1913. A few years later they opened Joe's Stone Crab Shack.

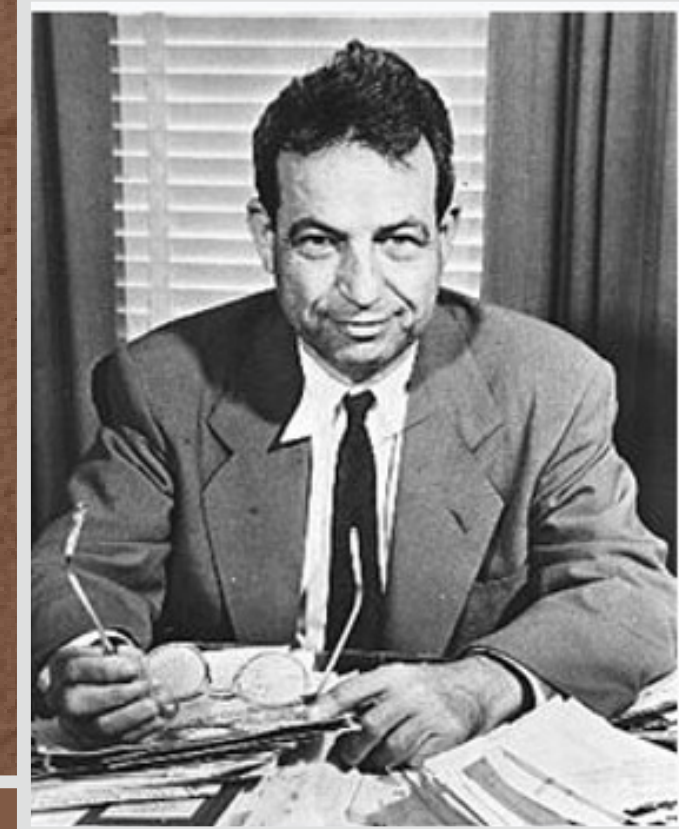


By 1912, the Jewish community was around 35 people and they began to establish their first congregation known as Miami's Pioneer Synagogue and it is Miami's oldest congregation. In 1920 they finally found a home in downtown Miami, **Beth David Congregation**.



The 1930s brought new residents growing the community to 4,500 and satellite communities emerged. While discrimination had by no means vanished, conditions were improving. This allowed Jews to participate in growing industries like hotel, banking and construction.

Henry Hohauser, a New York architect moved to Miami in 1930s and designed over one hundred Miami Beach buildings. He is known for his Art Deco architecture stylings, and was ranked as one of the 100 most influential people in South Florida history by The Miami Herald. **The Colony Hotel** and the **Essex House** are just two in his portfolio.



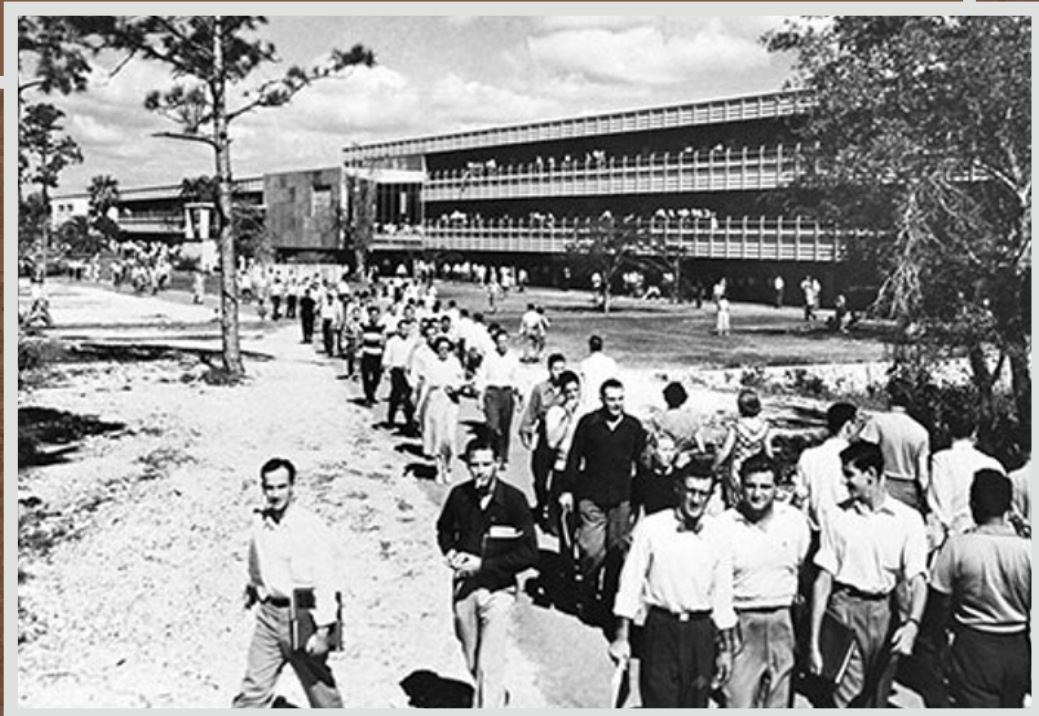
In 1953, **Abe Arnowitz** became the first Jewish mayor of Miami, a further signal of Jews' rising prominence in Dade County.

Along with religious, political, and cultural institutions, Miami-area Jews founded **Mount Sinai Hospital** (now Mount Sinai Medical Center) on Miami Beach in 1949, after local hospitals denied admitting privileges to Jewish doctors. The hospital also committed to serving white and Black patients from the time of its opening in 1949, and the hospital appointed an African American doctor in 1952.



Jewish community

From the early 1950s to 1960s, the Jewish community grew to 3,500. In addition to establishing religious institution, they also helped charter the **University of Miami**, which today has a Center for Contemporary Jewish Studies and Hillel.



Miami area Jews led local and statewide efforts to combat exclusionary hotel policies. They joined forces with other racialized minorities, who also experienced Jim Crow segregation, specifically those restrictive racial covenants prohibiting them from purchasing properties on Miami Beach. Black and Jewish activists in Miami's interracial branch of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) staged sit-ins at lunch counters across downtown Miami.

In 1958, **Shirley Zoloth** and other Jewish women helped found a chapter of the biracial Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to support desegregation efforts in Dade County schools and public accommodations.



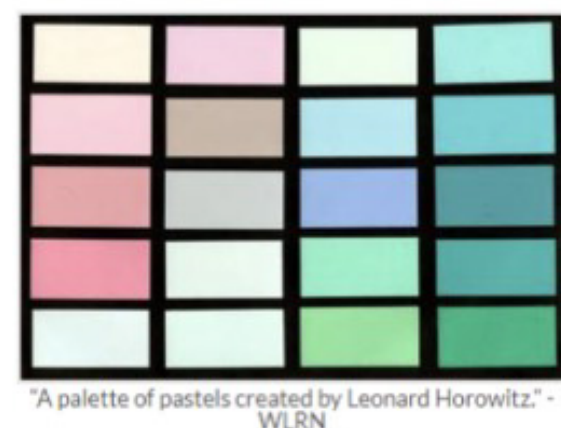
In the 1960s the community experienced exponential growth with over 130,000 Jews living in the Miami-Dade area. Further, within two years of the 1959 ouster of Fulgencio Batista, more than 3,000 **Cuban Jews** settled in the Miami area.

In addition to earlier Jewish immigrants from Cuba, the area has attracted a significant population of Spanish speaking Jews from Central and South America, as well as Jews from Israel. As a consequence, the Jewish population of greater Miami, in particular, is the most diverse in the country.



The Miami Beach Art Deco buildings of the 1930s and 1940s – many designed, built and operated by Jews – are architectural treasures known throughout the world. In 1976 **Barbara Baer Capitman** helped to found the Miami Design Preservation League. Within three years it received federal historic designation for the South Beach district of Miami. This launched the campaign that established the Art Deco District.

Leonard Horowitz was a young furniture designer from New York. He became dear friends with Baer and campaigned with her. He wanted to save the beachfront from gaudy excess and to highlight its elegant design features. To showcase its beauty, Horowitz created a **pastel colour palette** to be used for painting the buildings.



"Friedman's Bakery (on the corner of 7th St. and Washington Ave.) circa 1930. Before being painted with Leonard Horowitz's design." - Library of Congress

"A palette of pastels created by Leonard Horowitz." - WUOL

"Friedman's Bakery circa 1930. The building – and Leonard Horowitz's design – were featured on the cover of Progressive Architecture magazine." - WUOL

Jews have been involved in every aspect of the development of Miami, as architects, developers and contractors. They reshaped Miami as a desirable year-round residence and vacation destination, as well as constructing a longstanding ethnic financial foothold in the city. Through their contributions to the physical appearance of Miami Beach, their roles in building Miami are ever present.



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