

VOICES BLURBS

“This new book is a unique treasure. It documents the most significant transformation in the Cuban economy in the last half century. What is especially impressive, and unprecedented, is its focus on the dramatically expanding non-state workers themselves based on 80 in-person interviews. A triumph of scholarship in a country where fieldwork is notoriously difficult to carry out” (Mitchell A. Seligson, Centennial Professor of Political Science, Vanderbilt University, Founder of Latin American Public Opinion Project—LAPOP).

"A welcome addition to the literature on the Cuban socialist economy of today. Mesa-Lago, unquestionably the dean of Cuban studies, and his collaborators give us a first-hand look on the situation and attitudes of those who work in the non-state sector after the modest liberalization implemented by Raúl Castro. These eighty intensive interviews represent a unique accomplishment, given the continuing restrictions to economic freedom implemented by that government" (Alejandro Portes, Professor of Sociology Emeritus Princeton University and former President American Sociological Association).

“This book is the most comprehensive and well thought-out account of Cuba’s new private sector. It features rich and informative detail. Its studies encompass entrepreneurial initiatives especially among some of the self-employed of various types as well as generally unsuccessful agricultural schemes that grant to some workers the right to exploit land that remains state-owned. The book also examines the at times speculative real estate sales sector and the non-agricultural cooperatives that are still tethered to the state enterprises from which they were spun. Overall the book presents a wealth of information that had never before been compiled so systematically” (Jorge I. Domínguez, Professor of Government, Harvard University).

“A model of innovative academic collaboration between US and Cuban-based scholars, this book on Cuba’s emerging non-state sector is both quantitatively rigorous and qualitatively path breaking. It captures the rich voices of a wide array of Cuban actors in such sector, drawn from 80 in-depth interviews, which allows the authors to identify both the promising new opportunities and the many remaining obstacles those actors face while extracting from them valuable policy recommendations that would strengthen their role. It is an essential, timely resource for Cuban policymakers and all those interested in Cuba" (Archibald R. M. Ritter, Professor Emeritus of Economics and International Affairs, Carleton University, Canada and Ted A. Henken, Associate Professor of Sociology, Baruch College-CUNY, former President of ASCE; co-authors of *Entrepreneurial Cuba*).

“For its scholarly rigor, immense readability and policy-making applications, this is a pioneering volume. Taking a ‘ground-up’ approach that relies on interviews with Cubans rather than macro-studies crafted by third parties, the authors examine the attitudes and experiences of citizen-entrepreneurs as they fashion a more prosperous future for themselves and the nation. Its strengths include the researchers' insistence on letting Cubans speak for themselves, and their finding that for many of the interviewees, success cannot be measured in simply material terms but also an

opportunity to return the values of self-reliance and individual effort to the public realm” (Lillian Guerra, Waldo Neikirk Professor of Cuban and Caribbean History, University of Florida).

“*Voices of Change* is a serious investigation that utilizes fitting tools (interviews) considering the existing obstacles to conduct surveys in Cuba. It should be read carefully because is of great utility for those interested in the important topic of the non-state sector in Cuba, and a guide for future work. My congratulations to the authors for this volume, which will be required reading for our society, and hopefully motivates researchers to engage in similar projects (Dr. Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva, former Director of the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy, University of Havana and coeditor of *Miradas a la Economía Cubana: Análisis del Sector no Estatal*).

“This book is the most authoritative and complete analysis of Cuba's nascent private sector. Based on extensive interviews conducted in Cuba with 80 self-employed workers, usufruct farmers, members of non-agricultural cooperatives, and real estate intermediaries (facilitators of sales and purchases of homes), Mesa-Lago and his collaborators make a fact-based seminal contribution to the study of the private sector, the most vibrant segment of the Cuban economy today. This book is required reading for those interested in the progress and challenges of Cuba's reform process” (Jorge Pérez-López, International Economist, U.S. Department of Labor –retired, author of *Cuba's Second Economy*).

“This book coordinated by Carmelo Mesa-Lago is of indisputably importance to understand today Cuba because it examines the emergency of the non-state sector in the economy (that embraces 30% of the labor force) as well as the obstacles that the state erects to its expansion. Through 80 interviews with its participants, the book reveals the ambivalence of the Cuban government in its relationship to that sector, synthesizing the difficult transit of a centrally planned economy to one of socialist market in the 21st century” (Rafael Rojas, History Department, CIDE, Mexico City).

“One of the virtues and attractions of this book, coordinated by Mesa-Lago, is the examination of the groups that for several years contribute and infuse vitality to the economy outside of the state. The authors capture the interest of the reader through a careful analysis and the testimonies of the protagonists, providing an accurate view of the daily problems of the Cuban society. All this makes this volume one of the most significant contributions to the economic and social history of that nation” (Consuelo Naranjo Orovio, Research Professor and Director Institute of History, Higher Council of Scientific Research, Spain).

“*Voices of Change* is a totally original approach to Cuba's economy and society. A pioneer book that systematically focuses on and gives light to the non-state sector in an economy eminently state-owned and strongly centralized and planned. Supported by an excellent field work and reliable statistics and information this a reference volume that will be key to understand the future of Cuba and the evolution of its reforms” (Carlos Malamud, Principal Researcher on Latin America Royal Institute Elcano of International Studies, Madrid).

“This excellent book arrives in a crucial moment. Nine years of slow economic reforms in Cuba has left as principal result an emergent non-state sector, which is profoundly analyzed by the five authors. They show new evidence and a variety of experiences based on a research supported by 80 interviews conducted among the micro-entrepreneurs of the new economy in expansion. The study qualifies and quantifies with rigor a sample of participants in that sector, identifies their problems and expectations and propose transformations and new policies. ¡A great accomplishment!” (Pavel Vidal Alejandro, Profesor de Economía, Universidad Pontificia Javeriana, Colombia).

“A significant impediment to know with rigor and depth what happened in Cuba in the latest half century has been the obstacle to conduct field work through surveys and interviews by independent scholars. This book, in a sharp and meticulous manner, significantly advances in both directions. It reveals what the relevant non-economic sector thinks for the country’s future, and provides evidence of the opening that it is happening in Cuba’s academic world towards a path of more economic freedom” (Prof. Manuel Alcántara, Director de FLACSO, Spain, Universidad de Salamanca).

“In 2007 Cuba started a process of economic reforms that have energized the capacity of initiative and entrepreneurial-ship of many Cubans, transforming the social reality. Few analysts like Carmelo Mesa-Lago, profoundly knowledgeable of Cuba’s economy and society, are in the position to immerse in that new reality and interpret it, with empathy and rigor. This book, written by him with a group of young Cuban social scientists and colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh, is well-documented and vibrant, indispensable to become acquainted with the Cuba emerging from such process of change” (José Antonio Alonso, Professor of Applied Economics Universidad Complutense Spain; member of the U.N. Committee for Development Policy).

“Carmelo Mesa represents, in his magna oeuvre and impeccable trajectory, Cuba’s national conscience. In this book, he and his colleagues document the current Cuba, the one that could have been, and still may become” (Enrique Krauze, Editor of *Letras Libres*, Mexico City).

“*Voices of Change* listens to workers and private mini-entrepreneurs that have recently progressed in Cuba in the midst of many difficulties. The book gathers the scarce data available on those persons and completes it with answers from interviews with them, which achieves that they are no longer unknown” (Antonio Santamaría García, Researcher Institute of History, Higher Council of Scientific Research, Spain).