

Swingin' at the Savoy: An Integrated Space in the Roaring 20's

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I have always been fascinated with the 1920's, from books such as *The Great Gatsby*, to speakeasies full of flappers, and the overall boom in the economy, the 1920's seemed a rather glamorous time. But, all of the glamour and mystique of the Roaring 20's, only seemed to apply to white american society except for a few black stars. When thinking through what topic I would choose I immediately knew I wanted to do the Harlem Renaissance. However, that was too broad of a topic so I eventually settled on the Savoy Ballroom. The Savoy allowed me to delve into the music, dance, and even literature of the time period as well as address the racial tensions of the time period.

I began by researching the Harlem Renaissance. Initially, I decided on the Cotton Club, however, when I realized that the club was segregated, I wanted to find a different club. I researched other clubs from the 1920's and decided on The Savoy Ballroom. Just a few blocks away from the Cotton Club, the Savoy was a completely integrated club that featured black and white performers. I researched the club's performers, and the music and dance styles that evolved there, and all of the factors that led to the creation of the Savoy. The Savoy Ballroom was not only a result of the Harlem Renaissance, but a result of the time period as a whole, leaving me much to research and learn about.

I chose to do a website because, I thought that it would give me the most flexibility. In no other category would I be able to combine writing, with as many forms of multimedia as I would in a website. As suggested I made a weebly website, the first website I have ever attempted to create. I created a general layout that I knew I wanted to repeat throughout my entire website, but made sure that each page was distinct from one another. There were some problems, but overall I am extremely pleased that I chose to work on a website.

The Roaring 20's was a complex time period, with old traditional society clashing with new society, white and black culture colliding, a Post-World War I economy boost, and the aftermath that war leaves on a nation and a generation. The major conflict exhibited in relation to the Savoy, was conflicting white and black culture, as well as both communities becoming physically closer in areas such as New York. African-american culture was seen traditionally as unrefined and primitive, but the black artistic developments on the 1920's flipped this notion on its head. Whites began wanting to enjoy black performers, and spaces developed to satisfy this demand, but most, like the Cotton Club, were segregated. A more constructive compromise was reached at the Savoy, an integrated space where both white and blacks could relax and revel together. At the Savoy racial barriers dissolved, and the social lines drawn between blacks and whites were blurred.