

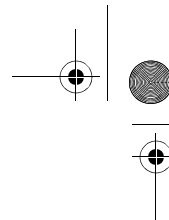
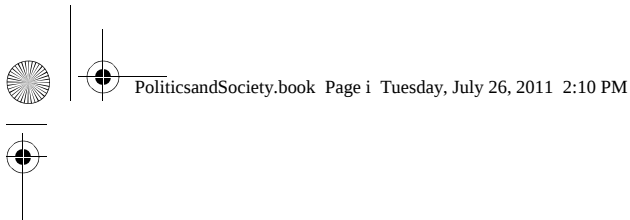
Politics and Civil Society

in Contemporary Cuba



Presented at the International Symposium
CUBA FUTURES: PAST AND PRESENT
March 31- April 2, 2011

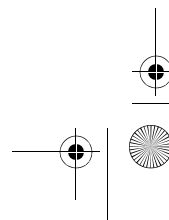
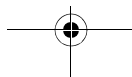
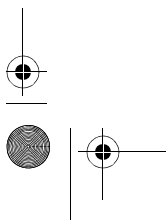
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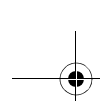


CUBA FUTURES: POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN CONTEMPORARY CUBA

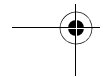
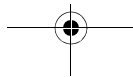
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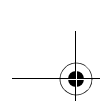
Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies





Presented at the international symposium “Cuba Futures: Past and
Present,” organized by the The Cuba Project
Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies
The Graduate Center/CUNY, March 31–April 2, 2011





CONTEMPORARY POLITICS AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN CUBA



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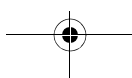
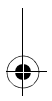
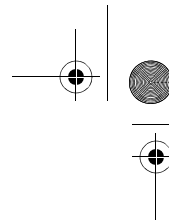


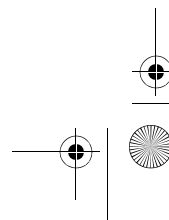
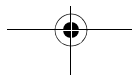
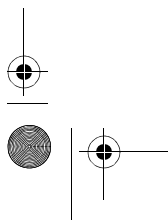
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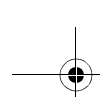
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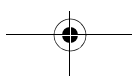


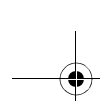
Preface

The dynamics of contemporary Cuba—the politics, culture, economy, and the people—were the focus of the three-day international symposium, *Cuba Futures: Past and Present* (organized by the Bildner Center at The Graduate Center, CUNY). As one of the largest and most dynamic conferences on Cuba to date, the Cuba Futures symposium drew the attention of specialists from all parts of the world. Nearly 600 individuals attended the 57 panels and plenary sessions over the course of three days.

Over 240 panelists from the US, Cuba, Britain, Spain, Germany, France, Canada, and other countries combined perspectives from various fields including social sciences, economics, arts and humanities. They provided in-depth treatment of a wide range of topics, including US-Cuba relations, healthcare, the history and legacy of the Cuban revolution, the increasingly complex Cuban diasporas, cinema, music, literature, and cultural institutions, the visual and performing arts, religion, the role of intellectuals, urban spaces, civil society, democracy, the impact of the Internet and technology, social development, non-governmental organizations, Afro-Cuban cultural movements, gender and sexuality, tourism, and race and ethnicity. The conference also discussed Cuba's links to the rest of the world.

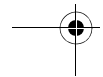
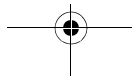
The conference was organized by Bildner Center director Mauricio A. Font and the Cuba Futures organizing committee, consisting of a growing number of Cuba specialists at the City University of New York, with support





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from the Bildner Center staff. Since 1997, The Cuba Project has been organizing related conferences creating a space for sustained dialogue on contemporary issues of Cuban society. The papers in this volume were presented during the Cuba Futures conference and focus on politics and civil society in contemporary Cuba.



1 Raúl Castro a la hora de las decisiones

*Janette Habel*¹

Abstract: Este artículo trata sobre el nuevo rol político de Raúl Castro en Cuba. Su misión no es fácil. Debe redefinir un proyecto de desarrollo viable en condiciones históricas y geopolíticas nuevas; garantizar la estabilidad del país; organizar el relevo entre los antiguos dirigentes históricos y las nuevas generaciones; y, además, iniciar negociaciones con la administración Obama. ¿Se podrá hablar en adelante de un «raulismo» o se seguirá imponiendo el «fidelismo»? Asimismo, ¿cómo salvaguardar la soberanía e independencia, junto a las principales conquistas sociales desde hace cincuenta años, mientras al mismo tiempo se llevan a cabo las reformas «estructurales» y se intenta normalizar relaciones con el continente, específicamente con Estados Unidos? Esa respuesta, que no es obvia, la debe dar Raúl Castro.

Palabras clave: reformas, Cuba, estabilidad, actores políticos, liderazgo político.

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I. Introducción²

La historia cubana es singular. Después de cuatro siglos de dominación colonial española, más de cincuenta años de república marcada por dos dictaduras, y de medio siglo de revolución, la isla está de nuevo en un momento crucial de su historia. Redefinir un proyecto de desarrollo viable en estas condiciones históricas y geopolíticas nuevas, garantizar la estabilidad del país, organizar el relevo entre los antiguos dirigentes históricos y las nuevas generaciones, iniciar negociaciones con la administración Obama, ésa es la misión de Raúl Castro. «Todo es negociable salvo la soberanía», declaró el nuevo presidente cubano. Reconociendo públicamente que el sistema funciona mal, que los salarios son insuficientes y que se necesitan «cambios estructurales y conceptuales», Raúl Castro había suscitado muchas esperanzas. Pero los cambios anunciados progresan lentamente. «Cuales fueran nuestros deseos de arreglar todos los problemas, no podemos gastar más que lo que tenemos», precisó el nuevo Ejecutivo recordando la gravedad de la crisis mundial y provocando la decepción de los que esperaban decisiones más rápidas. ¿Un golpe? ¿Cambio de rumbo o prudencia? Más de una decena de ministros fueron removidos—entre ellos el ex vicepresidente Carlos Lage y el antiguo jefe de la diplomacia cubana, Felipe López Roque—, se anunciaron fusiones de ministerios ligados a la economía con el objetivo de hacer más «funcional» un aparato de Estado hipercentralizado y muy burocratizado. En realidad, esas destituciones son el signo de graves tensiones políticas en la cúspide del aparato del Estado.

¿Se puede caracterizar lo que algunos llaman en Cuba el «raulismo»? La elección del hermano menor de Fidel Castro a la presidencia del Consejo de Estado y del Consejo de Ministros el 24 de febrero del 2008 no es sinónimo de una transición sistémica. Los dirigentes cubanos aprendieron de la experiencia soviética y de Europa del Este. Tras cincuenta años de «fidelismo», de los cuales dos años fueron de poder temporal, el hermano menor de Fidel Castro tiene como misión

2. Traducido del francés al español por Adeline Demoulin y Eléa Bardeau.

garantizar la continuidad y la estabilidad del régimen, impulsando al mismo tiempo reformas juzgadas indispensables. A los setenta y ocho años Raúl Castro dispone para eso de un tiempo limitado. Sin embargo, el ritmo de los cambios instaurados procede de un gradualismo prudente a fin de limitar el coste social de las reformas y de evitar abrir una caja de Pandora con consecuencias incalculables. El desafío es «salir del caos sin caer en la ley de la selva», afirma el sociólogo cubano Aurelio Alfonso. Pero la población es impaciente.

¿Por qué los cambios anunciados se hacen esperar? Las razones son de varios órdenes. La primera está ligada a la cada vez más grave situación económica. La segunda es política: hace falta adaptar las instituciones del régimen para perpetuarlo tras la desaparición de Fidel Castro del poder después de cincuenta años. La tercera resulta de una coyuntura nueva: la emergencia de una sociedad civil y de una juventud mucho menos receptiva a los discursos oficiales. La cuarta es internacional: ¿Cómo tratar con la administración Obama manteniendo a la vez las relaciones privilegiadas de La Habana con Hugo Chávez? La ecuación es difícil. El acercamiento con el presidente Lula podría permitir reequilibrar las alianzas y facilitar las negociaciones con el nuevo presidente estadounidense.

II. ¿Cuál dinámica para las reformas?

Apenas iniciada, la sucesión se enfrenta a una concomitancia imprevista de dificultades coyunturales (subida de los precios de las materias primas, gravedad de desastres provocados por tres ciclones consecutivos, consecuencias de la crisis económica y financiera internacional, el ritmo del crecimiento económico cubano en baja) y estructurales (fuerte dependencia hacia las importaciones, productividad baja, dualidad monetaria, hipercentralización burocrática). Los márgenes de maniobra económica para llevar a cabo las reformas son limitados. Según algunos economistas cubanos, la hoja de ruta—es decir, la estrategia de las reformas—ya está lista. «El menú está listo. Solo se trata de fijar una fecha, por lo menos en lo relativo a las medidas inici-

ales», declara el economista Omar Everleny Pérez (Pérez, 2008), subdirector del Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana (CEEC)³. Queda por ser aprobado durante el próximo Congreso del Partido Comunista Cubano (PCC) previsto para el otoño 2009 y, luego, ser aplicado.

De momento el gobierno procede paulatinamente, pero medidas de austeridad puntuales poco populares han sido tomadas. La edad de jubilación pasó de 55 a 60 años para las mujeres, y de 60 a 65 años para los hombres. El sistema salarial fue reformado y su aplicación es generalizada desde 2009, a partir de ahora los salarios no son más limitados en el sector público y pueden variar según el rendimiento y los resultados. Se puede leer en los carteles oficiales que «Para ganar más, hay que producir más». Los viajes al extranjero de los funcionarios y ejecutivos de empresas se han reducido en un 50%; los premios acordados a los trabajadores más eficientes y algunas subvenciones fueron suprimidos. La ministra de Hacienda subrayó delante de la Asamblea Nacional la necesidad de modificar «la política fiscal existente»; anunció la eliminación progresiva de las «gratuidades indebidas y altamente subvencionadas muy por encima de las posibilidades actuales del país» (Asamblea Nacional, 2007). La dinámica bajo las primeras medidas está marcada por una orientación mercantil.

Por otra parte, Raúl Castro reafirmó la prioridad dada a la agricultura. Desde 2008, una serie de medidas destinadas a estimular la producción agrícola fueron tomadas para disminuir las importaciones alimenticias cada vez más costosas. En efecto, algunos productos de base de la alimentación cubana (arroz, judías, trigo) dependen de las importaciones. Sin embargo, la situación de la agricultura es muy preocupante. En 2007, según la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas (ONE), la tasa de utilización de las tierras agrícolas era sólo de un 45% para un 55% de tierras no cultivadas. La producción era baja para algunas producciones de subsistencia. La contribución del sector agrícola en la obtención de divisas cayó: representaba el 16% de las exportaciones

3. En el diario *La Jornada* (17 de marzo, 2008) se indica que: «Cuba requiere soltar todas las fuerzas productivas».

en 2007 contra un 88% en 1990 cuando el azúcar proporcionaba el 80% de las exportaciones totales (Gazón, 2009: 6). Hoy, el sector estatal es poco productivo a diferencia del sector privado que trabaja en casi el 30% de las tierras cultivadas y asegura más de la mitad de la producción nacional.

Para remediar esta situación Raúl Castro anunció una serie de reformas para estimular la producción de alimentos, declarada objetivo prioritario de «seguridad nacional» para el nuevo Ejecutivo. Las tierras no cultivadas fueron distribuidas en usufructo a productores privados (el 7,5% de la superficie agrícola útil fue repartida en enero del 2009). El gobierno afirma haber entregado en usufructo más de 660.000 hectáreas de tierras en barbecho. Este usufructo no es transferible, mas es renovable por periodos de diez años y todas las tierras concernidas serán gravadas. El precio de compra pagado a los campesinos para ciertas producciones aumentó. Medidas de descentralización fueron tomadas. Las ciento sesenta y nueve delegaciones municipales de la agricultura que fueron creadas tienen como misión explotar todas las tierras y mejorar los mecanismos de comercialización especialmente ineficientes. Empresas públicas fueron desmanteladas para convertirse en suministradoras de servicios y su personal fue asignado a la producción.

Pero la situación económica y social exige medidas más importantes. Veinte años después, el nivel de vida de 1989 todavía no ha sido recuperado. A pesar del aumento de los salarios nominales en 2005, el economista Carmelo Mesa-Lago estima que los salarios reales (ajustados en función de la inflación) en 2007 todavía eran inferiores en un 76% a los de 1989 (Mesa-Lago, 2008). Raúl Castro reconoció en un discurso una evaluación que indicaba que «los salarios eran claramente insuficientes para satisfacer las necesidades» (Castro, 2008). A pesar del aumento de las pensiones ocurrido en 2005, su nivel medio real en 2006 era un 61% inferior al de 1989 (Mesa-Lago, 2008: 157). Algunos hogares muy pobres sufren de desnutrición (Pérez, 2008b). Con la crisis, los sistemas de salud y educación se han deteriorado. Los ejecutivos, los profesionales muy calificados y los profesores se dedi-

can a otras actividades por falta de remuneraciones suficientes. Un sistema de formación rápido de los maestros fue instaurado para paliar la falta de profesores. Pero las pobres actuaciones de los «maestros emergentes» suscitaron protestas por parte de la población. En cuanto a la salud, la transferencia de decenas de miles de médicos cubanos al extranjero, sobre todo a Venezuela, provocó escasez de médicos, puesto que algunos establecimientos hospitalarios apenas disponen del personal necesario (Feinsilver, 2008: 119).

Para algunos economistas cubanos, el sistema económico está en un *impasse* y no puede ser un punto de partida para el desarrollo. Pedro Monreal (2008: 33) evoca un «descarrilamiento» de la economía y «la terca realidad de un país invadido por el marabú» que necesita «una refundación económica, social y política». Para Omar Everleny Pérez hay que

liberar todas las fuerzas productivas, desarrollar el mercado, impulsar las inversiones extranjeras y reactivar las Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas (PYME) entre otras medidas susceptibles de dinamizar una economía tan poco productiva (Pérez, 2008).

También señala que «Hace falta una profunda transformación estructural incluyendo formas de propiedad no estatales en la agricultura como en el sector manufacturero y en los servicios» (Pérez, 2008b: 63). Así se puede observar que la economía representa la mayor preocupación. Es significativo que Carlos Lage—hoy destituido pero antes encargado de seguir la evolución económica para el gobierno—pusiera en tela de juicio la corrupción y la incompetencia administrativa, constatando que la recuperación no correspondía a la amplitud de los recursos distribuidos. Pero, mientras que las reformas mercantiles instauradas durante la crisis posterior a la caída de la Unión Soviética (el «Periodo Especial») desestabilizaron el equilibrio social anterior, la prudencia se impone cuando se trata de ir más allá, sobre todo teniendo en cuenta que las opiniones discrepan a propósito de los «cambios estructurales» por realizar.

III. Preparar el *poscastrismo*: institucionalizar y estabilizar el régimen

El desafío también es político. La funcionalidad de un sistema previsto para operar en otro contexto histórico es discutible. El escenario de la sucesión es imprevisto. Perfectamente dominado en 2006, el traspaso de poderes preparaba la población a la ausencia de Fidel Castro, gravemente enfermo. Su vida estaba en peligro. Dimitiendo de sus mandatos en el 2008 (salvo su cargo de Secretario del PCC), Fidel Castro parecía alejarse del poder. Sin embargo, no sólo sigue estando presente a los ochenta y tres años sino que parece estar mejor, y «piensa» casi todos los días en las columnas del periódico *Granma* o en Internet. En la televisión sus «Reflexiones» son a veces leídas integralmente. Y no hay siempre adecuación entre sus escritos y las decisiones tomadas por el gobierno de Raúl Castro (como se pudo ver a propósito de los intercambios relativos a las relaciones con la Unión Europea o con algunos gobiernos latinoamericanos). ¿Se puede llegar a decir que existen divergencias entre los «raulistas» y los «fidelistas»? Los desacuerdos entre los dos hermanos son ocultos. Se pueden identificar diferencias de estilo de trabajo con, para los primeros, un mayor pragmatismo y un funcionamiento más organizado dentro de las instituciones existentes, incluso el Ejército; para los segundos, un voluntarismo que no se preocupa de los imperativos y toma frecuentemente caminos desviados.

Pero más allá de estas observaciones es difícil identificar corrientes políticas organizadas dentro del aparato estatal. El sistema político de partido único es opaco y no permite la expresión pública de las diferencias aunque el PCC es muy heterogéneo. El lenguaje estereotipado domina la prensa oficial y el *black out* sería casi total sin «Radio Bemba», un sistema de boca en boca a menudo bien informado. El investigador cubano Haroldo Dilla⁴ identifica tres sectores en la élite

4. Haroldo Dilla es sociólogo. Fue uno de los investigadores del famoso Centro de Estudios sobre América (CEA) cuyos responsables fueron reprimidos por Raúl Castro en 1996. Actualmente reside en República Dominicana.

política (Dilla, 2008: 42-43). En primer lugar, las personalidades históricas todavía activas (entre los cuales Raúl Castro es la figura clave), a menudo inmersas en actividades monetarias y comerciales, favorables a una larga apertura económica y partidarias de un control político reforzado del cual las Fuerzas Armadas serían garantes. Un segundo sector estaría, según Dilla, compuesto de políticos más jóvenes ligados a responsabilidades económicas y a algunos centros de investigación; serían partidarios de una mayor flexibilidad política y están en contacto con dirigentes latinoamericanos, especialmente con el presidente venezolano Hugo Chávez. La personalidad más representativa sería Carlos Lage, hoy destituido, el ministro de Cultura y miembro de la Oficina Política, Abel Prieto, todavía en su puesto, y quizás el ministro de Asuntos Exteriores Felipe Pérez Roque, también destituido. Por fin, un tercer sector muy conservador y partidario de una visión dogmática de la política aceptaría reformas bajo la condición de controlarlas y preservar las prerrogativas de la burocracia del PCC. El primer vicepresidente José Ramón Machado Ventura (de setenta y ocho años) sería el máximo exponente de este tercer grupo. Controla el aparato del PCC que incluye varias centenas de miles de funcionarios. Éstos son los pilares políticos de la administración y su destino está ligado al mantenimiento de un Estado muy centralizado; temen ser desestabilizados por «cambios estructurales» que podrían provocar reivindicaciones políticas.

Mientras que se esperaba la promoción de Carlos Lage como número dos, es Machado Ventura quien, bajo la sorpresa general, fue elegido vicepresidente del Consejo de Estado en el 2008, lo que—en caso de incapacidad de Raúl Castro—le convierte en su sucesor oficial según la Constitución cubana. Esta decisión imprevista anunciaba la exclusión de Carlos Lage. Esta alianza entre la alta nomenclatura del PCC y los militares «históricos» forma hoy el núcleo duro de la dirección del país. En el marco del proceso de sucesión actual, la exclusión de Carlos Lage y de Felipe Pérez Roque permite a Raúl Castro consolidar su poder y colocar a sus propios hombres. En su concepción el

PCC representa la vanguardia de la Nación. Pese a ser partido único, el PCC está lejos de ser homogéneo.

En la víspera de fechas importantes, el nuevo presidente quiere «trabajar en el perfeccionamiento de las instituciones» en alianza con las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) de las cuales fue ministro durante casi medio siglo. Éstas adquirieron un peso económico considerable. Controlan directamente o indirectamente dos tercios de la economía. Son el vector de numerosas transformaciones económicas y tienen un peso a favor de reformas que lleven a un mayor espacio del mercado y la disciplina, para hacer más competitiva una producción que no lo es. Los empresarios de las FAR practican desde hace mucho tiempo «el perfeccionamiento de las empresas», expresión que califica un sistema de gestión aplicado en las empresas cubanas cuyos métodos son marcados por la búsqueda del rendimiento y de la rentabilidad. La puesta en marcha de mecanismos de organización y de dirección utilizados en empresas privadas que funcionan en una economía capitalista implica una mayor autonomía de decisión para los dirigentes, incluyendo la posibilidad de reducir los efectivos y de aplicar un sistema de pago y remuneración ligado a los resultados de la producción. En agosto del 2007, 797 empresas sobre un total de 2.732 (la mayoría de ellas públicas) aplicaban las normas de «perfeccionamiento» (Carboneres, 2008: 3). La nueva política salarial nacional aplicada desde el segundo trimestre del 2008 se inspiró en estas normas. De ahora en adelante todos los trabajadores serán pagados según su rendimiento, su salario de base será fijado sin referencias a las escalas salariales nacionales y distintos sistemas de remuneración podrán coexistir en una misma empresa. Antes, esto era una práctica prohibida.

El nuevo presidente puso el acento en la regularidad de un funcionamiento institucional muchas veces maltratado por su hermano mayor. El abandono de la «batalla de las ideas» (una estructura paralela extremadamente costosa realizada por Fidel Castro para impulsar sus propios planes económicos y sociales) y el alejamiento de algunos «talibanes», apodo dado a jóvenes incondicionales del líder máximo cuyo

activismo a menudo hacía un cortocircuito en la legalidad administrativa, confirma esta voluntad de «colegialidad»—y de disciplina—que se ejemplifica con las Fuerzas Armadas. En ese sentido, el «raulismo» se diferencia del «fidelismo» sin que signifique una mayor preocupación por la participación democrática. Pero el desorden institucional mantenido por Fidel Castro se había vuelto inaceptable. De ahora en adelante se debe reformar y reorganizar sin desestabilizar: una operación difícil que de momento casi no deja espacio a nuevas generaciones. Es impactante ver que ni Fidel ni Raúl Castro tuvieron suficiente confianza en la generación siguiente para transmitirle—incluso bajo su control—la responsabilidad del gobierno, mientras que algunos dirigentes (cuadragenarios o quincuagenarios) experimentados están en función desde hace mucho tiempo. Fue el caso de Carlos Lage (cincuenta y siete años) y de Felipe Pérez Roque (cuarenta y tres años). El poder queda entonces, salvo algunas excepciones, en las manos de la vieja generación histórica⁵ que así afirma querer decidir por sí misma las reformas a poner en marcha.

Para esta vieja guardia, la situación no es simple. ¿Cómo, para evitar la división de los círculos dirigentes, reemplazar los arbitrajes dictados hasta entonces por Fidel Castro, líder carismático e «irreemplazable» según Raúl Castro? ¿Cómo «construir el consenso» sabiendo que toda ruptura en la cúspide pondría en peligro el conjunto del sistema? En el credo castrista la unidad es un principio sagrado, una división de las élites es el peor de los peligros. Sin embargo, las destituciones repentinas de altos responsables intervenidas en marzo del 2009 ilustran bien la dificultad. ¿Cómo gestionar divergencias sin recurrir a la represión o a la calumnia? Los métodos utilizados en contra de los dirigentes políticos reconocidos, acusados de burlarse de la edad y de las competencias del núcleo dirigente en presencia de extranjeros y así traicionar la confianza de Fidel y Raúl Castro, recuerdan desagradable-

5. Hay seis militares sobre veintitrés en la Oficina Política. Los comandantes y los generales representan el 26% del Consejo de Estado. Además de la promoción de varios militares durante la remodelación ministerial de marzo del 2009, el coronel Armando Emilio Pérez, uno de los responsables del «perfeccionamiento de las empresas», fue nombrado en abril como viceministro de Economía.

mente los procesos en boga en la antigua Unión de las Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas (URSS). La nota oficial anunciando su alejamiento fue seguida por una «reflexión» de Fidel Castro en forma de aclaración, precisando no sólo su pleno acuerdo con las decisiones tomadas sino, factor agravante, denunciando las ambiciones de sus antiguos allegados «que les condujeron a jugar un papel indigno». Sin embargo, las destituciones del vicepresidente Carlos Lage, percibido como una figura ligada a los «reformadores», y de Felipe Pérez Roque, que dirigía la diplomacia desde 1999, fueron interpretadas como el signo de una reestructuración alrededor de los hombres ligados a Raúl Castro, en contra de los allegados del antiguo «líder máximo».

¿Cómo explicar entonces el desmentido acusador de Fidel Castro para con sus antiguos subordinados aun a riesgo de ser desaprobado? Carlos Lage es un hombre cuya reputación de integridad nunca se había cuestionado antes. Y cuando dejó el Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Felipe Pérez Roque fue reconocido con aplausos. Dudas e interrogantes críticas procedentes de personalidades próximas al régimen se expresaron públicamente discutiendo las acusaciones oficiales⁶. Luego, ocurrió un nuevo incidente con el arresto de un empresario español amigo de Carlos Lage, Conrado Hernández. Acusado de ser un agente español, Hernández fue interpelado en el aeropuerto de La Habana. Fueron sus conversaciones con Carlos Lage y Felipe Pérez Roque—escuchadas y grabadas sin su conocimiento—las que habrían provocado sus destituciones. Videos presentados en Cuba a dirigentes políticos y militares del país relatan sus declaraciones en donde critican la edad de Fidel Castro y las competencias de su hermano (*El País*, 2009). ¿Esconderán estas palabras poco corteses, sobre la vieja generación que no cede el poder, desacuerdos más políticos? No se puede excluir esta idea.

¿Cuál es el verdadero papel de Fidel Castro en este contexto? ¿Qué lugar ocupa hoy? Ante la crisis financiera mundial, el antiguo presidente cubano escribió en un comentario publicado en la página *web*

6. Ver las páginas *web Kaosenlared y Rebellion*; esta última cercana al gobierno cubano.

oficial «Cubadebate»: «He disminuido las reflexiones como lo había propuesto para el presente año a fin de no interferir o molestar a los compañeros del partido y del Estado en las decisiones que deben tomar». Lo menos que se puede decir es que este compromiso no fue respetado. Al contrario de sus aserciones, no se retiró. No tiene más responsabilidades políticas pero su autoridad no depende de un título y sus múltiples «reflexiones» siguen pesando en las decisiones políticas. Ello fue visible cuando, tras la visita de la presidente chilena Michelle Bachelet a La Habana, casi provocó un incidente diplomático al evocar un contencioso histórico—el necesario acceso al mar para Bolivia. Líder carismático, Fidel Castro arbitraba y decidía, incluso si su carisma se había «rutinizado» desde hacía años (Weber). Hoy la enfermedad le impide ocupar el primer plano en la escena política, pero igual ha permanecido muy activo. Lo que se preguntan muchos cubanos es si estas destituciones se deben a una preocupación creciente frente a los cambios de la política estadounidense hacia Cuba, o si anuncian la instauración de decisiones impopulares mientras que las dificultades económicas y sociales provocan un pesimismo y un malestar alarmante. «Ya estamos contra el reloj, la pared o el abismo» escribe el antiguo diplomático Pedro Campos⁷.

La hipótesis según la cual los dos hermanos Castro tomarían decisiones geopolíticas diferentes—Fidel Castro, desconfiando del nuevo presidente estadounidense y defendiendo el mantenimiento de lazos privilegiados con Hugo Chávez; Raúl Castro, prefiriendo acercarse al presidente brasileño Lula con la perspectiva de una gran negociación con la administración Obama—es creíble⁸. Carlos Lage y Felipe Pérez Roque estaban en contacto frecuente con el presidente venezolano. En lugar de apoyarse sobre un frente latinoamericano construido alrededor de Hugo Chávez, Raúl Castro cuenta con el presidente brasileño para diversificar sus alianzas, limitar la dependencia cubana

7. Autor de un proyecto de tesis sometido al próximo Congreso del PCC. Este antiguo funcionario del Ministerio del Interior colabora regularmente en la página *web Kaosenlared*.

8. Esta hipótesis fue evocada en un texto anónimo titulado «Material de trabajo» que circuló en Internet y también fue evocada por el escritor R. Gott en *A fresh breeze in Havana*.

con respeto a Venezuela y facilitar la negociación con Washington. La debilidad de la delegación cubana en el Foro Social de Belén (Brasil) en enero del 2009 testifica de las prioridades del presidente cubano a pesar de la presencia de los presidentes ecuatoriano, boliviano, paraguayo, venezolano y brasileño. Pero también se puede preguntar: ¿No sería una repartición de los papeles? ¿No están los hermanos Castro en dos frentes al mismo tiempo? En efecto, por ahora nada puede reemplazar los intercambios preferenciales con Caracas.

IV. Una sociedad civil emergente

Además de ese contexto político, una tercera razón hace más peligrosa la instauración de las reformas. Desde la década de 1990 una sociedad civil emergente está apareciendo. Con la enfermedad de Fidel Castro, esta dinámica social embrionaria se reforzó⁹. Algunas medidas impopulares fueron objeto de protestas, como fue el caso en enero del 2008 cuando los empleados cubanos de empresas extranjeras se opusieron a una resolución que pretendía introducir una medida de fiscalización sobre sus salarios. El aplazamiento de la edad de jubilación suscitó también recriminaciones. Este descontento social todavía es limitado pero tiene eco y explica la prudencia de las autoridades. Por otra parte, círculos intelectuales o militantes también se expresan, especialmente en Internet. En el 2007, durante un episodio llamado «la guerra de los *mails*» centenares de intelectuales y artistas protestaron contra la difusión de un programa de televisión complaciente con antiguos censores culturales.

Los balances críticos de los años de plomo (la «década gris» de 1970), el recuerdo de los descontroles del «socialismo real» durante el Congreso de la Unión de los Escritores y Artistas Cubanos (UNEAC) en abril del 2008 fueron los primeros índices de ese despertar. Durante las 5.000 asambleas organizadas en centros de trabajo en 2007 se denunció: la diferencia de recursos; el acceso ilegal a divisas; las dificultades de los transportes públicos; la falta de maestros y su

9. Ver A. Gray y A. Kapcia (2008).

formación deficiente; la disminución del número de médicos; la carestía de los servicios; la incompetencia de los administradores; y la pequeña corrupción «rastrera». Se expresó la exigencia de una mayor participación popular en las decisiones. Las autoridades habían alentado estas críticas: «es así que podemos avanzar» se decía dentro del partido.

En diciembre del 2007, Raúl Castro comentó con moderación estos debates en la Asamblea Nacional: «no se trataba de informar cuáles son los problemas». ¿Era necesario que «se abran las bocas» para conocer la opinión de la población? Desde entonces, otros incidentes significativos se produjeron: la interpelación pública del presidente de la Asamblea Nacional, Ricardo Alarcón, por un joven estudiante; la difusión en la página *web Kaosenlared* (de la cual no se sabe exactamente quién la inspira) de varias contribuciones o proposiciones alternativas en el marco de la preparación del Congreso del PCC en 2009, junto con los debates muy abiertos organizados por la revista *Temas*. Todo lo anterior es testigo del mismo fenómeno.

Se observa una gran diferencia entre el discurso oficial y el posicionamiento de las generaciones nacidas a fines del siglo XX, un desfase que acentúa el deterioro del clima político. «Tengo veinticinco años» declaraba en 2007 Carlos Lage Codorniu¹⁰, presidente de la Federación de los Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU) e hijo de Carlos Lage,

mi vida ha sido marcada por los años de crisis, periodo durante el cual se vio cómo ciertos valores han degenerado en Cuba [...] Hay un debate actual entre generaciones, entre lo que cree la generación de nuestros padres, y la nuestra que quiere proponer ideas nuevas. Incluso los jóvenes más ortodoxos tienen diferentes maneras de pensar y de asumir no sólo la Revolución sino la vida en sociedad... Hay que presionar para reforzar el peso de la nueva generación, pero si algunos lo han entendido, otros son mucho más reacios (en *Temas*, 2007).

Este diferencial generacional es sin duda uno de los elementos más preocupantes para la dirección del país. A lo largo de los años, el

10. Hijo de C. Lage. Economista. Presidente de la FEU, de la cual fue alejado hace poco tiempo.

marxismo soviético enseñado en la universidad bajo el título de «socialismo científico» ha sido percibido por ciertos jóvenes como un dogma anquilosado del cual Fidel Castro sería la encarnación.

En efecto, no es la primera vez que iniciativas procedentes de la «sociedad civil» ocurren. Numerosas asociaciones civiles y organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONG) que intentaron ofrecer alternativas a dificultades de la población sufrieron un boicot burocrático. Cuando los proyectos de una ONG sobrepasan los límites fijados el Estado interviene, lo que frecuentemente tiene consecuencias negativas¹¹. Fue el caso de Hábitat-Cuba (una ONG cubana)¹² cuyas experiencias de «arquitectura participativa» habían permitido mejorar el hábitat de la población facilitando las reparaciones o la reconstrucción de viviendas con la ayuda de profesionales. Ahora bien, si el Estado cubano puede explicar que busca proteger su soberanía nacional denunciando las tentativas de injerencia de algunas ONG norteamericanas, parece absurdo que imponga límites y controles a organizaciones que rechazaron toda injerencia internacional y que se adhirieron a los objetivos del proyecto revolucionario. Es una constante del poder castrista: sea de izquierda o revolucionaria, ninguna expresión de autonomía social en la dimensión política es tolerada. «La burocracia sigue dialogando consigo misma e imponiendo acuerdos desiguales a la gente bajo formas de coacción o captación, reproduciendo la asimetría entre lo estatal y lo social» constata el profesor Armando Chaguaceda (2009).

Al día de hoy estas prácticas son criticadas y la exigencia de una democracia más participativa, incluso más autogestionaria, se expresa en revistas (como por ejemplo *Temas*), en Internet, en círculos militantes, en la universidad o en estructuras asociativas¹³. Antes de la destitución de su padre, el joven presidente de la FEU, Carlos Lage Codorniu (en *Temas*, 2007), constataba «la ausencia de una verdadera cultura de debate», con el hecho de que

11. Ver A. Gray y A. Kapcia (2008).

12. Dirigida por la arquitecta Selma Díaz, antigua responsable de la ordenación del territorio. Hábitat-Cuba finalmente fue disuelta.

13. Como el Centro Martin Luther King.

los espacios de participación hayan perdido su credibilidad porque los estudiantes no más identifican las instituciones ni sus dirigentes como una vía de comunicación con la Revolución [...] Hay gente muy buena pero no accede a puestos de dirección porque estos son ocupados por compañeros que quizás son muy disciplinados, muy correctos, en adecuación con imperativos pasados, pero que hoy no responden más a las necesidades de los cubanos (en *Temas*, 2007).

Premonitorio, añadía: «a veces, se excluye gente acusada de no ser revolucionaria porque tiene opiniones diferentes. Estas políticas erróneas se identifican con la Revolución» (en *Temas*, 2007). El filósofo Jorge Luis Acanda confirma: «el socialismo cubano tiene que ser menos estatal para impulsar la democratización del poder y de la propiedad».

V. ¿La vía *vietnamita*: una alternativa?

¿Hasta dónde puede y quiere ir Raúl Castro? Está aquí para perpetuar el sistema político reformándolo en el plan económico. Pero una vez apartada toda terapia de choque, la idea de una transición graduada sin un costo social es poco creíble. Sin embargo, la polarización y la fragmentación social provocadas por la crisis tras la caída de la URSS ya tuvieron efectos desagregados¹⁴. Los que denuncian los riesgos de la vía china para Cuba subrayan el peligro que representa para el sistema. Es el caso del antiguo ministro de Economía, José Luis Rodríguez, hoy destituido. Había declarado en 2007 que Cuba no cambiaría su modelo económico para seguir el de China o de Vietnam, que sólo se trataba de hacer más eficaz la economía sin llevar a la diversificación de las formas de propiedad. Para él, la propiedad de Estado debe ser preponderante; el desarrollo de pequeñas empresas no está a la orden del día. ¿Jugó este punto de vista un papel en su evicción? Aquí también, sólo se puede especular. Pero estas posturas forman parte del debate interno actual. Y Fidel Castro nunca escondió sus reservas

14. Leer sobre este tema los trabajos notables de la socióloga cubana M. ESPINA (2008).

respecto de estos «mecanismos capitalistas» de los cuales teme consecuencias políticas.

A corto plazo, la continuidad del castrismo no parece amenazada. ¿Pero se puede reformar un poder carismático? En efecto, el esquema vietnamita (atentamente observado por el nuevo Ejecutivo) demuestra que la transición de una economía de mando (centralmente planificada) hacia una «economía socialista de mercado» (es así como la califican los dirigentes vietnamitas) no es sinónimo de democratización. En Vietnam, el proceso de renovación (*doi-moi*) impulsado por el Partido Comunista Vietnamita (PCV) en 1986 permitió pasar de una economía ineficaz sometida a la negligencia burocrática y dependiente de la ayuda extranjera, a una economía de mercado cuyas tasas de crecimiento sobrepasaron un 8% en los últimos años. Los éxitos vietnamitas fascinan a dirigentes cubanos, como demuestran los numerosos intercambios, viajes y publicaciones entre ambos países (Domingo y Tansini, 2007)¹⁵. La prioridad dada a la agricultura y la asignación de tierras productivas a campesinos, las inversiones extranjeras (acaban de ser autorizadas en Cuba para el azúcar), los reajustes previstos de los tipos de cambio para poner fin a la dualidad monetaria se inspiran de la experiencia vietnamita. Pero Cuba no es comparable con China o Vietnam en la situación geopolítica, el tamaño, los recursos económicos, la historia ni la cultura. El «socialismo de mercado» significa en realidad «el capitalismo salvaje» protegido por el Estado y el Partido, notan ciertos responsables. El comportamiento de las empresas chinas es tan depredador como el de las multinacionales del norte, y a veces peor. La aplicación de este «modelo» podría tener graves consecuencias.

Sobre todo porque el relevo difícilmente podrá efectuarse en el marco de una continuidad institucional que ha sido construida para y por Fidel Castro. El PCC no tiene la misma coherencia histórica que el PCV. Un «capitalismo de partido» es problemático por razones sociales y políticas. Las desigualdades (paro, déficit sanitario y escolar) más

15. Ver R. Domingo y R. Tansini (2007).

o menos toleradas hasta ahora en Pekín o Hanoi arriesgarían no ser aceptadas en Cuba, donde la cultura igualitaria y redistributiva es fuerte. Finalmente, la economía de mercado bajo el control del Partido o del Estado no deja ningún espacio a una democracia participativa o autogestionaria que reclaman muchos cubanos. ¿Cómo articular las reformas económicas de mercado sin cambiar de paradigma sociopolítico protegiendo a la vez las prerrogativas de la burocracia? Tal es la ecuación que Raúl Castro deberá resolver en el Congreso del PCC previsto para el otoño del 2009.

VI. Un nuevo escenario para las Américas

Mientras que la administración del presidente Barack Obama ha empezado a flexibilizar el embargo casi cincuentenario, liberalizando los viajes y las transferencias de las divisas drásticamente limitadas por George W. Bush, La Habana ya no está aislada en el tablero internacional. Las grandes potencias anticipan los cambios por venir. La visita del comisario europeo para el desarrollo, Louis Michel, y el levantamiento de las sanciones de la Unión Europea aplicadas desde 2003, precedieron a la visita del presidente chino Hu Jintao. Una decena de acuerdos bilaterales (incluso la compra de azúcar y de níquel cubano) fue cancelada y la deuda comercial ha sido renegociada con años adicionales, que van de cinco a diez años (*La Lettre de La Havane*, 2009: 5). China es el segundo socio comercial de La Habana después de Venezuela. Para Pekín, Cuba es una buena puerta de entrada para acceder a las preciosas materias primas de América Latina. El jefe del Kremlin, Dmitri Medvedev, también fue a la isla en 2008 mientras Rusia participaba con Venezuela, principal aliado cubano, en maniobras militares en el Caribe. Para Moscú, desarrollar los lazos entre Caracas y La Habana permite responder al proyecto estadounidense de instalación de un escudo antimisil en Polonia y la República Checa. Rusia modernizará el equipamiento militar cubano de origen soviético hoy obsoleto y grupos petroleros rusos quieren

explorar la zona económica exclusiva de Cuba. Moscú parece dispuesto a «olvidar» la deuda de su antiguo aliado.

Raúl Castro dispone también de apoyos mayores en América Latina, obviamente con Hugo Chávez, pero también con el presidente brasileño Lula y otros dirigentes latinoamericanos disfrutando del fin de la hegemonía estadounidense para tomar sus distancias con Washington. El 16 de diciembre del 2008 durante una reunión en Brasil, Cuba fue reintegrada al grupo de Río y treinta y tres naciones latinoamericanas y caribeñas reafirmaron su condena de las sanciones de Estados Unidos contra la isla. Después del viaje del presidente brasileño Lula en 2008, los presidentes de Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, República Dominicana y Venezuela fueron recibidos en La Habana en 2009. El nuevo presidente mexicano Calderón también ha anunciado su venida. Estas visitas son un homenaje a «la resistencia del país desde cincuenta años», declaró Raúl Castro. En la Cumbre de las Américas que tuvo lugar en Trinidad y Tobago en abril del 2009 en presencia de Barack Obama, los gobiernos latinoamericanos enviaron un mensaje al presidente estadounidense: la normalización de las relaciones entre Washington y Cuba es imprescindible. Pero la declaración final no obtuvo consenso, fue rechazada por los países de la Alternativa Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA) porque no mencionaba el embargo. Los otros gobiernos latinoamericanos la adoptaron sin firmarla.

Tras un nuevo giro, Washington, constatando sin duda «que se necesitan dos para bailar rumba» (*The Economist*, 2009), anunció la apertura de conversaciones exploratorias «informales» con La Habana. El partido de *ping-pong* que ya ha empezado será largo, en tanto hay importantes obstáculos legislativos y políticos en Estados Unidos. Del otro lado del estrecho de Florida, Fidel Castro ya ha asegurado que Obama había «malinterpretado» las declaraciones de Raúl Castro (*El País*, 2009). Este mismo había declarado estar listo para hablar de todo, incluso de los «presos políticos», una terminología siempre rechazada por Fidel Castro. En la isla, las relaciones con Washington arriesgan convertirse en un desafío para la política

interna. «El lobo está llegando, pero en lugar de pistolas, trae fajos de dólares» escribe Pedro Campos (2009), quien llama a realizar los cambios necesarios para hacer frente a esta situación. ¿Cómo gestionar el paso de medio siglo de conflictos y de confrontación a una fase de normalización de las relaciones? No es obvio cómo encontrar un *modus vivendi* con la administración estadounidense que permita salvaguardar la independencia y las principales conquistas sociales desde hace cincuenta años, mientras al mismo tiempo se llevan a cabo las reformas «estructurales».

Finalmente, en la ausencia de un debate político organizado y de libertad de prensa, es difícil calibrar la evolución de las diferentes corrientes políticas que atraviesan la sociedad cubana. Salvo el caso de los disidentes, cuyo impacto es actualmente muy débil, se pueden reconocer tres corrientes que en realidad se cruzan de manera variable según los sujetos. Esquemáticamente, se distinguen los pragmáticos que se reclaman de Raúl Castro y que buscan una versión cubana del «modelo vietnamita». A medio camino entre Chávez y Lula, desean el fin del conflicto con el gran vecino del norte. Segundo, los «ortodoxos» que no se fían de los «cambios estructurales» y de sus consecuencias sociopolíticas mientras el régimen negocia con la administración Obama. A pesar de su edad y de su enfermedad, Fidel Castro permanece como el garante de la intransigencia frente al imperialismo. Exige, antes de cualquier concesión, el levantamiento del embargo y mantiene su visión verticalista y homogénea de la sociedad reunida detrás de su jefe para enfrentar al enemigo. Esos diversos posicionamientos tienen en común la voluntad de preservar un régimen autoritario fundado sobre el Partido único.

Otra orientación democrática está presente dentro del círculo intelectual, estudiantil, además de algunos sectores del partido que expresan las aspiraciones de amplios estratos de la sociedad, como lo había demostrado el debate popular organizado en 2007. De momento, piden cambios sin desear una ruptura. Reclaman a la vez más democracia política y una mayor libertad económica para los trabajadores independientes, los campesinos, comerciantes y artesanos.

Pero quieren mantener el control del Estado sobre los sectores estratégicos y preservar las conquistas sociales. Esta tendencia es variada, incluye partidarios de la democracia participativa y de la autogestión, defensores «de una efectiva pluralidad emancipadora de las izquierdas» (Chaguaceda, 2007: 118-125) y partidarios de la economía mixta. Sea como sea, es la primera vez que parece dibujarse una corriente de pensamiento distinto de dos variantes burocráticas del castrismo, la carismática «fidelista» y la pragmática «raulista». El fin del embargo sería la condición de su desarrollo.

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2 The Cuban Revolution Today: Proposals of Changes, Scenarios, and Alternatives

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I say this only to save my soul.
-Karl Marx

Abstract: The new stage of the Cuban Revolution that began with the presidency of Raúl Castro has seen consultation with the masses about what kind of socialism they want to build, a return to some aspects of the economic reform abandoned in 2000, a key role in the economy for the armed forces, the dismantling of certain programs of the Battle of Ideas that have proved economically unsound, the elimination of certain subsidies and free food for workers, and the reduction of the state through the fusion of ministries and the reduction of the labor force. The success of these policies will condition what scenarios will prevail in Cuba in the future. Possible scenarios include (1) transformation toward a twenty-first-century socialism consistent with the historical roots of the Cuban Revolution, (2) immobility, (3) a socialist market economy such as those of China and Vietnam, (4) collapse and implosion in the style of the Soviet Union and the countries of the Eastern Bloc and/or internal revolt, and (5) overthrow of the government because of a military invasion by the United States. Scenarios 1, 2, and 3

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are most probable, but 5 cannot be ruled out. A series of policy alternatives is suggested here that might make the first scenario possible.

On July 31, 2006, Fidel Castro, because of serious health problems, provisionally delegated the presidency of Cuba to the second secretary of Cuban Communist Party and minister of the armed forces, Raúl Castro. On February 24, 2008, Raúl Castro was appointed president. This new stage of the Cuban Revolution has been characterized by consultation with the masses about the kind of socialism they want to build, a parallel policy returning to some aspects of the economic reform abandoned in 2000, a key role for the armed forces in the economy,² the dismantling of programs of the Battle of Ideas³ that were considered economically unsound, the elimination of subsidies such as free food at workplaces, and the reduction of the state through the fusion of ministries and the reduction of the labor force. The success of these policies will condition what scenarios will prevail in Cuba in the future.⁴ The consolidation of the revolution in the medium and

2. The Cuban army is the most successful institution in Cuba with regard to organization. At the Fifth Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in 1997 it was decided to extend the managerial improvement of the army to the civilian economy. By 2007 this was being done for 797 of a total of 2,732 enterprises (<http://www.cubasocialista.cu/texto/0098081lage.html>).

3. The Battle of Ideas was an ideological movement launched by Fidel Castro at the beginning of 2000 in order to bring the child Elián González, whose mother had died at sea and whose father sought his return to the island, back from Miami. This mass mobilization meant a renewal of revolutionary values and was described by Fidel as follows: "They are the ideas that illuminate the world, that can bring peace to the world. . . . that can resolve the violence. Because of this we speak about a battle of ideas" (quoted in Ramonet, 2006: 364).

4. Several foreign actors have designed scenarios for the "transition in Cuba" (Xalma, 2007). The government of the United States has been fostering a rapid transition to liberal democracy, including internal subversion and violent actions to reestablish the island's neocolonial dependency. The European Union, along with some sectors of the political class in the United States, wants a gradual transition or "soft landing." The extreme right of the Cuban community agrees with the policy of blockade and rapid transition through violent action if necessary, but in recent years broad sectors of this community have approached the European Union view. Within Cuba the government through Raúl Castro is trying to guarantee the traditional model of socialism with changes that are primarily economic. Some intellectuals and broad sectors of the population want more speed and depth in the changes in the economic, political, social, and ideological arena. They consider this the only way for socialism in Cuba to survive. Almost all of the tiny dissident groups in Cuba agree with the policy of the United States and are financed by ad hoc funding through the Interest Section.

long term depends on the development of new policies to overcome present shortcomings.

WHITHER CUBAN SOCIALISM?

Why a Revolution in Cuba?

The Cuban Revolution was the response of the Cuban people to the contradictions created in Cuban society by the neocolonial model imposed by the United States. Politically, the expression of this model was the Batista dictatorship; economically, it was underdevelopment; in the social sphere, it was a rate of unemployment close to 20 percent and a high level of underemployment; internationally, it was the absence of an independent foreign policy; and culturally, it was an increasing crisis of cultural identity threatened by images of the “American way of life” (López Segrera, 1972; 1980; 1989).

When the United States responded aggressively with sabotage, breaking off diplomatic relations, launching the invasion of the Playa Giron (Bay of Pigs) in 1961, and establishing the blockade in 1962, Cuba had no choice but to join the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), which served as an alternative market for the island as well as supplying the weapons necessary for its defense.⁵ The economic crisis that Cuba faced in 1989 was the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting disruption of Cuba's commercial links with Comecon and the difficulty of finding alternative markets (Smith, 1992: 99). While Cuba did recover during the 1990s—although with great suffering—from this failure of “real socialism,”⁶ it did not achieve a gross domestic product (GDP) similar to that of

5. The blockade costs Cuba US\$230 million a year in foreign investment and by 2009 had caused the country losses of more than US\$93 billion (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/10/29/world/main4556348.shtml>). The CAME was a complementary commercial association of socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc, and Cuba, that meant the possibility of survival in spite of the U.S. blockade.

6. By “real socialism” I mean the form developed in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.

1989 until 2006 (López Segrera, 1995b; 1997; 1998; 2005). The main challenge now is building a new model of socialism in order to prevent a return to dependent capitalism and neocolonial status. This will require not only the adoption of practical policies but also a great debate concerning the transformation of Cuban socialism (Alzugaray, 2009a; LAP, 2009).

A number of possible scenarios can be imagined, among them (1) transformation toward a twenty-first-century socialism consistent with the historical roots of the Cuban Revolution, (2) immobility, (3) a socialist market economy such as those of China and Vietnam, (4) collapse and implosion in the style of the Soviet Union and the countries of the Eastern Bloc and/or internal revolt, and (5) the overthrow of the government because of a military invasion by the United States. The most probable of these scenarios are 1, 2, and 3, but we cannot rule out 5. The proposals in this paper are aimed at making possible scenario 1; if they are not adopted, I think that scenario 2 or 3 will prevail.

The fundamental features of the twentieth-century socialism of the former Soviet Union and the East European countries state capitalism, central economic planning, political authoritarianism, an egalitarian collectivism that in practice fostered the development of a bureaucracy without adequate control on the part of the masses, anti-ecological productivism, and weak political participation. Despite many similarities to this model, the distortions of Cuban socialism were not so extreme as in the countries where “real socialism” failed. Because of the historical roots of the Cuban Revolution and the characteristics of its leadership, Cuban socialism did not crumble. Nevertheless, constitutional, legislative, and structural modifications will be required for it to achieve a twenty-first-century socialism—a socialism that is more democratic, participative, and economically efficient. The enormous consensus supporting the Cuban leadership and the Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular (National Assembly of Popular Power) has allowed an advance toward democracy, but qualitative changes are needed to guarantee participation in decision-making pro-

cesses. The dilemma is not whether to perfect socialism or to restore capitalism. Without forgetting the contributions of Marxism-Leninism, the Asian socialism of China and Vietnam, and the thought of Che and Fidel, what is needed is substantial qualitative change.

Certain principles will have to rule twenty-first-century socialism in Cuba: the predominance of use value over exchange value, the democratization of all spheres of the social life and especially of the state, social equality, a society of culture and knowledge rather than one of consumption, sustainable development, and collective—not necessarily state—ownership of the means of production.

Twenty-first-century socialism in the Cuban case should be characterized by the preservation of state ownership of the strategic sectors of the economy and social services such as education and health; cooperative forms, self-management, the reduction of the state economy, and decentralization must be promoted. This means neither neoliberal privatization nor a capitalist market economy but a form of “socialist market economy” regulated by appropriate taxes. In the political sphere it will be necessary to promote significant participation in decision-making processes and not only in debate, and there must be regularity and transparency in the processes of accountability. Forms of the socialist market economy that lead to great social differences should be avoided through the preservation of the social security system and Cuban socialism’s achievements in the social area.

There is debate whether to think of China—and somewhat similarly Vietnam—as mainly socialist country or mainly capitalist. China of course still proclaims itself socialist and is governed by the Communist Party. While its internal economy and world trade operate on market principles, I consider this not the definitive abandonment of socialism but a tactical retreat. We cannot forget that more than 300 million Chinese have come out of poverty with the socialist market economy. Nevertheless, socialism is at a crossroads in China, and it may be defeated by capitalist forces. Some people on the political left

are disappointed with the Asian form of socialism, but only time will tell.

Cuba belongs to the Western cultural tradition and has distinctive traits in its history and in the history of its revolution that will allow it to avoid the great inequalities that are emerging in the Chinese and Vietnamese model of socialism and to improve democratic procedures.

In this article I shall recommend policies that might contribute to the construction of a twenty-first-century socialism. Although some of these policies will be close to the modalities of the socialist market economy, they aim to foster a Cuban socialism based mainly on new moral values.⁷

The Special Period in its Context

Signs of an economic crisis deeply rooted in a particular form of inefficient socialism that produced high salaries in spite of low productivity began to appear as early as 1986, before the so-called Special Period (1990-2006).⁸ The Cuban leadership made an effort through the “rectification process” of that year to return to the mystique of the 1960s. The chaos that resulted from perestroika and the perception

7. There are many proposals by Cuban social scientists for changing the policies of Cuban socialism. Some of these analyses are very critical of the government and argue that the socialism in place is state capitalism (Campos, 2007) and that constitutional and juridical modifications are urgently needed (Segura, 2008; 2010). Others writers are less critical but also offer concrete proposals for change (in the economic sphere, Monreal, 2008; Carranza, Gutiérrez, and Monreal, 1996; Vidal, 2009; 2010; Pérez, 2010; Nova, 2010; in the political sphere, Guanche, 2009b; Chaguaceda, 2009; Sánchez, 2006; Tablada, 2007; Martínez, 1993; 2001; in the social sphere, Espina, 2007; 2008; Alonso, 2007; in international relations, Alzugaray, 2009a; 2009b; Hernández, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c). In the United States Latin American Perspectives has published three issues (164, 165, and 166) containing articles about the Cuban Revolution and relevant criticism from the left.

8. One of the main deformations of the economic model was the practice of increasing salaries in factories from an average of 300 pesos to more than 1,000 pesos because of formal rather than real “overtime work.” After 1985, the peak year of a long period of sustained economic growth in Cuba, the Cuban economy entered into a phase of stagnation (Brundenius, 2009: 31). Import capacity declined from US\$8,100 million in 1989 to US\$1,719 in 1993. To this was added the food insufficiency of the island and difficulty in acquiring oil.

and hope in certain sectors of the leadership that a coup d'état in the Soviet Union could reestablish the old relationship may help to explain the resistance of the government to make changes at the beginning of the 1990s and the fact that the call for the Fourth Congress of the Cuban Communist Party and the tone of public discussion were more radical than the Congress results.

Since 1989, the Cuban government has been dealing with enormous challenge caused by major international events such as the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc, the tightening of the U.S. blockade, the emergence of a unipolar world led by the United States, the economic and social crisis in the South, the “victory” of neoliberalism, the world economic crisis since 2008, several natural catastrophes and hurricanes, and the need for Cuba to become part of a new type of global market. During the period 1989-2010 the main challenges have been to build a capital-intensive economic model, to maintain legitimacy and credibility in the political realm despite increasing social inequality, to avoid isolation in international relations, and to maintain the morale and strategic strength of the armed forces in defense against military aggression by the United States. By my criteria, the performance has been better in the last two categories than in the economic and political realms, where changes have been rather slow and unsystematic. The economic reform undertaken in 1993 allowed the reestablishment of some markets and private initiatives forbidden during the “rectification process” and authorized the use of foreign currency. Although there were achievements in some aspects of the economic reform (for example, foreign investment and the excess of currency), they were the result not of any overall plan but of a set of financial measures. Mainly, the development of the Cuban economy depends not on the excess or lack of currency—although this is an important variable—but on its productive capacity. At the end of the 1990s the economic reform slowed down and was reversed in many respects—especially with regard to providing market space for Cuban nationals as in the Chinese or Vietnamese economic reforms⁹—after 2000, with the new program of economic recentralization, with deep social

objectives, known as the “Battle of Ideas.” So far this new trend has proved incapable of revitalizing production, dealing with unemployment (despite the partial successes of the social workers’ programs),¹⁰ eliminating corruption, and offering the excluded labor force an alternative in either the state or the private economy. Lifting the sanctions against the use of foreign currency has meant exclusion from consumption (the normal offer available in Cuban pesos is rationed)¹¹ of people who do not receive money from relatives abroad or large amounts of hard currency or pesos from dealings in the private economy (renting rooms in houses, managing restaurants, etc.), in the black market, or through corrupt practices in government posts. The informal market grew rapidly during the Special Period because of a general scarcity of goods and the fact that this black market is cheaper than the state one selling in hard currency, the goods offered in it having been, as a rule, stolen from the state stores.

Although there have been important political reforms and the leadership has legitimacy, credibility, and the support of broad sectors of the population, participatory democratic practices have not fulfilled their potential, partly because the institutionalization of the 1970s was contaminated by the Soviet model. Today, the appeal to personal sacrifice to achieve future prosperity and equality does not, as a general rule, mobilize people as it did in the past, among other things because

9. In contrast to the situation in China and Vietnam, where nationals can have big enterprises and associate with foreign capital, in Cuba only small businesses such as renting rooms in one’s own house and tiny restaurants are allowed.

10. The social workers’ program was the concrete expression of the Battle of Ideas. Through it young people who were neither working nor studying were employed at various social tasks with salaries and encourage to enroll in various courses. At the same time, they replaced workers in areas where corruption was very high such as gas stations. Fidel personally took charge of this program to show how work and adequate political treatment could make young people at risk of delinquency into model revolutionary citizens.

11. A system of rationing to ensure equal access to food resources in a situation of scarcity was established in 1962. The ration card (*libreta*) guaranteed access to state stores that provided the basic basket of beans, rice, cooking oil, sugar, meat, fish, and eggs. In addition to this workers were provided with meals and snacks in their workplaces. In the 1980s a parallel market was established in special state stores at higher prices than the subsidized ones of the ration card, but these stores were closed during the Special Period because of the scarcity of goods. The free lunches and snacks in workplaces have recently been recently eliminated, and there is a discussion of canceling the ration card.

of the impact, especially on the younger generations, of the discrediting of the dogma of the irreversibility of socialism and its association with hardship and of lack of access to the market and increased inequality during the Special Period. The erosion of consensus induced by these conditions is undeniable (Valdés, 2004: 241). Despite the efforts of the leadership in the social area (health care, education) and the special programs launched by Fidel Castro through the Battle of Ideas, poverty, inequality, and marginality have been growing since the 1990s, along with resentment on the part of those excluded from the benefits of hard currency and power sharing (Espina, 2007; 2008).

The main objective of my analysis is to demonstrate the need for a solution to the following main contradictions: centralization versus decentralization and the need for effective political participation; huge social programs versus limited economic growth; equity versus growing inequality (20 percent of the urban Cuban population is living in poverty); the value of work versus black-market practices; reinforcement of socialist values versus the deterioration of those values; institutionalization versus weak institutions and illegal practices as a way of solving everyday problems; and international support for Cuba against the U.S. blockade versus criticism concerning democracy and human rights. There is an urgent need to adopt policies that will reinforce the possibility of a best-case scenario in the economic, political, social, cultural, and international arenas. I will try to identify some of these policies on the basis of my own research and what was suggested by the Cuban people during the meetings held in 2007 at the behest of President Raúl Castro.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The Vicissitudes of Socialist Economic Development

The economic reform begun in 1993, unlike the ones in China and Vietnam, assumed the option of a mixed economy regulated through

a singular combination of planning and the market.¹² Its logic was to redistribute hard currency, and this is why the prices in the shops that sell in hard currencies (*tiendas de recaudación de divisas* or TRDs) are 270 percent higher than in other countries. Between 1995 and 2000 the country reached an average growth rate of almost 4.5 percent. In 2006 the minister of the economy declared that Cuba had overcome the Special Period, since the value of the GDP was equivalent to that of 1989 (Carranza, 1996; Monreal, 1997; 2007; 2008). However, the economic reform had driven the prices that prevailed in the informal economy toward the economy as a whole, generating severe inflation. This implied a sudden decline in the wages of Cubans who received their salaries in the national currency. I am not against the authorization of foreign currency, but to mitigate the rapid emergence of inequalities that it produces, a parallel solution should be implemented for the problem of the low salaries of teachers, doctors, and other professionals, who earn less than waiters or taxi drivers. The result has been to punish the ablest and most revolutionary sectors of Cuban society. The lifting of sanctions on foreign currency was urgent in order to acquire hard currency in a situation of extreme economic crisis after the crumbling of the “real socialism,” but it happened 17 years ago, and salaries in pesos—also they increased in 2005 and later—are extremely low in comparison with the income and salaries received in hard currency in other areas of the economy such as foreign enterprises and tourism and with the prices of commodities in the market.¹³

Even the redistributive attempt of the TRDs to recover hard currencies had a perverse effect in several senses: their prices for meat and agricultural products were reflected in increasing prices in the agricultural free market. This caused many potential national or for-

12. Central planning remained, but broader areas were opened to private markets that had been limited since the “revolutionary offensive” of 1968 against small businesses. Foreign enterprises were invited to invest in almost all sectors of the economy and small businesses were authorized for Cuban nationals.

13. Doctors working abroad and outstanding trainers and sports figures receive part of their salaries in hard currency and, in some cases, pensions.

foreign consumers to choose, if possible, to import their drinks and food on their own, through relatives, or to acquire them on the black market at lower prices. In addition, there was a devaluation of human capital and professional services in key sectors such as health care and education. The migration of teachers, engineers, and other professionals to the informal economy, to hard currency activities such as tourism and even to foreign countries was fostered by these policies.

An economy mainly based on earnings from tourism and remittances is very vulnerable (despite the more favorable measures adopted by the Obama administration),¹⁴ as is apparent from the consequences of 9/11 and hurricanes such as Michel, Ivan, Gustav, and Ike for tourism and the impact on remittances of the current world economic crisis. As a result, the Cuban economy has lately been relying heavily on the sale of professional services to Venezuela and many other countries, mainly in the health care sector.

Since the beginning of the Battle of Ideas in 2000 and especially during 2004 and 2005, some measures have been adopted to correct the contradictions provoked in the social domain. With this aim, the expansion of privatization was stopped, licenses for self-employment were suspended (in 1999 there were 360,000 licenses, and in 2010 they had dropped to 110,000), pensions were increased, and direct aid was approved for the poorest families.¹⁵

The peak GDP growth in the present decade was reached in 2006, with a rate of 12.1 percent. Since then, the rate of increase has diminished, being 7.3 percent in 2007 and 4.3 percent in 2008. In 2009 the Cuban GDP continued falling, reaching a figure of 1.4 percent. The

14. On April 13, 2009, restrictions on the frequency and duration of visits by Cuban-Americans to their relatives in Cuba and the frequency and amount of the remittances sent to them were eliminated. Likewise, procedures were liberalized with regard to telecommunications and the sending of gifts.

15. In the first semester of 2005 there was an increase in pensions and other social security benefits. In the social security sector, the pensions of 1,468,000 people, just over 97 percent of the total number of pensioners, increased. These actions benefited 4.4 million people, 30.9 percent of the population, at an annual cost of 2.78 billion pesos (Castro, 2005). In 2008 pensions in social security and social assistance showed a new increase of 20 percent (Juventud Rebelde, April 27, 2008 ;<http://www.juventudrebelde.cu>).

prospects for 2010 are not very different (Vidal, 2009; 2010; Pérez, 2009; 2010). The rate of unemployment in 2008 was only 1.6 percent, while in 1995 it was 7.9 percent. This could be explained as a result of the social programs of the Battle of Ideas, which gave employment to broad sectors of society. Nevertheless, it has been calculated that there are now 1,300, 000 citizens underemployed and at risk of losing their jobs. From October 2010 until March 2011 a half million will be offered work in agriculture, construction, or other areas and the possibility of developing a private enterprise. This will probably mean a lot of social tension (Pérez, 2009: 22).

The economy of the island has suffered a succession of external shocks: a drastic decline in the terms of trade (-38 percent in 2008), mainly caused by increases in the prices of imported food and oil and a 70 percent drop in the price of exported nickel; three hurricanes in 2008, with losses around US\$10 billion; and, more recently, a financial crisis that developed into a global economic crisis.

Since 2004, agreements with Venezuela that have provided the opportunity to obtain external income from the export of professional services have had a significant impact on the scale of payments and the growth of the Cuban GDP (Pérez et al., 2009; Sánchez, 2006). Obtaining oil at lower prices in relation to the world market, receiving payments for professional services, and a cooperation program that in 2010 will involve 285 projects mean that the relationship with Venezuela is a key variable for the Cuban economy today.¹⁶ The problem is that the above-mentioned exports have begun to decline have not been replaced by exports in other sectors of the economy, such as industry and agriculture, which have been left far behind and with very low productivity.¹⁷

16. Cuba receives 80,000 barrels of oil a day in exchange for more than 30,000 doctors, medical personnel, and specialists in various areas such as education and sports. The cooperation started in 2000 with 17 projects and US\$ 30 million. By 2010 there were 285 projects and contracts amounting to US\$3 billion (<http://www.mre.gov.ve/index>).

17. The sale of professional services has its limits, both external (a decline in demand for and prices of these services due to the world economic crisis and lower oil prices) and internal (negative effects on medical and other professional services in Cuba).

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The economy has been facing a serious crisis of liquidity in currencies since 2009. An estimated calculation of income could be the following: US\$2,500,000 billion from nickel, US\$2 billion from the sale of medical and other services, US\$1 billion from tourism, US\$1 billion from remittances in cash, and approximately another billion in various articles brought by relatives or friends or sent through the mail (this item declined with the restrictions imposed by George W. Bush and has benefited from the measures adopted by the Obama government), and another billion from the pharmaceutical industry and biotechnology and from other products such as tobacco. The main sources of liquidity for the government on a short-term basis are the sale of professional services abroad, tourism, the TRDs, and the foreign currency exchange offices known as “Cadeca.”¹⁸

The Achilles’ heel of the economic arena today is food production, housing, and the lack of hard currency.¹⁹ According to research conducted by Cuban economists, it is probable that the Cuban economy will decline into stagnation or recession the duration of which will depend on the speed, depth, and efficiency of the transformations that are implemented to stimulate productivity and income (Vidal, 2010).

In synthesis, the attempt to replace the extensive growth model that preceded the Special Period with a new growth model based on tourism and the export of professional services shows structural weaknesses and signs of depletion, which have started demonstrating major limitations in the availability of currencies, a more relative shortage of resources for investment projects and, finally, a trend toward a deceleration of the growth of the GDP. The government has adopted austerity measures—the elimination of dining rooms in workplaces, rationalization of the labor force, reduction in travel

18. The policy concerning foreign currency aims to achieve, through the sale of professional services, taxes, and the higher prices in the TRDs, a redistribution of these earnings to finance social services for the whole population and obtain hard currency for development.

19. The deficit in housing is around 1 million. The subsidized products available through the ration card are so scarce that they do not last more than a third of a month.

abroad—to cope with this crisis (Vidal, 2009; 2010; Pérez et al., 2009; Pérez, 2010).

Democracy through Consensus?

The Cuban political system in the first decades of the Revolution had a political unity that facilitated the existence of a consensual democracy with massive political participation.²⁰ A new constitution and revolutionary laws as well as new political and mass institutions emerged rapidly in the first five years of the revolution (1959-1964). Formal institutionalization was achieved only in 1975, however, after the first congress of the Cuban Communist Party. This consensus democracy emphasized social rights such as education, health care, housing, and employment in order to allow citizens to take a real part in political and social life.

The political system had the following features:²¹ a state with a one-party system and political (the Cuban Communist Party, the Union of Communist Youth) and mass (the Central Union of Workers, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution) organizations, among others. A new juridical system corresponding to the laws and values of the new society also emerged.²² The materialization of a new political culture, based on the history of Cuba and its tradition and, giving pri-

20. The masses received enormous benefits in the first decade of the revolution. This, together with the fostering of values such as solidarity and internationalism, may explain the fact that in surveys done in 1960 the revolution had more than 90 percent support. On the basis of this consensus and because of the role played by the media and political organizations in disseminating the teachings of a charismatic leader such as Fidel Castro, the great majority of Cubans had a new sense of mission. The mistakes of the 1970s and 1980s and the inequalities that emerged with the Special Period have eroded this broad consensus and made it necessary to replace merely formal political participation with real political participation in decision making and not just in discussion.

21. Dictatorships such as Machado's in the 1930s and Batista's in the 1950s had the result of discrediting liberal political democracy and traditional political parties in Cuba. The perception of the leadership and the masses was that unity against the national oligarchy was more important than the corrupt and dictatorial rule supported and controlled by the United States.

22. This system has as its main objectives the achievement of social equality. It guarantees that no one can be dispossessed of his land or his house and establishes nonbureaucratic forms of justice such as popular tribunals.

ority to patriotism, internationalism, equality in all spheres, continuing education, and active political participation, both quantitative (in diverse places: the neighborhood, the workplace) and qualitative (real participation in decision making) (Harris, 2009).

Each of these traits had its potential opposite: unanimity instead of unity; the lack of institutional and democratic mechanisms for ensuring democratic political succession to the highest level (in order to avoid loss of legitimacy) and generational succession; calls for debate that did not include participation in decision making; the reproduction of the political institutional model of other forms of socialism, generating corruption, formalism, bureaucracy, inefficiency, estrangement between leaders and the people, inequality, and double moral standards; a tendency toward adopting laws and constitutional dispositions that were not adapted to Cuban reality; the concentration of functions and resources at the top levels to the detriment of the local ones and the concentration of decision-making processes in the actors of the major hierarchy; the emergence of distortions in politics (elitist and corrupt practices that generate inequality) and in the culture of work; and the failure of efficiency in work, combined with other revolutionary values, to guarantee upward social mobility and proper remuneration.

Until July 2006, power was concentrated in the historical leader of the revolution, Fidel Castro, first secretary of the party, president of the State Council and of the Council of Ministers, and commander in chief of the armed forces. He still holds the position of first secretary, but Raúl Castro occupies the other three.

The system thus, despite political concentration, has democratic-participatory possibilities—a permanent link between the state and the masses through the party and the mass and professional organizations—but also deficiencies. There is a lack of deliberation in decision-making bodies; citizens consider the sessions not as an opportunity for collective discussion of alternative solutions but as mere forums for presenting demands. Local governments are invested

with formal power but not with resources; delegates feel that they have no power to solve the problems expressed by the population because municipal priorities have to conform to the priorities of the state. Consultation and discussion prevail over the transformation of demands into working strategies at the local level. As a result, participation does not lead to the sharing of responsibility by the various actors in the decision-making process (Rodríguez, 2009: 107).²³

A great debate within the party and the mass organizations has been promoted by President Raúl Castro since 2007, but the mere creation of opportunities for debate has not necessarily led to broad public participation. The media have not reflected this debate in all its richness and do not normally publish alternative points of view (Valdés, 2009; Rodríguez, 2009; M. Domínguez, 2009; J. Domínguez, 1978; Evenson, 2009).

The Foreign Policy of the Cuban Revolution

The main arguments of several U.S. governments (Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and G. H. W. Bush) against the Cuban Revolution were its close relations with the USSR and its support for liberation movements. Since the crumbling of the USSR, the conditions (dating to the Carter administration) set by Clin-

23. In 1965, the Cuban Communist Party was created and Fidel elected as its first secretary. In 1976, a new socialist constitution-replacing the Fundamental Law of 1959, an adaptation of the Constitution of 1940-established the Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular (National Assembly of People's Power-ANPP), with regional assemblies at the local level. Elections at the municipal, provincial, and national levels take place every five years. The president of the National Assembly is elected by its deputies, and they are also responsible for electing members of the Council of State, Cuba's highest executive body, which consists of a president, a first vice president, and various other vice presidents. From 1976 until 2008 Fidel was always elected as president of the Council of State. In February 2008, because of Fidel's resignation due to illness, Raúl Castro was elected as president of the Council of State. In 1980, 1986, 1991 and 1997 the II, III, IV and V Congress of the Cuban Communist Party were held. During thirteen years no Congress of the Party has been celebrated. On November 8, 2010 Raúl Castro announced that the Congress VI of the Party will be celebrated in the second fortnight of April, 2011. The following day were published the Guideliness of Economic and Social Politics of the Congress and a wide discussion of this draft is being held in Cuba. The final version of this paper was concluded on October 30. For this reason an analysis of the above mentioned Guideliness is not one of the aims of this paper.

ton, G. W. Bush, and Obama for recognizing the island's government and lifting the blockade have been the establishment of a Western-style democracy in Cuba and respect for human rights.

In the 1990s the United States passed two extraterritorial laws to reinforce the blockade in the aftermath of the crumbling of the Eastern Bloc: the Torricelli Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.²⁴ Neither of these laws achieved its purpose of isolating Cuba, although both damaged the country in some respects, such as increasing the prices of imported goods. In 2009 only the United States, Israel, and Palau voted in the UN General Assembly against lifting the embargo, while Micronesia and the Marshall Islands abstained.

In 1996 the European Union, adopted a policy called the "Common Position" and associated with the presidency of José María Aznar in Spain whereby European policy toward Cuba was subordinated to the hostile U.S. policy toward Cuba. The development of the relations with Cuba was conditioned to the Eurocentric vision of democracy and human rights. Although the socialist government of President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero has taken some steps to improve relations with Cuba, the Common Position still prevails. This results in the case of the United States in a double standard, since these governments do not mention the serious violations of human rights in other countries and are in no position to establish moral standards after Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo and the passage of planes carrying prisoners arrested through illegal procedures through the airports of European countries such as Spain. While the Cuban Five are in jail for trying to deter terrorism against Cuba, Luis Posada Carriles, a well-known terrorist, is living peacefully in Miami.

Cuban relations with Venezuela and the member countries of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), its growing relations

24. The aim of the Torricelli Act was to prohibit trade with Cuba by subsidiary companies in third countries and access to U.S. ports of ships transporting goods to the Island. The Helms-Burton Act sought to deprive Cuba of external financing and prevent foreign investment in the island through sanctions on businessmen of third countries who made investments in Cuba and the United States.

with Brazil and the countries of MERCOSUR, its strong relations with China, Russia, and several Arab and African countries, and its traditional relations with Spain and the developed capitalist countries give the island a solid position in the international arena. Even countries that criticize Cuba rhetorically, such as the European ones, have important commercial relations and investments in the island.²⁵

CUBA TODAY: SCENARIOS AND ALTERNATIVES

Background

On November 17, 2005, Fidel Castro, in a speech at the University of Havana, raised the topic of the reversibility of socialism in Cuba and the possibility of the Revolution's defeat because of its own mistakes. Returning to this subject during his dialogues with the journalist Ignacio Ramonet a year later, he said: "This country can be destroyed, this Revolution can be destroyed if we are not capable of correcting our own mistakes, if we do not manage to put an end to many vices: very much theft, many detours and many supply sources of money for the new rich" (Ramonet, 2006: 567).

The central topics of Raúl Castro's speeches since he assumed office have been the following: (1) inviting the Cuban people to formulate proposals for changing what it may be necessary to change in socialism to improve it; (2) insisting on the need to raise the standard of living of the Cuban people by increasing production and services, emphasizing that "the country's priority will be to satisfy the basic needs of the population, both material and spiritual;" (3) fulfilling the strategic aim of "achieving that the salary recovers its value and people's standard of living of everyone is in direct relation to their legally received income;" (4) emphasizing the urgency of a more productive agriculture and announcing the distribution of idle state lands in usu-

25. Alliances such as MERCOSUR, ALBA, the Association of Caribbean States, and the Caribbean Community and Common Market, give Cuba ample space in its regional relations with the Latin American countries.

fruct but not in property (the “land and resources should be in the hands of those who are capable of producing with efficiency,” and therefore they should “receive the material remuneration that they deserve;” (5) reducing the state by merging some ministries and eliminating unnecessary personnel in order to “make the management of our government more efficient” and foster the constant development of its institutions (employees will not be abandoned and will receive proper training for other jobs; (6) not being afraid of discrepancies in the bosom of the revolution; (7) not “aspiring to a unanimity that turns out to be fictitious;” (8) expressing the idea that if only one party exists, “it must be more democratic than any other;” (9) talking about the need for senior executives to give proper information to citizens and workers in the political and administrative arenas—”informing in a systematic way on subjects in charge with realism [can you clarify “in charge with realism?”] and in a diaphanous, critical, and self-critical way” in order to achieve real solutions through continuing accountability (R. Castro, 2007a; 2007b; 2008a; 2008b; 2009; 2010a; 2010b).

In his speech of December 28, 2007, Raúl Castro talked about the broad consultation with the population concerning his speech of July 26, 2007. The consultation, which consisted of 215,687 meetings, was directed to the various party, government, and mass-organization levels and workplace organizations and aimed at the immediate adoption of solutions to various problems, among the most important being formulae for coping with the housing shortage, insufficient food production, and lack of adequate transportation. Nevertheless, in broad sectors of the population there is the perception that the measures adopted so far are few and changes is occurring very slowly. President Castro has asked people to be patient on several occasions.

Some measures adopted since 2006 under Raúl Castro and some others that either he has raised in his speeches or the people have expressed include the following: reduction of the state by merging institutions, distribution of idle state lands in usufruct, authorizing the use of products such as cellular phones, authorizing small private businesses such as hairdressers and barber shops, eliminating unnecessary

social benefits such as workers' lunches, closing down noneconomic projects launched during the Battle of Ideas; broadening opportunities for self-employment, and a wide release of prisoners who had committed offenses against the security of the state as a gesture of goodwill toward the Catholic Church and other international actors.

Raúl has fostered this discussion because discontent, indolence, apathy, and various forms of corruption have been developing with force lately. For example, from January 2009 until May 2010 the country saw the death of 26 patients in the Havana Psychiatric Hospital,²⁶ the dismissal in March 2009 of top-level government cadres such as Secretary of State Felipe Perez Roque and Vice President Carlos Lage, the dismissal of General Acevedo, Director of the Institute of Civil Aeronautics of Cuba, in March 2010, and a strong media campaign against the government at the beginning of 2010 because of the death of the prisoner Orlando Zapata in a hunger strike and Guillermo Fariñas's hunger strike asking for the release of imprisoned dissidents.

Now, bearing in mind the various proposals that have been expressed in different forums in Cuba, I shall proceed to formulate some possible features that the Cuban model of socialism might adopt and to identify the scenarios favorable to the above-mentioned model and the policy alternatives that, if adopted by the government, would contribute to the crystallization of the best-case scenario: a new model of socialism for the twenty-first century. I do this as a contribution to a debate that is being conducted in my country and abroad, but I want to stress that these suggestions are made humbly and do not preclude other analyses and proposals (Hernández, 2010a, 2010b; Alzugaray, 2009b; Alonso, 2007; Martínez, 1993, 2001; Lopez-Segrera, 1995b, 1997, 1998; Guanche, 2009a, 2009b; Tablada, 2007; Campos, 2007; Chaguaceda, 2009; Segura, 2008, 2010).

26. No such thing had ever happened before in the Cuban health care system.

Features of the New Economic Model

In the economic sphere, after the normative and organizational transformations and regulations of the economic reform in its two stages (from July 1993 to the autumn of 1994 and from this date until the year 2000, in which a new recentralization meant the reversal of some aspects of these transformations)²⁷ and in accordance with the desire for change expressed by Raúl Castro in a number of speeches, a new model might emerge. In this new model, foreign investment, together with the liberation and development of internal productive capacity, could create an economic structure in which property is not a monopoly of the state, though the state remains a regulatory agent. The central aim of this model would be to solve in the short and medium term the two major economic problems: the existence of a dual currency and the fact that the real wages of the Cubans do not have enough value to cover their daily needs. This new economic model might have the following features.

To revitalize production and increase consumption:

- A return to the economic reform interrupted around 2000, including constitutional and juridical modifications to facilitate foreign investment,²⁸ steps toward decentralization, greater freedom for state enterprises, and diversification of international trade.

27. The reform included the following organizational changes: decentralization of foreign trade; embryonic creation of commercial duty-free zones and industrial parks exempt from duties and taxes in June 1996 and of ad hoc commercial and financial structures; new, more decentralized and autonomous modalities of negotiation between Cuban enterprises and foreign capital; cash flow in hard currencies in the sugar, nickel, fishing, oil, and even in certain aspects of social services like higher education; the appearance and development of Cuban corporations that operate in currencies and mixed companies; a managerial revolution, with new forms of marketing offering products and services on the Internet as well as joint ventures; the reform of wholesale prices, establishing more detailed modalities and increasing some of them; and the proliferation of nongovernmental organizations. The normative changes included the constitutional reform of July 1992; extension of the statutory order of February 50, 1982, with relation to foreign investment; and the adoption of statutory orders and resolutions legalizing the possession of hard currencies, authorizing self-employment, and creating free agricultural and handicraft markets.

28. Foreign investment in Cuba amounted to US\$4 billion in the period 1994-2004.

- The development of new formulae (cooperatives, self-management), especially in agriculture and services to make viable the double condition of producer and owner.
- Democratic control and planning by the workers in all production and services centers according to their interests but in coordination with municipal and national priorities.
- The establishment of monetary-mercantile intermanagerial contractual relations among all sectors. This will imply the modification of the budgetary current conceptions and the establishment of legal regulations to develop socialist self-management.²⁹
- The development of a national business community capable of establishing mixed companies with the state and with the foreign business community and allowing it to offer capital, technology, and markets.³⁰
- An increase in the number of freelancers and their importance in the economy. This implies expanding the issuing of licenses for self-employment and applying low taxes to them according to their annual earnings.
- An increase in the mixed sector in the majority of economic sectors.
- The reduction of the state bureaucracy for regulating economic activity at the central level as a result of increasing decentralization and greater opportunities for the nonstate economy.
- The development of a process for redefining the regulatory role of the state through a plan that guarantees the basic national interests of the people in a given period and reducing its bureaucratic dimensions and its administrative omnipresence.
- An increase in the use of market mechanisms, including a flexible free price system, for the allocation and distribution of resources (not necessarily of the “market economy”) at the managerial level, with the consequent development of a managerial state economic system together with a mixed and private economy based on efficiency and the preservation of fundamental public services. This will mean a significant reduction of the black market.

In the fiscal and financial spheres:

- The development of fiscal and financial policies—a progressive tax system on revenues and profits for national and foreigners and indirect taxes on consumption (a

29. This means not adopting the Yugoslav model but establishing a very clear link between the productivity of workers and their direct earnings through cooperatives of various sorts.

30. The human capital and knowledge of the Cuban market of this national business community are very valuable assets for foreign investors. Proper regulations should be established for the development of these enterprises in order to avoid what has happened in other former socialist countries and the enormous inequalities that have emerged in the countries with socialist market economies such as China and Vietnam.

value-added tax)—in order to achieve significant control over the money supply and avoid high levels of inflation. This implies promoting a taxpayer culture and establishing an annual tax on earnings under the proper and verifiable control of the National Office of Tributary Administration.

- Elimination of the dual currency and replacement of it with a single national currency, taking the appropriate steps to ensure its international convertibility.
- Elimination of the 20 percent exchange tax on the dollar in the CADECA.
- Reduction of prices in the TRDs according to international standards and applying an indirect tax on purchases.
- Elimination of the ration card and the creation of direct and selective subsidies to the persons of low income, with special attention to persons with low pensions and single, physically handicapped, and disabled mothers under the control of the local organs of Popular Power.
- The creation of a new economic culture among leaders, executives, and workers that focuses on profitability and efficiency at the core of economic analysis. This means promoting economic competition in order to raise quality in production and services, linking wages to the real results of the economic activity, improving pricing policy, and achieving full cash flow as an essential criterion for the existence of economic activities, reducing subsidies to the minimum.
- The distribution among workers of a percentage of the earnings of the enterprises.
- Legislation preserving health and safety, guaranteeing environmental protection, avoiding great inequalities, and fostering a culture of solidarity.

Concerning property rights:

- Freeing agricultural production from the constraints of the government that hobble it and speeding the delivery in usufruct of the cultivable idle land to individual peasants and preferably groups of peasants who are interested in forming cooperatives.
- The establishment of networks of credit for peasants, cooperatives, and workers who request it.
- Full liberalization of the internal market for all agricultural and fishing products.
- Freedom to rent among nationals without taxation and through legislation protecting the house owner.
- The establishment of the tax on houses renting rooms (or the whole house) to foreigners according to annual earnings (not, as now, to be paid in advance whether the property is rented or not, which leads to illegal renting in order to avoid paying taxes, enormous bureaucracy, and high levels of corruption).³¹
- Freedom to sell houses among Cuban nationals living in Cuba with the payment of an appropriate tax.

- The free import and sale of motor vehicles, subject to taxes and fulfilment of environmental regulations.

To overcome the current stagnation in the growth of the GDP and the crisis of liquidity through these economic measures and to incorporate the sale of professional services and the incomes that stem from it into the economy as a whole, a sustainable level of economic growth is indispensable. To achieve this, it is necessary to develop an internal market that can be articulated with the international one and with the various branches of the Cuban economy.

The scenarios that would favor the consolidation of this model might be, among others, the following: (1) The U.S. blockade evolves gradually toward diminishing negative regulations, and in Obama's second term full diplomatic relations are established. (2) The availability of oil on the island is increased as a result of increasing domestic oil extraction and agreements with Venezuela already in place. (3) Cuba significantly increases foreign investment and the establishment of mixed companies. (4) New credits of public and private foreign capital are obtained. (5) The foreign debt is renegotiated on a new flexible basis. (6) The prices of the traditional products—sugar, nickel, tobacco—increase on the international market, and profitable new associations are achieved for the sale of new products of biotechnology and the pharmaceutical industry. (7) There is an increase in the production of new and traditional products, and tourism continues to grow. (8) The production of food for local consumption reaches ideal levels. (9) There are no natural catastrophes and epidemics.

As policy alternatives that would foster the development of the new model, I would suggest the following: (1) continuing the development of the economic reform, giving it a more productive and less financial dimension; (2) adopting measures that favor the solution of the debt problem and relations with financial international organizations; (3) further improving the conditions for foreign investment; (4)

31. While one may own a house in the city and a second house at the beach, renting either of them or simply a room in one of them is prohibited. Acquiring a license to do so is difficult and costly. The issuing of such licenses was halted in 2008, but since October 2010 licenses have once again become available.

adopting a fiscal policy based on studies of the real earnings of potential companies and individual taxpayers; (5) while the dual currency exists, incorporating into the emergent economy the sectors and workers that are more productive, giving biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and tourism special treatment concerning raw materials, electricity quotas, and so on, so that they can guarantee the input of hard currency that they produce for the country; (6) authorizing Cuban citizens to organize medium-sized and small companies with the same rights that are granted to foreign capital; and (7) developing legislation on property that contemplates the new realities (a Cuban citizen today is unable to sell his house or his car, for example, or to rent them, since licenses for the latter have been suspended).

Cuban economists have presented recommendations on key topics, among them taking action to eliminate the monetary duality, redefining the material bases of accumulation, developing new formulae for inserting Cuba into the international economy and its distributive chains, and other ways of restructuring the Cuban economy departing from the achievements and difficulties of its current strategy (see Carranza, Gutiérrez, and Monreal, 1996; Monreal, 2007; 2008; Monreal and Carranza, 1997; Pérez, 2010; Vidal, 2009; 2010; Nova, 2010; Brundenius, 2009; Mesa Lago, 2009, 2010; and Domínguez, 1978; 1989; 2010).

Adjustment without “Dis-Socialization”

Regarding the social conquests—education, public health, social security, and high levels of social justice—achieved during the past 50 years, which today are a heritage of the Cuban nation, there is a need to work on a new model adapted to the new realities. This means supporting and developing the national system of public health, education, and social security with more decentralized and less bureaucratized formulae and a relatively smaller burden on the central budget of the state. The positive development of this new model will be determined by the scenarios and policy alternatives that may con-

tribute to the crystallization of the features of the economic model. The challenge consists in developing a certain type of adjustment without “dis-socialization,” by which I mean the cancellation or substantial reduction of social benefits in health and education and the development of great inequalities (Espina, 2007, 2008; Domínguez, 2009).

The Weakness of Democracy Based on Consensus: Political Reform

The experiences of Spain and Portugal, which have evolved from capitalist dictatorships to capitalist democracies, and the Comecon countries, whose transition was from socialism to capitalism, are of no help to us in envisioning a process of “transition” in Cuba. Socialism in Cuba has nothing to do either with the dictatorial forms of Franco’s regimes or with socialist countries such as Poland or Czechoslovakia (Hernández and Pañellas, 2007). I do not, however, mean to say that Cuban socialism is not irreversible. Everything will depend on whether or not it is possible to reinvent Cuban socialism. Whether the revolution succeeds in building twenty-first-century socialism will depend on the political will of the government and the masses.

In Cuba we can observe recurrent cycles of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, of debate and dogmatism. The various openings have proceeded rapidly to closings of the universe of speech and debate: (1) from the democratization of 1970 to the Congress of Education and Culture and the gray five-year period (1970-1975) characterized by dogmatism in the cultural area; (2) from the debate on free agricultural markets and increasing the level of participation in decision making to the Fourth Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in 1991, which overlooked many of the most radical proposals of that debate; (3) from the political and economic flexibility initiating an economic reform in 1992 to the ideological hardening and closure of the debate on Cuban problems exemplified by the disintegration of the Centro de Estudios sobre América in March 1996 and the Battle of the Ideas of 2000.

Many of the problems confronted today have been considered “youthful mistakes:” “Socialism is young,” “It was necessary to learn.” “Innovation” has been used less for announcing the future than for justifying the present: it has worked, really, as justification before a failure that, it is promised, will not happen again in the “new stage in which we are now” (Guanche, 2009a). The “Now We Will Achieve the Promised Future” syndrome proposes agreement to accept a mistake, almost always defined unilaterally, criticize it, and begin again. We must bear in mind, however, that the origin of many of these mistakes is the same: centralization, partiality, formalism in popular participation, bureaucratic planning, voluntary non-planning, narrowness of the public sphere for social debate, conversion of social institutions into agencies that overcome the citizens to “protect” the basic interests of the state.

The case of the Cuban dissident Orlando Zapata, deceased on February 23 as a consequence of a hunger strike, and the case of his follower, Guillermo Fariñas, who abandoned a hunger strike in June 2010 after the release of the imprisoned dissidents, are undoubtedly tragedies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to put this drama in its proper perspective by analyzing the motivations underlying the media campaign developed mainly in the newspapers and television in Spain and Miami. First, the groups of Cuban opponents on the island share the agenda of the anti-Castro organizations from Miami. Their new strategy for overthrowing the revolution and restoring capitalism on the island is a “pacific” one. They may differ on issues such as the blockade, which is rejected by the dissidents living in Cuba in contrast to many of their allies in Miami. The ideology of the majority of these dissident groups could be identified as center-right. In contrast to the Cuban counterrevolution in the 1960s, which had a certain social base and a considerable number of clandestine members and guerrillas in the Sierra del Escambray, the current dissidents have no social base. They suffer from a lack of leadership and from legitimacy in civil society because of their inability to attract broader support (Hernández, 2010a). As Hernández describes them, their proposals have no coher-

ent political and economic program and are characterized by imprecision: calls for “national reconciliation,” the “strengthening of the civil society,” “pluralism,” and the restoration of capitalism as neoliberalism, whose pernicious consequences for Latin America are well known.³²

The dialogue of the island with Washington advanced more in 2009 than in the 10 previous years: conversations were resumed on migration and direct mail; semiofficial groups are exploring avenues of cooperation in intercepting drug traffic; without lifting the restrictions imposed by the Bush administration in 2005, visas have been granted to academicians and artists; currents in the U.S. Congress are working hard to restore the freedom of Americans to travel to Cuba. In relation to the European Union, in spite of the “Common Position” adopted at the end of 1996, the policy of the EU, led by Spain, has substantially improved relations with the government of Raúl Castro since June 2008 through the lifting of the sanctions imposed in 2003. Contributing to this change were increasing ties between Cuba and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, not only with governments of the left and center-left but also with others such as Mexico. For the previously mentioned sectors of the extreme right, it was necessary to stop this process of negotiation and recognition of Cuban reality.

Cuba does not agree to pay any tribute for the limited concessions of the United States, which in any case has been unwilling to lift the blockade, asking for changes in Cuba as an excuse to maintain it.

It is predictable that the Cuban political system will move toward decentralization and increased pluralism. Substantial changes in the constitution, the juridical system, and political culture will be necessary to achieve this. Popular participation will fortify the system because of the development of organizational measures and institu-

32. Between 1996 and 2008 some US\$83 million were distributed to universities and organizations by USAID's Cuba Program with the purpose of regime destabilization (Lutjens, 2009: 7). The so-called Independent Libraries Project is also financed in this way (Neugebauer, 2003).

tional and juridical regulations. This will raise the profile of civil society and of its organic expressions with regard to a state that is more regulatory and less total and monopolist. The new model must involve the development and improvement of the consensus decision making established in the 1960s and modified through the years (Valdés, 2009).

The new political system being created as a result of the political reform that began in 1992 and in accordance with the statements made by Raúl Castro in several speeches since 2007 will have, among others, the following features:

- Freedom from the built-in features of the Soviet experience and reinforcement of the role of popular power directed by a vanguard party, with a state that is based on the autonomy of powers and is not ideologically defined as exclusive and in which decentralization supplants the bureaucratization of decision making and its merely administrative character.
- The Cuban Communist Party, if it remains the sole party, as an authentic party of the Cuban nation without dogmatic exclusions. This will involve full democratic functioning in its internal life, significant delegation of the making and implementation of decisions to its popular bases, substantial pluralism in its ranks, and confinement to the strictly political domain, without administrative attributes.
- Significant participation of the representative organs of Popular Power in the political decision-making process at all levels. This will mean longer and more frequent meetings of the National Assembly and its commissions, the reduction of formal mechanisms, and an increased presence and influence of the various sectors of the country in the organs of the Popular Power, including the National Assembly. A more participatory Popular Power, with increasingly horizontal and inclusive practices, will play a key role in a project of socialist self-government.
- Allowing delegates to Popular Power to have their own local priorities and budgets rather than being subordinated to the priorities of the central state institutions.
- Requiring delegates to the National Assembly to live most of the time in the municipalities that they represent in order to become deeply acquainted with the problems of their constituencies.
- Democratic election of the directors of all state centers of production and services by the workers, and in the universities democratic election of rectors, deans, and department heads according to previous established parameters concerning their curricula. The directors of schools will be elected democratically as well.³³
- Although the unity of power will be maintained, decentralization of this power and orientation of it toward the construction of local power. State institutions will

increase in relative autonomy. Party functions and state ones will be very clearly separated-harmonizing the unity of power with the widest separation of functions.

- Publication of a synthesis of the proposals made by the Cuban people in the assemblies of 2007 and discussion of a tentative timetable for adopting these proposals.
- Intensive development of NGOs and significant pluralism in the media, opening more spaces for media not dependent on the state.
- Effective civil-military collaboration.
- Increasing influence for the social sector-both businessmen and workers-linked to foreign investment, as members of the party and of the mass organizations, on the political life of the country.
- A higher profile and role for trade unions in the life of the nation.
- Clear definition of the limits of the political system in favor of the increased autonomy of the economic system and civil society.
- Informative transparency and guaranteed access to information for all citizens, especially through facilities for the use of the Internet and of communication and information technologies. The "secret syndrome" must not justify managing information as a closed estate from which the masses are excluded. This means reliable and systematic information concerning the use of financial resources and access to information produced worldwide.

These features will contribute to a new foundation for consensus and increase the legitimacy of the system and its pluralism while its behavior adjusts to a new system of institutionalized procedures.

The model just described will be favored by the following scenarios: (1) The current consensus concerning policies with regard to young people and religious and intellectual sectors is maintained and widened. (2) Appropriate control, primarily preventive, is achieved over antisocial behaviors that tend to increase delinquency. (3) Dissident and other antisystem groups continue to lack a sizable social base (as they do now) and their activity decreases. (4) The massive antisystem demonstrations of August 4, 1994, the result of the difficult living conditions at the beginning of the Special Period, are not repeated. (5)

33. In the first decades of the revolution, managers and personnel with administrative posts of a certain importance were appointed according to their capabilities in the field and their revolutionary merits. This gave them legitimacy according to the prevailing values. Nevertheless, in the new stage of the revolution with new incoming generations, democratic election could be a way of motivating workers and providing them real participation.

The historical leadership maintains undisputed hegemony in the context of an expanded consensus that prevents the crystallization of a political alternative pole with mass support.

The adoption of the following policy alternatives (among others) by the Cuban leadership would contribute to the consolidation of the model: (1) constitutional reform to establish and guarantee the required political and economic changes; (2) nomination of all candidates for provincial delegates and for representatives to the National Assembly directly by municipal assemblies (today only half of these candidates are nominated directly by the people, while half are nominated by provincial and national commissions); (3) nomination of candidates for president of the Council of State by members of the National Assembly and the election, by secret ballot, of the president by the people (this implies a modification of the current indirect election by the National Assembly); (4) broad dissemination of a report on the handling of the proposals of the Cuban people with regard to measures for improving socialism on the island and the timetable for adopting them, if possible, in the short and medium term; (5) employment of multiple criteria in visualizing the conflict and questioning of the current order from diverse positions (revolutionary or not) as a necessary challenge, just as at the beginning of the revolution, in the process of building a new consensus; (6) elimination of any form of exclusion and discrimination for reasons of race, religion, age, sex, or other (this means adopting policies of affirmative action in relation to the black and mulatto population, homosexuals, women, members of religious groups, and others who have been excluded); (7) extension of participation in the state and in the party not only in the discussion and implementation of decisions but also in the process through which they are adopted; (8) further extension of freedom and creative facilities for intellectuals;³⁴ (9) extension to the maximum of the facilities to travel and to migrate by improving current legislation and adopting other measures (free entry into the country for all holders of Cuban passports and for all citizens of Cuban origin without pending cases in the judicial system, independently of their profession and the

date on which they left the country, will eliminate cumbersome entry and exit permits for Cuban citizens and authorize migration for the children and other family members of professionals (mainly in the health sector) who have up to now been considered “deserters;” (10) establishment of specific time limits for state and party mandates and development of practices that allow revocability of positions through flexible and broadly democratic mechanisms; (11) improvement of policy toward the Cuban community abroad, differentiating the different currents of opinion and pursuing dialogue not only with those who sympathize with the revolution but also with all those who are not active in seeking its overthrow; and (12) declaration of an amnesty that includes all prisoners for offenses against the security of the state, with the exception of those who have committed crimes seriously damaging other human beings or property.

Cuban Foreign Policy Today

The government of Cuba has proposed to the U.S. government an agenda of topics that need to be considered in the course of dialogue and negotiation directed toward improving relations between them: the lifting of the economic, commercial, and financial blockade, removal of Cuba from the list of terrorist countries, abrogation of the Cuban Adjustment Act and the “dry feet/wet feet” policy, compensation for economic and human damages, the return to Cuba of the territory occupied by the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo, an end to radio and television assaults against Cuba, and the cessation of the funding of internal subversion. A key issue on this agenda is the liberation of five antiterrorist Cuban fighters who for 11 years have suffered unjust

34. The cultural domain will be influenced decisively by what happens in other spheres of Cuban society. The victory of the “culture of resistance” that has characterized independent nationalism—in opposition to the view that Cuba cannot be fully independent because of its proximity to the United States—will be fostered by economic development, political tolerance, and the possibility of preserving social achievements, social justice, independence, and sovereignty. In January 2007 there was a great debate among Cuban intellectuals concerning a possible return of the dogmatism in the cultural sphere of the “gray five-year period” (1970-1975), since some of the old hardliners were appearing on television (see Fonet, 2009: 379; Amuchastegui, 2007).

imprisonment in the United States. Measures have been adopted that have weakened the blockade during Obama's first term, and these could be expanded in the future.³⁵

Although Cuba is not a member of the Organization of American States or the Continental Social Alliance, this does not mean that it is isolated in the region. It is a member of ALBA, the Rio Group, the Association of Caribbean States, the Caribbean Community and Common Market, and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System. It takes part in forums such as the Ibero-American summits and has excellent relations with the countries of MERCOSUR. The emergence in the region of radical governments developing alternatives to neoliberalism—Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and El Salvador—has involved a strengthening of Cuba's relations with these countries. Its principal strategic allies will continue to be Venezuela and the countries of ALBA, and existing agreements with Venezuela will be extended and strengthened. Other important strategic allies will continue to be China, Vietnam, and Russia (Suárez, 2009). Relations with Spain and the Vatican will maintain a high profile.³⁶ The steps taken by Cuba in the development of democracy may help to persuade the EU to abandon the Common Position. Cuba will continue to supporting the

35. The pope's visit to Cuba in January 1998, which passed without antisystem incident, had a positive outcome in that it opened up new areas of dialogue between the Church and civil society. The dialogue of May 2010 between President Raúl Castro and Cardinal Jaime Ortega, head of the Cuban Catholic Church, and the one in June with Spanish Minister of Foreign Relations Miguel Angel Moratinos led to the decision of the Cuban government to release before November the 52 remaining prisoners of the 73 dissidents who had been incarcerated in 2003. Moratinos considered these measures very positive and later said in a press conference that this might lead to the elimination of the Common Position of the EU toward Cuba. These measures, as I have pointed out, led Fariñas to end his hunger strike. In addition, the debate of Cuban officials and intellectuals with members of the Cuban community abroad in the Catholic Week of June 2010 and the visit of Vatican Secretary of State Monsignor Mamberti and his meeting with President Raúl Castro are in this line of dialogue and negotiation (Granma, July 8, 2010 [<http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/english/index.html>]; Granma, July 21, 2010 [<http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2010/06/21/nacional/artic08.html>]).

36. On July 4, 2010, Fidel Castro published a reflection on possible U.S. aggression against Iran. On July 13, 2010, he appeared on television for the first time since his illness four years ago and explained his arguments on this issue. He did not refer to the internal situation of the island or to the recent release of the prisoners liberated after a dialogue with the Cuban Church and the Spanish foreign-relations minister.

cause of Palestine and strengthen its relations with the countries of the Middle East.³⁷

The Cuban government could adopt policy alternatives that would help to improve relations with the United States. It could deepen its links with important economic groups in the developed countries and all countries with which it has (or wants to have) important economic relations, since this will create lobbies favorable to good relations with Cuba in all these countries and thus protect the island from changes in policy by the various parties and political classes in power. It could speed up economic and political reforms—not because the United States demands them but out of its own conviction—and thus facilitate the lobbies' work. It could enter into an agreement of cooperation with the EU, as Vietnam has done, with the promise of taking new steps in the development of democracy.

I suggest that a reading of the course of history by the leaderships and political classes and the United States could present unprecedented opportunities for negotiation. If social peace is not maintained in Cuba and the economic crisis causes dramatic fractures of consensus, the current line of negotiating only limited aspects such as migration could prevail. If, in contrast, social peace and a modicum of performance in the economic sphere are maintained in Cuba without serious fractures of consensus, the sectors of the United States that today consider it unacceptable to negotiate with Cuba as was done with China might be ready to agree on a policy that repeats the initial steps of the Carter administration and goes beyond them to lift the blockade and move toward full normalization of relations.

If the U.S. political class observed that the latter scenario prevailed, it might be inclined to initiate a process of negotiation with Cuba, abandoning two prejudices that have prevented the kind of negotia-

37. Nevertheless, taking advantage of the 2000 Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act, "more than 4,350 companies and 132 farm associations and federations, and between 2001 and 2006 159 companies representing 35 states, signed contracts with Cuba involving 300 products. The contracts amounted to some US\$2.28 billion" (Lutjens, 2009: 7).

tions that have taken place with China: displaying a real political will to normalize the relations (a will that has never been present in the Cuban case) rather than just to resolve specific topics of basic interest to the United States (plane kidnappings, migration, the South African conflict in the 1970s and 1980s) and eliminating from the agenda what today it considers the primary issue—a substantial modification of the political regime of the island—in favor of political, economic, military, cultural, juridical, technical, and other topics of bilateral interest (Hernández, 2010c; Domínguez, 2010).

What might lead the U.S. executive and the Congress to forge a consensus in this direction?

The argument that the Cuban issue is a “highly emotional” one—especially with Fidel Castro as secretary of the Cuban Communist Party and Raúl Castro as president of Cuba—does not seem to me to be unavoidable. If prejudices were insurmountable, Nixon's and Kissinger's policy toward China could not have achieved success in negotiations, much less the reestablishment of relations. Although the Chinese case is different in some respects from the Cuban case, this does not affect the validity of the example. The logic and rationality of U.S. interests go against this type of prejudice.

Given that Cuba has not collapsed in spite of the crumbling of European socialism and that an invasion is inadvisable because of the losses that it would cause for the United States in more than one sense, perhaps it would be best to keep on negotiating specific issues such as the migration agreements, weakening the blockade, and finally lifting it. This would allow the United States to try to influence Cuban socialism from inside while allowing U.S. corporations to benefit from enormous earnings on the island. Cuba has reentered international markets and is receiving foreign investment from around the world while North American transnationals have been prevented from profiting from this market.³⁸

Cuba today is not a “threat” as an ally of the former USSR, as it was in the cold war, and is not present in previous theaters of operations of the cold war in Central America and Africa.

In the multilateral arena, the resolution against the blockade that the UN adopts each year is opposed only by the United States, Israel, and some other irrelevant countries. The whole international community, with these exceptions, is against the blockade.

Fidel Castro and Raúl Castro have shown their ability to achieve political stability and consensus on the island, something that a “Cuban” from the Cuban American National Foundation (having proven unable to achieve unity even within the Cuban community in the United States) would not be able to do in a Cuba with capitalism restored after a costly invasion.

Cuba might, after the normalization of relations, turn into a factor of stability in the region because of the importance for the island of its new relationship of equality with the United States.

Is an unstable Cuba in a situation of civil war and endemic conflict better for the United States than a politically stable society with a not insignificant market?³⁹

Why is a Western-style democracy demanded of Cuba but not of China or Vietnam for the lifting of the blockade and the establishment of full diplomatic relations? Why this double standard?

The Cuban political class and leadership are prepared to accept the logic of economic interdependence as a route to overcoming dependency in this area, especially in a world in which, as the Cuban leadership is aware, socialism is neither irreversible nor significantly

38. "Free trade with Cuba would have significant benefits to U.S. economy" and "would create higher productivity and standard of living to the Cuban economy as well" (Lynch, 2005: 44). Depending on possible scenarios with regard to its GDP, "Cuba's exports to the United States would reach \$4.21 billion and imports from the U.S. would be \$9.47 billion by the year 2013. In the next 20 years, exports from Cuba would exceed \$19 billion and the imports from the U.S. would be close to \$29 billion." This relation with Cuba would mean the creation over a 20-year period of from 315, 269 to 845, 621 jobs in the United States.

39.

advancing, despite the important victories and processes of consolidation of leftist governments in Latin America, and in which the alternative is either to be increasingly incorporated into the international and regional economy or to remain on the margins of history. This new perception tends to favor in Cuban optics with more force than ever before, and this points toward a definitive solution to the dispute with United States without abandoning the essence of the nation.

In synthesis, a total lifting of the blockade does not seem to be predictable in the short term. Nevertheless, the economic and political stability of the country could lead the United States to modify its hostile policy and even lift the blockade in the years ahead. Some additional factors could foster this tendency: fear of a crisis of migration, the practically unanimous condemnation of the blockade by the international community in UN resolutions; the persistent rejection by Latin America, the EU (the main commercial partners of Cuba since 1994), and Canada of this anti-Cuban policy; and the growing rejection of this policy in the United States as damaging to the North American people and much of its business community, which opposes its exclusion from a sure, nearby market with numerous other advantages.⁴⁰

Will Socialism in Cuba Survive?

It is obvious that the model of Cuban socialism has survived up to the present because it has managed to avoid being deformed to the same degree as the “real socialism” that crumbled. The Cuban Revolution is the result of a long struggle for sovereignty and equality and has deep historical roots. The leadership has maintained an ethical attitude and has been able to preserve broad consensus through continuing contact with the masses in the most critical situations.

40. An April 2009 CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll showed that 64 percent of Americans surveyed thought that the United States should lift its travel ban on Cuba, while 71 percent thought that the United States should reestablish diplomatic relations with the island nation.

Nevertheless, it would be ingenuous to think that in the short term the current Cuban model will remain unscathed and that it is exempt from deformations, some of them copied from “real socialism” and others that have emerged in an economy under the rule of hard currency with growing inequalities and corruption. Actually, the model has suffered substantial modifications, but the Cuban leadership is trying to preserve the achievements of socialism. Nevertheless, the changes that have occurred since 1989 have been turning Cuban socialism into a society with less equity than before. What is not clear is whether the social cost of the economic reform is making the system more productive. Apparently, this is happening only in the tourist enclaves and other areas where there is foreign capital and economic units operate with hard currency. At the same time, there is efficiency in some state enterprises, mainly those managed by former members of the armed forces.

Is it possible that the hostile U.S. policies and the strategic mistakes committed by the Cuban Revolution, such as the revolutionary offensive of 1968 and the delay of urgent changes, will return the country to the dependent capitalism that reigned in 1959?⁴¹ Would this transition to capitalism be peaceful or through an invasion? Will Washington and the right-wing sectors of Miami be able to frustrate the dreams of José Martí, Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, the Cuban people, and the new generations? Is victory possible for the line of historical thought that has asserted since the nineteenth century that Cuba cannot be fully independent—that dependence on the United States is both more profitable for the island and unavoidable in geopolitical terms?

The long tradition of struggle of the Cuban people is not in harmony with this notion. The island will not go back to dependent capitalism, lack of sovereignty, and all the inequalities and injustices of Cuban society before the revolution. Transformation toward a twenty-

41. The revolutionary offensive of 1968 practically eliminated small private businesses. A small group of independent workers was authorized, and 30 percent of the land was left in private hands with its owners required to sell their production to the state.

first-century socialism consistent with the historical roots of the Cuban Revolution is the more probable scenario. It will be necessary to reestablish consensus on new bases if a renewed and redefined socialism is to avoid the threats, both internal and external, that hover over one of the most fascinating and controversial experiments of “Our America.”

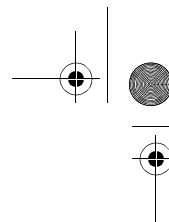
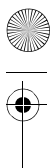
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3 Parameters, Uncertainty and Recognition: The Politics of Culture in Cuba



Yvon Grenier

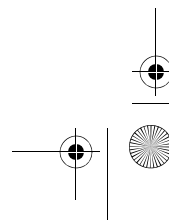
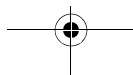
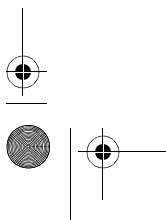
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Hoy, la vida cultural y social del país ha vuelto a poner una vez más sobre el tapete muchas preguntas más concretas que, aun después de 'Palabras a los intelectuales', quedaron sin una respuesta amplia, clara y categórica: ¿Qué fenómenos y procesos de la realidad cultural y social cubana forman parte de la Revolución y cuáles no? ¿Cómo distinguir qué obra o comportamiento cultural actúa contra la Revolución, cuál a favor y cuál simplemente no la afecta? ¿Que crítica social es revolucionaria y cuál es contrarrevolucionaria? ¿Quién, cómo y según qué criterios decide cuál es la respuesta correcta a esas preguntas?

Desiderio Navarro (2008: 19)

Fifty years after Fidel Castro's famous June 1961 speech at the National Library, it is still impossible to know what is "within" and "outside" La Revolución. When Leonid Brezhnev announced on August 3rd, 1968 that "each Communist party is free to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialism in its own country, but it is not free to deviate from these principles if it is to remain a Communist Party," I presume that back home, people understood this as a reminder of who was in charge in Moscow, not as an



attempt to clarify those “principles” (quoted in Judt, 2007: 422). Fifty years ago, Cubans had not yet experienced many of such teaching moments. The rhetorical question by Cuban intellectual Desiderio Navarro, quoted above, would have been topical in 1961; it seems naïve and possibly disingenuous in 2007. After all, if such a fundamental question has not yet been answered properly, chances are that it cannot be, and perhaps Navarro could consider drawing lessons from that. What is striking here is the mix of certainty (*La Revolución*) and uncertainty (what is within it and what is not?) that characterizes the regime, as well as the ambivalence of an important Cuban intellectual, who manifestly wants to do his job and ask tough questions, but without crossing a line—ironically, the same elusive line that is the object of his question. In this paper I propose some conceptual tools to analyze this strange mix of uncertainty and ambivalence, with the objective of contributing to knowledge on possibilities of political participation (especially by artists and intellectuals) in non-democratic regimes.

Uncertainty

To analyze the authoritarian regulation of *uncertainty* in Cuba, I propose to revisit and theorize the concept of “parameter,” which designates formal and informal political constraints on participation. Cultural agents in Cuba (I mean artists, writers, academics, intellectuals and cultural bureaucrats), are familiar with both the term parameter and the practices of *parametrage* or *parametración*. I argue that parameters are not created equal. Navarro and other intellectuals conceivably know that one set of parameters is unmistakable in Cuba: the ones shielding the meta-political (foundational) narrative of the regime, which I call *primary parameters*. These parameters shield three dogmas: a) *La Revolución* is an ongoing process or movement (i.e. not a past event); b) *La Revolución* is Fidel Castro (and Raul) and vice versa; and c) *La Revolución* is a unifying force (e.g. what fosters divisions is counter-revolutionary). The past, present and future of *La Revolución* are in movement, subject to redefinition by itself, which practically means by the Castro brothers. If in other communist countries the state is the administrative agency of the Communist party, in Cuba the state and the party are the administrative agencies of *La Revolución*/the Castro brothers. Primary parameters directly shield top leaders from criticism coming from lower ranks. In that pyramidal scheme, however, only one leader, at the top, is beyond criticism (not count-

ing auto-criticism): he is both the power and the opposition. Over the past twenty years it has been increasingly possible to criticize the (defunct) Soviet Union but not Fidel Castro's decision to align the country on the USSR or to mimic its policies. Errors can be "rectified" and some officials may be removed from their positions. The top leadership/*La Revolución* is never asked to pay for them.

The central role of the Cuban leadership and the Cuban Communist Party (CPP) in providing politico-cultural orientation to the State, the mass organizations and the Cuban nation is reiterated in all official documents directly or indirectly concerning cultural policies in Cuba: the Constitution of 1976 (and its amended version in 1992); the "tesis and resoluciones" of five congresses of the CCP concerning art, literature and culture; official declarations during cultural events; speeches by Minister of culture Armando Hart (1976-97) and his successor (Abel Prieto, 1997-); and last but not least, speeches by Fidel Castro, in particular his foundational *Palabras a los intelectuales* at the National Library (June 1961) and his closing speech at the 1971 Congress on Education and Culture. In most documents or proclamations on culture, one finds the routine quotation from Fidel Castro or views explicitly drawn from what Armando Hart once called "la sustancia del pensamiento de Fidel" (Hart Dávalos, 1988: 3).

The dogma according to which *La Revolución* is an ongoing process or movement is arguably the core of the master narrative. It is probably unique: to my knowledge, leaders of countries in the Soviet bloc, China, North Korea or Vietnam do not constantly refer to the government as "the revolution." Mexicans "institutionalized" their revolution. Needless to explain, in Cuba the revolutionary myth (following Mircea Eliade's definition: myth as the "sacred history of origins") has been a dominant feature of Cuban politics for a century. A truly radical (dare I say: "revolutionary?") position in Cuban politics would be to proclaim that the revolution is over, and that other sources of legitimacy and meaning must be found. Interestingly, much of the academic work on Cuba, including critical works from outside the island, routinely fail to unpack this myth of revolution. Thus, a quick review of scholarly publications reveals that political change in Cuba is usually conceived as makeovers of the revolution, attempts to "reinvent revolution," to "make new revolutionary cultures," to start a "second revolution," and the

like (Brenner et al, 2007; Bunck, 1994; Miller, 2008; Fernandes, 2006). Seemingly, nothing significant can take place outside *La Revolución*.

Secondary parameters delimit political participation *within* the system. Made of both implicit and explicit rules, these parameters are a constant source of uncertainty because implicit rules are typically unclear and explicit ones tend to change frequently.¹ Crossing the line delineated by the secondary parameters can be construed as a venial offence. This can be redeemed—unlike disrespect of primary parameters (mortal sin!), which cannot. Both offends *La Revolución* but in the first instance, *La Revolución* may be merciful. Writers, artists and especially intellectuals are dealing with parameters in a very special way, because parameters shape not only their daily routine and lifestyle but also their work. They have more to win if they do it well and more to lose if they don't. In that sense, Montaner is probably right to contend that “there is no other group in Cuba more nervous than intellectuals” (Montaner, 1999: 124).

The arbitrariness and the uncertainty of rule is a common denominator of all political systems not anchored in the rule of law. This uncertainty is compounded in “revolutionary” regimes such as the Cuban's because of the fundamentally contradictory nature of the master narrative (Goldfarb, 1978; Lefort, 1999). Recalling Paul Valéry's *bon mot* that “two mortal dangers threaten humanity: order and disorder,” one can argue that order (the state, the regime, the statu quo) and disorder (revolution, insurgency, and concomitantly criticism, imagination, and autonomy) represent a danger *for each other*. They require very different sets of skills and dispositions. Communism is a humanistic ideology theoretically impervious to dogmatism and alienation. In practice it has been the official ideology of totalitarian states. Unlike non-mobilizational forms of autocratic government, communist regimes always appear to care deeply for culture, humanity, *l'homme*. And yet, Communist parties rarely make their top positions available to intellectuals (the Italian Communist Party being the exception), especially if they are in power. Intellectuals have been the prime victims of communist and revolutionary regimes. Communist regimes typically have ambiguous justification for the distribution of power in society. Under the oxymoron “Democratic central-

1. For instance, over the past five decades it has been more or less advisable to be Christian, heterosexual, to have no contacts with family in exile or with foreigners, not to speak out of turn about economic reform or corruption, to criticize the Soviet Union (during the late 1980s), to praise the Soviet Union, to demonstrate peacefully, and so on.

ism” one typically finds in official rhetoric numerous calls for unwavering obedience to the leader and the party, and simultaneously a celebration of debates and criticism (especially by Raul Castro since 2006). A cursory review of public declarations by cultural officials in Cuba shows that censors routinely condemn self-censorship, challenging intellectuals and artists to be more audacious and critical (Acosta, 2007).

Thus, cultural policy in Cuba seems to be an exercise in contradictions. Consider the views, enunciated by Minister of Culture Armando Hart, that “El materialismo dialéctico e histórico es la negación consecuente del dogmatismo, de la escolástica y es el rechazo más profundo del librepensador” (Hart Dávalos, 1987: 3). Or talking about cultural organizations, an official document points out that “institutos y consejos no son parte del gobierno: están subordinados al gobierno, que es algo distinto. Son instituciones culturales, no gubernamentales, subordinadas al gobierno” (República de Cuba, 2002: 6). These are fundamental contradictions, not merely “gaps” between the “State’s rhetoric” and reality (Geoffray, 2008: 12).

Ambivalence

The literature on participation by artists and intellectuals in Cuba almost always build on the premise that they are uniquely wired to strive for more autonomy and “space” within the system, constantly pushing back the frontiers of the permissible.² This is consistent with common definitions of the intellectual (definitions of the intellectual are typically self-definitions) as someone who is hard wired to question dominant values and institutions.³ When coupled with their distinctive capacity to imagine a better world, no wonder they have been feared (and co-opted) by the powerful since Antiquity. While intellectuals find themselves in a fairly different situation in Cuba than in the rest of Latin America, it has been noticed that in this country artists and writers (and to a lesser extent academics) enjoy more freedom than

2. In this paper “intellectual” means someone who manages to leverage authority gained from peers in one field of knowledge or culture to become a publicly-recognized authority on fundamental (as opposed to merely practical) public issues (Grenier, 2005). Octavio Paz once said that in Latin America almost all writers are intellectuals, though not all intellectuals are writers. This is probably true for Cuba as well. In this paper I sometimes talk about writers, artists and academics, but most of the time I concentrate on intellectuals.

3. In contrast with the typical portrait of the Latin American intellectual, however, Cubans are not presented as the voiceless or the critical conscience of the people: the government does that; they mostly look after themselves.

the average citizen, conditional on their loyalty to *La Revolución*.⁴ Whatever extra “space” they enjoy, the argument goes, it must have been laboriously earned. From there it is tempting to speculate that in a transition to a more open Cuba, intellectuals would find themselves in the forefront of the emancipation movement.

The available evidence suggests that cultural agents in Cuba crave less for autonomy than for *recognition*—by peers, cultural institutions and especially by the state. They probably crave for a certain degree autonomy, for it is necessary for artistic or intellectual development. Furthermore, it is probably true that art, literature and at least some of the work done by social scientists can be in and of themselves a repository of autonomy, resistance and even opposition to dominant values and institutions (van Delden and Grenier, 2009).⁵ Artists and writers (or shall we say, their work) can even be unwittingly critical. This is why autocrats never completely trust them and rarely give them any political power. Even official art, literature and scholarship can be the depot of counter-narratives (Suleiman, 1983). Finally, ideological cravings were a important variable for some years after the 1959 victory.

Artists and writers always seek recognition, at least by some peers. In Cuba the battles within the intelligentsia during the sixties was clearly a battle for recognition by the state fueled by an inflation of ideological cravings. The typical “official intellectual” of the following decades is the writer-bureaucrat who achieved recognition by the state at the price of his/her autonomy, with or without ideological cravings. As Lisandro Otero once proclaimed, during the fourth congress (1988) of the Union of Cuban writers and Artists, “el intelectual en una sociedad auténticamente revolucionaria tiene ante sí el deber de consentir” (UNEAC, 1988: 2).⁶ Over the past twenty years cultural agents present (or reinvent) themselves as craving for more autonomy, less ideology but no less recognition, this time not only by the state, cultural institutions and peers but also, significantly, by the global market, the access to which being granted by the state.

4. Cuban sociologist Haroldo Dilla talks about “las precariedades de la subordinación negociada” (Dilla, 2007). Similar observations have been made about the “velvet prison” of artists under state socialism (Haraszti, 1987; Fernandes, 2006: 188).

5. Haroldo Dilla argues that in Cuba social scientists have less autonomy than artists, “because the field is subject to harsh scrutiny by the ideological apparatus, which is inextricably linked to the fact that, unlike artists, social scientists have the professional obligation to demonstrate, as well as the temptation to solve” (Dilla, 2005: 39). I would argue that in fact, writers and sometimes artists often experience this same craving to demonstrate and solve, and for the benefit of the public at large, not just students and colleagues.

Post-Soviet Downsizing

Cuban writer Leonardo Padura Fuentes contends that the three major features of the post-Soviet period for writers and artists has been “the winning of space by the creators to express themselves,” the “crisis of cultural production” (particularly in the first half of the 1990s) and “the massive (voluntary) exile of Cuban artists” (Padura Fuentes, 2007: 350). What Padura Fuentes presents as a “winning of space,” presumably earned by, not merely granted to, “creators,” Yoáni Sánchez sees as mutual accommodation with the state. For her, “the advent of the nineties substituted the carrot for the stick:”

Instead of repudiation rallies—screaming mobs surrounding their homes—public scorn and threats of prison, intellectuals were offered small stipends. These were no longer the times of the so-called Padilla Affair, in which a visibly frightened poet was forced to read a public mea culpa for the verses that flowed from his pen, and ultimately to pay for his “sins” with a decade in prison followed by exile. Now they decided to capture the intellectuals with perks, such as permission to travel abroad and the possibility of paying for the trips in national currency, instead of the high cost convertible pesos required from other Cubans. Members of the Cuban Writers and Artists Union (UNEAC) were allowed to have an email account, and some even received a prized home internet connection (Sánchez, 2010; see also Geoffray, 2008: 112; Pérez & Sánchez Mejía, 1996).

A similar policy of the “carrot” was successfully implemented for decades by the PRI in Mexico.

The opening of the cultural sector to transnational market forces in the 1990s prompted cultural agents to modify their strategies for recognition. The “commodification of [the Cuban] identity,” for instance, had an impact on the art and literature of the “special period” (Whitfield, 2008: 2). The time when everything was either mandatory or forbidden came to an end. Before one concludes that these are evidence of liberalization, it is useful to consider Javier Corrales’ interpretation of uneven economic reforms in

6. On the UNEAC website, Otero (2010) remembers that “En nuestra Unión de Escritores y Artistas quedó nítidamente señalado que desde los intelectuales que fundaron nuestra nacionalidad hasta quienes empuñaron las armas para defender nuestra revolución socialista existía una continuidad. Un mismo latido, una misma razón, un mismo ímpetu es el que ha definido a nuestros creadores en su búsqueda de una transformación de la vida. Hubo escritores y artistas en Yara y en el Moncada, los hubo en Baire y en Girón, los hubo en la milicia y en la zafra, los hubo en las líneas antifascistas de España, en el Escambray, en las brozas de África, los hubo en todos los enfrentamientos, en todas las trincheras, en todas las lidias ideológicas. Y con ese mismo espíritu combativo y resuelto la UNEAC continúa.”

Cuba. For Corrales, these reforms “served to strengthen the power of the state vis-à-vis society, and within the state, the power of hard-liners.” He continues: “This new type of state, which I call ‘the gatekeeper state,’ dominates society through a new mechanism—it fragments the economy into different sectors of varying degrees of profitability and then determines which citizens have access to each respective sector” (Corrales, 2002). The “gatekeeper” model applies to the cultural field as well. Not all writers and artists benefit equally from the new environment. Furthermore, one author suggested that the “exodus has become one of the most profitable industry for the Cuban government: sale of exit visas, invitation cards and passports—all in dollars, of course” (García, 1998: 44).

The massive exodus of artists and (to a lesser extent) writers and academics during the 1990s reduced the competition for recognition in Cuba. The lower level of competition coupled with the newly acquired perks made the life of established intellectuals relatively comfortable, by Cuban standards (Johnson, 2003: 152). Rather than a competition between various factions within the island, the new significant alternative is between staying or leaving.

The 1990s brought an ideological downsizing too. Wooden Marxism-Leninism lost ground, Martí gained some. “National-Leninism” is probably a good characterization of the renewed official ideology. As Tony Judt once remarked, in a discussion on post-Soviet Eastern Europe, nationalism and Marxism-Leninism share a similar “syntax” (collective identity, threatened by an external agent). In Cuba the common syntax points to a common enemy: the US. In the post-Soviet environment, writers and artists can choose not to be “political” (i.e. choose “la cubanidad” over “la cubanía”).⁷ More, depoliticization is used by the government to redeem pre-revolutionary or Cuban-American writers (in fact, to absolve itself from the past ostracism of these writers). Previously censored authors such as César López or Antón Arrufat can now be celebrated and their works published. They typically respond with more than forgiveness: they offer gratitude.

7. See the distinction between *cubanía* (revolutionary), *cubanidad* (patriotic but not political) and *anti-cubanía* (counter-revolutionary) proposed by the Minister of Culture Abel Prieto (Prieto, 1994) and insightful comments on this matrix by Rafael Rojas (Rojas, 2009).

The Politico-Cultural Field

From the onset the goal of the new “revolutionary” regime has been to create “a new man in a new society” Official documents talk about *La Revolución* as “the most important cultural fact of our history” (Ministerio de Cultura, 1977). The mass media, as well as education and cultural policies, were quickly mobilized to promote the state's new agenda. A new and extensive Politico-Cultural Field (PCF) was created, within which operate cultural agents.⁸ In this “new society” the scope of what could be expressed was reduced, but the range of cultural activities and their access by the population in general expanded. One recognizes here the imprint of communist cultural policy. As Milosz once wrote about realist socialism (the ideal-typical cultural policy of communist regime): it “fortifie les petits talents et mutile les grands” [it strengthens modest talents and mutilates great ones] (Milosz, 1988: 206).

The contours of the PCF were never confined to the purview of state's cultural organizations. The Communist Party and its youth branch, its sections responsible for ideological vigilance, all mass organizations,⁹ unions (such as the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Artes y Espectáculos), the ministries of interior¹⁰ and education are all involved. The cultural section of the army's Verde Olivo was famously used, at the end of the 1960s, to assert the communist policy in culture (one remembers the anonymous attacks of “Leopoldo Avila”). When culture is dominated by politics, culture is politics by other means.

The PCF has been headed, like any other fields in Cuba, by Fidel Castro, followed by Raul and their close collaborators of the moment. The Ministry of Culture was created in 1976, in replacement of the National Council for Culture (under the authority of the Ministry of Education). The PCF is also shaped institutionally by the intersection of culture with other policy areas and institutions, in particular education (which can be seen as a sub-field of the PCF) and the economy.

8. I use the notion of political field (*le champ culturel*) developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1992), but add “political” to correct a sociologism that is inappropriate for the study of Cuba.

9. “Las organizaciones de masas y los organismos estatales, mantendrán una lucha en favor de la superación político-ideológica de los trabajadores de la cultura, de su vinculación y conocimiento de la realidad social...” (PCC, First Congress. “Resolucion” 31).

10. Raul Castro's son, Alejandro Castro Espín, wrote a book entitled *Imperio del terror* recently published by the editorial Capitán San Luis of the MININT!

It is significant that the key institutions regulating culture were all put in place early on, before the creation of the ruling party; institutions such as the *Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* (ICAIC), created in March of 1959; the *Casa de las Américas*, in April of 1959; and the *Unión de Artistas y Escritores de Cuba* (UNEAC) in April of 1961.¹¹ No doubt a writers' association would have been created earlier if writers had not been fighting each other so fiercely (*Lunes de la Revolución* v. *Hoy Domingo*) for recognition by the new political leadership.

I called these "secondary" institutions. "Primary" institutions are the Communist Party, its Central Committee and its Department of culture; the highest organs of executive power; and within all those, transcending them, the Castro brothers. They organize, control and represent "cultural workers" "within" *La Revolución*, emulating the Soviet model. They have at times provided some space for "dissonance" (Ivan de la Nuez's term) as well as shelter for individuals momentarily victimized by another organization within the PCF and/or directly by the political leadership. This occasional protective role appeared to be a consequence of the fact that UNEAC, ICAIC and the *Casa de las Américas* were founded and directed for decades by close collaborators of Fidel Castro from way back: respectively, by Nicolás Guillén, Alfredo Guevara and Haydée Santamaría. In Cuba the political is personal.¹² When a writer or an artist fell in disgrace, he or she could be ousted from an organization (a research center, a cultural supplement, a jury) with a permission to join another organization in the field, in some other capacity: for instance, becoming translator (Padilla), librarian (Arrufat), civil servant

11. They were followed by an impressive number of organizations and organizations such as the Instituto del Libro (1965), the Casas de la Cultura, the Association 'Hermanos Saiz' (AHS), the Ferias internacionales del libro, the Festival del nuevo cine latinoamericano, the Bienal for visual art, Centers dedicated and named after Wilfredo Lam, Juan Marinello, José Martí, the Centro Teórico-Cultural Criterios, among others.

12. On the Cuban Communist Party's website, the UNEAC (like the Unión de Periodistas de Cuba) is presented as a "non-governmental organization." In fact, it is squarely a government organization. For a Cuban writer or artist, the road to insilio or exile often starts with a condemnation or expulsion from UNEAC (For instance, in 1991, in response to a petition signed by ten writers who asked for more civil and political liberties. See Díaz Martínez, 1996.) Recently a petition for the released of political prisoners and in support of Orlando Zapata Tamayo was apparently signed by 50,000 individuals, including several members of the UNEAC (Yoani Sánchez's blog, 10 August 2010). It is likely that opportunities to publish abroad and collect royalties will free writers from tight control by UNEAC. The Casa de las Américas was founded by the government in April of 1959 and has been under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture since August 1978. Its presidents have all been prestigious insiders: Haydée Santamaría (1923-1980), Mariano Rodríguez (1912-1990) and now Roberto Fernández Retamar (Fornet, 2001; Lie, 1996).

(Cesar López), or collaborator in film production (Jesus Diaz)—perhaps preferable to inspector of poultry at the Buenos Aires market (Jorge Luis Borges). . .

The 1960s proved to be a fairly oppressive and repressive decade for Cuban artists, writers and academics. Interestingly, it is rarely presented as such, even by opponents of the regime, probably because at the time cultural actors typically strove to redeem their “original sin” (not participating in the insurgency against Batista). After a period of intense ideological cravings (bordering on the religious, as Rafael Rojas suggested) and competition for recognition, many intellectuals were marginalized and censored. The repression of the following decade, now officially recognized as the only dark period of cultural repression in Cuba, was more systematic and coherent but it was probably less extensive than during the 1960s.¹³

Within the PCF, competition for recognition between different groups have emerged periodically. The battles brought to an end publications and groups like *Lunes de Revolución* (1959-61), *El Puente* (1961-65), the cultural supplement of *Juventud Rebelde* under the directorship of Jesús Díaz entitled *El Caimán Barbudo* (1966-83), *Pensamiento Crítico* (1967-71), the *Centro de Estudios de América*, *Paideia* and *Naranja Dulce* (Martínez Pérez, 2006; Menton, 1975; Rojas, 2009). They were all ran by writers who thought of themselves as avant-garde revolutionary intellectuals or artists. Because they were embracing La Revolución and acted as if they had been recognized as the new cultural elite, many mistakenly assumed they could be a bit irreverent, affect an aesthetic detachment, be humorous, even ridiculed their bureaucratic superiors (Díaz, 2000; Collmann, 2000). They soon found out that one can unwittingly stray “outside” *La Revolución*. None were ever “anti-establishment” and many of the individuals continued to strive for recognition by the state after their fall.

Guessing the Secondary Parameters

Academics, writers and artists can talk about problems and challenges in Cuba. Errors can be called as such, if some of the following conditions are met: 1) they were already identified as such by the political leadership; 2) they

13. Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez concurs: “the 1970s were in fact kinder than the 1960s.” In Kirk and Padura Fuentes, 2001: 10.

occurred in the past, preferably a distant one; 3) the culprits are middle men, the bad bureaucrats, or a collective deficit in revolutionary spirit; not the leaders in power.¹⁴ Injustices committed by the state against certain individuals can be regretted if those individuals are not deemed “counter-revolutionary” (i.e. if they never explicitly challenged the master narrative). If they did, the non-political part of their cultural contribution can now be recognized but the overall judgment on them as human beings should remain typically negative.¹⁵ Finally, it is possible to ask *La Revolución* to live up to its own ideals, if it is done in a constructive fashion. The line not to be crossed is: loyalty to the top leadership/*La Revolución* and acquiescence to what Raymond Aron, in his perceptive analysis of Soviet totalitarianism, called the *principe unitaire* (principle of unity).

Within such parameters, what can be publicly said about the challenges facing the country is obviously limited though potentially significant. The dissonant views that can be expressed within these parameters are mostly found in electronic journal destined to foreign readership, in close doors colloquium like *Temas'* monthly *Ultimo Jueves* or *Criterios'* sessions on cultural policy, in essays and interviews (again, mostly published abroad), and importantly (because it has much more resonance within the island) in cinema (in particular during the Festival de La Habana), literature and visual arts. The space between this kind of dissonance and what can be read in *Granma*, *Cuba socialista* or *La Jiribilla* basically marks the boundaries of the secondary parameters.

Interestingly, the current minister of culture and former UNEAC President Abel Prieto seems to have become the writers and artists' man in Havana, the writer-minister-politburo member who protects them against narrow-minded cultural commissars. In a comment on the movie *Fresa y Chocolate*, Minister Prieto said that “*Fresa y chocolate* is an artistic synthesis of the kind of unity in diversity that we need. That is to say, Cuban homosexuals have to submit themselves to this process of unity without losing their

14. This is a common theme in the novel of the special period (Behar, 2009; Whitfield, 2008; Hernandez-Reguant, 2009).

15. If that person is still in exile, a fortiori a vocal opponent, then s/he is described as having profound moral or psychological flaws: the person is vain, disturbed, greedy, vindictive, and the like). (Curiously, this practice is adopted by many foreign academics: see for instance Chanan, 2004). Worst: the person is *ninguneada*. See the recent affirmation on exiled artists by Abel Prieto: “Con excepción de uno o dos de los bailarines del Ballet Nacional, todo lo demás no tiene el menor valor para la cultura cubana” (EER, Wed. February 6, 2008).

identity” (quoted in Fernandes, 2006: 61). The film can be tolerated, concludes Fernandes, “because it puts forth a narrative of incorporation rather than autonomy as the basis for recognition” (Fernandes, 2006: 61). Another interesting example: during the 2009 Bienal of Havana in 2009, artist Tania Bruguera sparked a scandal with her impromptu call for “democracy” and “freedom.” After being promptly condemned by the event’s organizing committee, it received support from Minister Prieto. Bruguera was mightily impressed: “No es un burócrata, no encierra las cosas en viejas trampas y entiende el valor del arte para el discurso político con creatividad. [...] La institución entendió que lo que hago viene de un lugar que es el de la crítica revolucionaria y constructiva que aprendí en la escuela, y esto ayudó. Lo que podría cambiar es lo que cada cual entiende por revolucionario.” Perhaps this marks a certain centralization of power at the expense of secondary institutions, within the PCF.¹⁶ In the new gatekeeper state, nothing but a connection at the top carries weight.

Interviews with Cuban artists and writers provide further illustrations of how one can handle parameters in Cuba (From Cuba, 2002; Behar, 2009; Kirk and Padura Fuentes, 2001). Let’s look, for instance, at a collection of interviews realized in Cuba, with the help of UNEAC, by Canadian Professor John M. Kirk and Cuban writer Leonardo Padura Fuentes (Kirk and Padura Fuentes, 2001). The “stars interviewed belong to the Cuban cultural ‘establishment’ in that they enjoy support, prestige, and official recognition” (p.xvii). However, many “have suffered censorship, and some have been persecuted.” Kirk adds that “all expressed great admiration for the work of the current minister [of culture], the writer Abel Prieto, who as president of the UNEAC had fought against such prejudices” (p.xxiii). If some deplores errors, readers should make no mistake: “without exception, all expressed their belief that the situation for intellectuals had improved in recent years” (p.xxiii).

Silvio Rodríguez (1946-) recalls how silly it was to have been censored in the early 1960s, for publicly expressing admiration for the Beatles. We are

16. Incidentally, what does the new Department of culture (2006) of the CPP’s Central Committee want from the UNEAC in 2007, according to its director Eliades Acosta (2007)? “Una nueva UNEAC, que en alguna medida nos recuerde la de los inicios, pero que sea la de hoy. [...] Que no sea una agencia de viajes, ni una agencia de comercialización, ni un lugar para beber, que no favorezca capillas que luchan por cuotas de poder, ni cree caldos de cultivo a egoísmos. Creo en una UNEAC viva, valiente, cívica, escuchada y respetada.” This sounds much like Carlos Aldana.

told that the main culprit—a single individual named Alberto Batista—now lives in Miami. What really bothered Rodríguez wasn't the interdiction to sing: it was the accusation that he had nothing to do with the revolution: "I was mad, really mad, because nobody—absolutely nobody—had the right to exclude me from the revolution..." (p.10). About the present, he deplores "the lack of communication and of information in Cuba" and the lack of "freedom." It's worth recalling that in March of 2010 (so many years after he gave that interview), Rodríguez suggested that the "r" of revolution should be dropped, that an "evolution" is now in order. It is a very "revolutionary" perspective in a country like Cuba to renounce the "r." Nevertheless, his comments remain vague, the "evolution" appearing to be a way of extending *La Revolución*. In February of 2008, he made waves by calling for greater freedom to travel. As the most famous singer of the Nova Trova and probably the best known cultural ambassador for *La Revolución* in Latin America, no doubt he can afford a bit more space than the ordinary "cultural worker." Significantly, the other famous Trovador, Pablo Milanés, made critical comments around the same time while performing in Spain. He said that "one must condemn [the government] from the human perspective if Fariñas dies."¹⁷ Milanés, who was briefly interned in the UMAP in the 1960s, affirmed that "ideas must be discussed and engaged in battles of ideas, they should not be incarcerated."¹⁸ Affirmations such as these are not explicit challenges to the primary parameters but they are still meaningful in a country like Cuba.

Let's look at a few more examples. The case of Antón Arrufat (1935-) is well known. For many years he was prevented from publishing and sent to work at the municipal library in a suburb of Havana, where he wasn't allowed to receive visitors or messages, or to write. This lasted nine years. Then, he "wrote a letter to Fidel." Twenty-two days later he got a reply and a job as editor of *Revolución y Cultura* (though he could not publish for one more year). In 1981 his novel *La caja está cerrada* was published. As he puts it: "My rehabilitation had begun, and it has continued to this day." He was awarded the Carpentier Prize by the Cuban government at the Ninth International Havana Book Fair in February 2000. Arrufat recalls that "... in my case no leaders ever told me why they objected to my work. Instead, they broke all

17. Guillermo Fariñas is a political dissident and Sakharov prize recipient who held two hunger strikes in 2006 and 2010, both to protest against the detention of prisoners of conscience.

18. In *El Nuevo Herald*, 13 March 2010.

communication with Padilla and with me. There was never the slightest effort at conversation or negotiation. Not even the slightest lobbying. It was simply conveyed to us that we had committed an error and that they had to punish us, making an example of us as a warning to others” (p.31). Asked if he ever receive an apology: “Here in Cuba, errors are rectified in silence.” Then he puts a lid on it: “Without a doubt, the matter has been rectified. After the Ministry of Culture was founded, things improved under Armando Hart. Some matters became more flexible, more intelligent. I was lowly rehabilitated, I started to publish, they gave me several awards, and I was allowed to travel abroad again” (p.33-34).¹⁹

Pablo Armando Fernández, *ex-subdirector de Lunes* and director of *Unión* (1987-94) won the National prize for Culture in 1981, the Critics' Prize for *Campo de amor y batalla* in 1985 and the Cuba's 1996 National Prize for Literature. We are told by the editors that “for almost three decades he was one of the black sheep of the Cuban cultural fold. He was savagely attacked by the cultural commissars, who forced him to work for nine years in a printing press. Then they refused to publish his work for fourteen years and would not allow him to leave the island for another thirteen years” (p.78-79). Fernández's overall assessment: “After all that I've been through, I think I have the right to publish a book entitled ‘The Book of Infamy.’ It would not be fair to do so, however, because these events have nothing to do with the revolution per se” (p.88). Censorship doesn't exist today in Cuba “anymore.” Then he proceeds to attack what he calls “literature of exile.”

Nancy Morejón, the Afro-Cuban “poetess of the revolution,” hardly sees any problem in the cultural field except the fact that bookstore do not have a special stand to display books (such as hers) who receive prizes (p.111). And yet, she too was on a black list, in the 1960s. She have good things to say about Padilla the poet but as an individual he lacked “maturity.” Errors were committed on both sides. She adopts the official line on freedom: “I feel that Cuban writers today are demanding things that simply cannot be conceded in a period like this... [...]. Moreover, ‘freedom’ has many facets, and many

19. In an article published in *La Gaceta de Cuba* (a UNEAC publication), Arrufat make comments about Virgilio Piñera that could apply to his own itinerary. Piñera, we are told, “fue un marginado literario, no fue, como se ha afirmado en el extranjero, un perseguido.” For him, “nunca, además, decidió apartarse ni eligió el aislamiento en respuesta. [...] Fue rasgo permanente de su persona, desde que, en los primeros meses del triunfo se integró al proceso, hasta su muerte, al estar dispuesto a participar” (Arrufat, 1987: 19).

people think that they have to make demands on the state for their freedom” (p.117).

Roberto Fernández Retamar is director of *Casa de las Américas* and the Center for Martí studies, as well as a member of the National Assembly and the Council of State. He was nominated the first secretary of UNEAC in 1961. He won the National Prize for Literature in Cuba and an award from the Latin American Studies Association in 2008. Retamar is as “official” an intellectual as can be in Cuba. In the interview he talks about the need “to obtain the greatest possible freedom that we can,” but emphasizes that it is contingent, a “relative” idea. Retamar thinks that it is “immature” not to include dissident writers such as Cabrera Infante in Dictionary of Cuban literature. Retamar says that “I have been, am, and always will be opposed to such acts” (meaning excluding writers), and “I also understand that it will soon be impossible to stop publishing a writer because of nonliterary reasons” (my emphasis).²⁰ At the same time, “there are also some writers whose opinions can cause a great deal of irritation because of their fierce opposition and their lies about Cuba. It will be more difficult to publish their work than that of other writers. That is only natural” (p.126-7). He too admits that “errors” were committed in the past, for instance in the government’s “hostility” toward homosexuals, though in his view this problem was not “invented by the revolution.” *Lunes de Revolución* was “in the hands of a person [Carlos Franqui] who, despite literary ability, was profoundly disturbed. He was also a professional liar, as can be seen in his nonliterary texts.” (p.127). After roundly attacking Padilla, he admits that the affair should have been “handled with more tact” (p.128). This view, also found in Alfredo Guevara’s memoirs, is part of the official position on Padilla and the “affair.”

Another interesting source of insight is the famous exchange of heated emails among Cuban intellectuals, in January and February 2007, in reaction to the appearance on TV of the former head of the National Culture Council from 1971 to 1976 and main implementer of the repressive policies known as the *Quinquenio Gris*: Luis Pavón. These emails were eventually published on a Cuban website entitled Consenso (not in mass media). In a long

20. One recalls his role in the Cuban condemnation of Pablo Neruda and Carlos Fuentes for their participation to the PEN Club meeting in New York in 1969. Carlos Fuentes, who calls Retamar “Zhdanov Retamar,” insists that he included in the petition Alejo Carpentier and José Lezama Lima without asking their permission. Neruda called him “El Sargento” and in Fuentes’ novel *Cristóbal Nonato*, he is the inspiration for the character “El Sargento del Tamal.” See Fuentes, 2003.

statement about the errors committed in the area of cultural policy, Ambrosio Fornet mentions Fidel Castro's "Palabra a los intelectuales" as "fortunately" the "main organizing principle of our cultural policy" over the past decades, "except during the dramatic interregnum of the pavonato" (Fornet, 2007). Fornet talks about the First Congress on Education and Culture of 1971 and about a Commission of that Congress as a turning point allowing a certain faction to take over most of the cultural field, with only a few organizations like UNEAC and ICAIC preserving some autonomy. For Fornet the nightmare ended on November 30th, 1976, when the new Ministry of Culture was created and Armando Hart became minister. Desiderio Navarro goes a bit farther: "In my article, 'In media res publicas' I have talked about the responsibility of politicians and the limitations of the critical role of the intellectual—above all in the years in which culture was conducted by Luis Pavón—but this is only half the problem. The other half—worthy of another article—is the responsibility of the intellectuals: without the silence and passivity of almost all of them (not to mention the complicity and opportunism of more than a few) the 'Five Grey Years' or the 'Pavonato,' as many now call it, would not have been possible, or, in any case, would not have been possible with the great destructiveness it had" (Navarro, 2007). He significantly raises the question of why "at just this singular moment in the history of our country when all our people hang on the convalescence of the Commander-in-Chief, is this sudden and glorious media resurrection of Luis Pavon produced?" In other words, not only is Fidel innocent of the Pavonato, as if he was out of the country from 1971 to 1976: now adversaries within the field take advantage of his convalescence to bring back fallen bureaucrats.

Two lessons can be drawn from the "wars of the emails." First, official writers reacted to the possible return of a group that had officially been repudiated. In that sense, even though this mini-revolt was highly unusual and therefore noteworthy, the writers' reaction was literally *conservative*. Second, Cuban intellectuals considered this episode as an internal conflict within the politico-cultural field, without challenging the master narrative shielded by the primary parameters (quite the opposite, as we saw).

Conclusion

Scholars in search of signs of autonomy and seeds for emancipation in Cuba's cultural scene usually look in the direction of young musicians or artists (hip-hops artists, punk rockers like Gorki Águila, collective muralists and the like), not writers or academics. Talking about the first, the most perceptive analysts, like Sujatha Fernandes and Marie Laure Geoffray, cannot help but realize that these unorthodox practitioners of “symbolic resistance” do not represent a vital challenge to the regime. Their practices are often co-opted by helpful cultural organizations, like the AHS. They hold close to the regime's master narrative, asking the regime to live up to its own goals and ideals. In a way, they function as a populist movement, channeling anti-establishment feelings. This leads either to a political dead-end or to a reconciliation with the system, not to fundamental change.

In the eventuality of a political transition toward a more open society, one can speculate that as consummate insiders, public intellectuals (mostly writers and academics) could play a support role in a negotiated transition from within. It is hard to imagine them playing a role in any other type of transition. Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were typically more inclined to seek reforms than radical change. Once the transition started, intellectuals/democratizers were quickly replaced by political entrepreneurs. Tony Judt made a very interesting comment in this respect: “The intellectuals who did make a successful leap into democratic public life were usually ‘technocrats’-lawyers or economists-who had played no conspicuous part in the dissenting community before 1989. Not having performed a hitherto heroic role they offered more reassuring models for their similarly unheroic fellow citizens” (Judt, 2007: 695). But in Cuba, with some exceptions (the poet and independent journalist Raul Rivero or independent economist Oscar Espinosa Chepe for instance), intellectuals could not possibly be seen as “heroic” in that way. Their occasional expression of criticism stay well within secondary parameters and never challenge the first. Even when they seem to be testing the secondary parameters, it is typically in a very cryptic fashion, away from Cuban mass media and always in the name of Fidel/*La Revolución*. Of course, *La Revolución* “can” mean different things to different people, but in Cuba (i.e. in public in Cuba), one does not find interpretations that stray away from the parameters. Furthermore, after the massive exodus

of the past decades, there are fewer intellectuals left. The Cuban Diaspora and its intellectuals is a different story, of course. But it is hard to see what role they could play in a negotiated transition (I am assuming here that in other types of transition, all bets are off). Comparativist Darren Hawkins was correct when he characterized the “non-transition” in Cuba as resulting from the absence of clear democratizing agent in the country (Hawkins, 2001).

Artists are not (or not primarily) intellectuals, they do not play a direct political role and probably will not in a period of transition. And yet, they may have the last word, because of their sway on culture and mentalities. For years many have been “touching and engaging Cubans,” as Fernandes concluded, and their questioning of dominant values and organizations (or at least some of them) will continue to resonate beyond the sound and the fury of politics (Fernandes, 2006: 153). It would probably be an exaggeration to call them “heroic.” Most bought into and indeed benefited from the current system. But in a genuine transition to something new, they would probably constitute one of the few bridges between the past and the future.

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4 Cuba: los retos de una reforma heterodoxa de la institucionalidad

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Abstract: Combinando los aportes del neoinstitucionalismo y las teorías de la sociedad civil de matriz posthabermasiana, este texto se propone, desde una mirada articuladora de las dimensiones estatal y societal, introducir un debate sobre los desafíos de una reforma intrasistémica de la institucionalidad cubana, capaz de responder a las crecientes demandas de eficacia, inclusión y democratización de una sociedad compleja regida por un orden sociopolítico verticalista, centralizador y autoritario. Los autores consideran que una reforma tecnocrática centrada en mejorar la eficacia y la gobernabilidad (como la actualmente en curso) no resolverá los problemas estructurales del modelo vigente en la isla y que sólo la apertura de mecanismos de participación, deliberación y rendición de cuentas, que integren democráticamente a la sociedad en la reforma del sistema político cubano, sería congruente con una propuesta socialista renovada. Ello permitiría preservar las conquistas históricas de la Revolución Cubana, impedir derivas autoritarias y neoliberales y hacer sostenible el desarrollo, las políticas sociales y la soberanía nacional.

Palabras clave: Cuba, reforma institucional, proyecto democrático participativo, deliberación, rendición de cuentas.

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A modo de Introducción: la innovación institucional participativa como debate y proceso regional

Desde hace dos décadas diversos autores han desarrollado un esfuerzo por caracterizar la expansión de prácticas e ideas políticas innovadoras—impulsadas por actores ubicados, esencialmente, dentro de la amplia y heterogénea izquierda latinoamericana—codificadas dentro de las coordenadas de un proyecto democrático-participativo opuesto al neoliberalismo en los diversos escenarios del globo. Con arraigo en movimientos, partidos y gobiernos desmarcados de las políticas estatistas tradicionales de corte leninista y/o socialdemócrata, las iniciativas agrupadas dentro del *proyecto democrático-participativo*,³ ofrecen una plataforma analítica y transformadora a través de formas alternativas de hacer política (leyes y mecanismos de democracia deliberativa, directa o participativa, instancias de rendición de cuenta, espacios o interfaces entre lo social y lo estatal, etc.) al tiempo testimonian los procesos combinados de preferencia ciudadana por los regímenes democráticos y el cuestionamiento sobre los desempeños concretos de los mismos.⁴

Los teóricos del *proyecto democrático-participativo* reconocen que este “(...) *no es un discurso coherente y homogéneo y/o un conjunto de prácticas e instituciones definido, sino una colección de principios, orientaciones, prácticas e instituciones que a un nivel experimental ha sido desarrollado por medio de luchas sociales en diferentes países de América Latina*”.⁵ Y se asume que las expresiones que este proyecto adopta varían de país en país, puesto que la relación con los entornos sociales y matrices culturales tributa a la heterogeneidad constituyente del mismo; de igual forma inciden sobre

3. Este texto reúne los aportes de las presentaciones e intercambios entre los autores en la preparación de un ciclo de conferencias impartidas en la ciudad de Xalapa, Veracruz, en el último trimestre de 2009. Asumimos en sus páginas la noción de proyecto democrático-participativo para denominar la variante particular descrita por Olvera, Dagnino y Panfichi, pero tomamos nota del hecho que todos los actores políticos (estatistas, mercantiles, civilistas) recrean sus propios conjuntos de principios, orientaciones, prácticas e instituciones, divergentes y a menudo enfrentadas, mediante las cuales representan y llevan a cabo su sentido de la participación.

4. Ver PNUD (2004).

5. Dagnino, Olvera, Panfichi en Raventós -comp- (2008: 31).

éste la acotación espacio-temporal y los constreñimientos generados por las políticas neoliberales y por las posturas neopopulistas y autoritarias de diverso signo ideológico.

En su obra los autores han dado cuenta de cómo los gobiernos latinoamericanos, al desmarcarse (en retórica o hechos) de la lógica neoliberal, comparten una mínima plataforma en relación con el proceso democrático. Esta se pone de manifiesto en el mantenimiento de diseños y procesos inherentes a la democracia (mal)llamada representativa y las instituciones del Estado de Derecho, elementos que resultan amenazados en algunos casos (acosos a la prensa y organizaciones opositoras) o expandidos (democracia directa en formatos plebiscitarios, experiencias de participación popular) pero no suprimidos a la usanza de los autoritarismos o totalitarismos clásicos. Además desde el *proyecto democrático-participativo* se cuestionan los efectos descuidadores de la privatización de la seguridad social y el combate a la pobreza, así como las iniciativas de despolitización de la sociedad civil impulsados desde las estructuras del Estado y mercado.

Realmente no es fácil impulsar la innovación institucional y fomentar la participación ciudadana en América Latina, donde subsisten múltiples barreras estructurales (región récord en desigualdad social, con clases y grupos dominantes muy aperturistas y Estados debilitados) y culturales (sociedades patriarcales, clientelistas, autoritarias, machistas, verticalistas). Junto a éstas, persisten barreras técnicas como las ausencias del marco normativo, los déficits de un funcionario incapaz y poco motivado, así como la escasez de buenos diseños y eficacia institucionales. Porque un gobierno puede expresar vocación de honestidad pública y la idea de fomentar la participación, pero sentirse atenazado por las carencias de recursos, la acumulación de demandas sociales y la impronta de múltiples crisis, a partir de las cuales los ritmos de la deliberación pueden sugerirle amenazas a la puesta en práctica de agendas correctivas urgentes.

En nuestros países latinoamericanos, aunque numerosas organizaciones y movimientos sociales incorporen prácticas alternativas (edu-

cación popular, diagnóstico participativo, trabajo comunitario) que apuntan a un modelo emancipador de sociedad, la cultura política reproduce frecuentemente ideales y modos de acción antiparticipativos. En realidad las relaciones entre actores estatales y sociales son muy complejas, revelándose relaciones de colaboración, competencia y conflicto en sus interacciones. Por todo ello una transformación social en nuestros países requiere voluntad de innovación institucional y de deliberación, con debate públicos abiertos, con ejes como el fomento de espacios a la participación ciudadana, las políticas de rendición de cuentas y los programas públicos para el combate a la inequidad, tareas que los grupos dominantes de pocos países parecen querer asumir de forma integral y por voluntad propia. En este sentido las ciencias sociales pueden contribuir al debate al “(...) involucrarnos con las complejidades de la situación política, las fuerzas sociales y las demandas económicas que rodean al diseño institucional”. (Ackermann, 2006: 149-150)

A partir de semejantes desafíos, el tema de la reforma e innovación de las instituciones ha cobrado renovada importancia en la teoría política y sociológica reciente. Por un lado, autores como James G. March y Johan P. Olsen (1997) han sometido a crítica el paradigma dominante de la ciencia política anglosajona—la teoría individualista clásica de la elección racional de los actores políticos, señalando la importancia de las instituciones y su legado en cualquier sistema social y político. Por otra parte, desde el Sur este tema también comenzó a ser examinado de una forma renovada. Richard F. DONNER, haciendo el resumen de un seminario celebrado en Cuba bajo los auspicios de la Cátedra del Caribe de la Universidad de la Habana y el Social Science Research Council de Estados Unidos, preguntaba: “1. ¿Qué tipos de instituciones contribuyen a qué clases de desarrollo? 2. ¿De dónde provienen las ‘buenas’ instituciones, es decir, aquéllas que facilitan resultados eficientes y equitativos, y por qué evolucionan de la forma que lo hacen?”⁶ Mientras, desde la izquierda, se ha propendido frecuentemente a subvertir irreflexivamente las instituciones, facili-

6. Donner (2007:7)

tando el camino de outsiders autoritarios y masas aclamantes, para quienes la existencia de normas, reglamentos y organizaciones constituyen marcos innecesarios y restrictivos para la conducción de una “política revolucionaria”, de corte decisionista.

En el proceso de reforma institucional, la innovación participativa complementa las instancias de representación, mediante las cuales ciertos grupos participan de forma indirecta en las instituciones, manteniendo relaciones más o menos estables y orgánicas con los representados. Las formas de participación y representación están relacionadas con los capitales económicos, sociales, culturales y simbólicos que dibujan el complejo de estilos y preferencias de las clases y grupos sociales. Como horizonte normativo, el proceso debe tendencialmente apuntar a la desconcentración y descentralización de facultades y recursos estatales, al desarrollo de poderes locales fuertes y abiertos a participación de la sociedad civil, y al protagonismo popular en la fiscalización, sanción y/o revocación de sus representantes en los órganos nacionales de poder estatal. El Estado emerge, por tanto, como locus privilegiado de las políticas innovadoras de participación y reforma.

Tratando de superar los enfoques reduccionistas y desconflictivizadores, definimos operacionalmente al Estado a los efectos del presente trabajo como *el complejo de relaciones y espacios institucionalizados orientado al mantenimiento y reproducción de la dominación y administración de vida colectiva en un contexto social y territorial específico*. En su concreción moderna, a partir del auge de los procesos de ciudadanización y representación de identidades, los Estados devienen también un espacio de defensa de intereses, conflictos y construcción de consensos, como consecuencia (y expresión) tanto de la lucha de clases como de la paulatina democratización político social. Son entidades administrativas y coactivas con alta potencialidad autónoma, que controlan territorios y poblaciones, compiten con Estados rivales y se relacionan con actores sociales diversos, moldeando las estructuras políticas y de clase.

En la Modernidad, el Estado deviene una instancia que trata de organizar, centralizada y jerárquicamente, las condiciones de coexistencia social y que procura disponer de los recursos materiales que sustenten la eficacia y legitimidad de su mandato. Sin embargo en su seno, en contradicción con lo anterior, también acaece que las distintas agencias estatales y de gobierno procuran grados mayores de autonomía, enfrentando la lógica del poder central, dando márgenes para alianzas entre actores societales y estatales. Recientemente, ante los efectos del proceso globalizador—en tanto debilitamiento de los Estados nacionales e incremento de la pluralización social—algunos autores han expresado que el Estado no cuenta ya ni con la estructura necesaria, ni con las condiciones sociales pertinentes (mayor diversificación y complejidad) por lo que sus funciones pasan a ser más de coordinación y vinculación que de imposición de un modelo específico de sociedad. Sin embargo, creemos que el Estado sigue siendo un actor decisivo como instancia capaz de impulsar, mediante coacción o consenso, una agenda política y que resulta influyente en los horizontes generales de transformación social.

En las últimas décadas, los Estados latinoamericanos han atravesado diferentes procesos de redimensionamiento y reformulación funcional, con vistas a cumplir las demandas emanadas de los enfoques neoliberales (planes de ajuste estructural, nueva gerencia de lo público, políticas de descentralización) dominantes en el mundo de las instituciones financieras y las agencias de cooperación internacionales. Y aunque el saldo de dicho proceso es contradictorio, la demanda de poseer un Estado más eficiente, eficaz y legítimo, complementado por mecanismos de participación ciudadana, emerge en todas partes. Y ahora en Cuba, ante la urgencia de reformas, podemos aprender de las lecciones recientes siempre que tengamos en cuenta las peculiaridades del sistema político isleño.

Miradas a Cuba: ¿una institucionalidad reformable y participativa?

El régimen de *socialismo de Estado*, que desde hace medio siglo impera en Cuba, integra los rasgos del modelo soviético dentro de una vetusta tradición estatista local. Cualquier mirada al país caribeño hallará una importante presencia del Estado en prácticamente todas las etapas de su corta historia. La enormidad del aparato colonial español fue emulada por el inacabado diseño institucional resultante de la trunca y avanzada Constitución del 1940, y ambos fueron a la postre eclipsados por el “todopoderoso” Estado socialista actual, controlador de los recursos nacionales y rector formal de toda la vida social. Modelo este que produce lo que Mayra Espina (2008) ha llamado una hiperestatalización de las relaciones sociales y que Almeyra (2009) ha señalado como un régimen burocratizado que restringe la participación popular.

En la coyuntura cubana de país subdesarrollado, el Estado ha demostrado ser imprescindible para mantener la soberanía nacional, impulsar un desarrollo económico, cambiar la estructura productiva, garantizar cuotas de justicia social mediante la redistribución de servicios y bienes y garantizar la defensa. Pero ha evidenciado también que es incapaz de resolver, con su modelo de gestión centralizada y vertical, una gran cantidad de expectativas de la sociedad y de fomentar una participación ciudadana autónoma. Desde la población, la respuesta a dichas demandas necesita—cómo correlato—que actores no estatales puedan evaluar las políticas públicas, papel hoy no cubierto por la prensa o por inexistentes asociaciones de vecinos, consumidores, padres de educandos, etc.

En el *socialismo de estado* cubano es común reducir la iniciativa ciudadana a la canalizada dentro de las estructuras estatales y partidarias, así como en las asociaciones paraestatales, lo cual tiene consecuencias perniciosas tanto en lo económico (aplastamiento de las iniciativas productivas y de servicio ciudadanas) como en lo político (desmovilización generalizada). Actores nuevos y alternativos, incluyendo

aquellos legalmente inscritos y/o reconocidos (ONG, grupos culturales y vecinales, etc.) son invisibilizados por el discurso político o segmentos dominantes de la academia, se les reconoce sólo papeles subsidiarios en el funcionamiento social, se recela de su naturaleza no gubernamental o se les sanciona en cuanto se enfrentan a las decisiones tomadas por instituciones del sistema político. Lo sintomático es, sin embargo, que el funcionamiento institucional deja mucho que desear, pues la centralización, la discrecionalidad administrativa burocrática y el personalismo a todo nivel han frenado el dinamismo y la deliberación colectiva desde las instancias nacionales a las estructuras de base gubernamentales, asociativas y partidistas. Y que la academia ha ofrecido, como tendencia, un tratamiento epidérmico al asunto, donde las referencias empíricas y el aterrizaje propositivo se ven relegados por referencias en gran parte abstractas.

En el discurso del 26 de julio de 2007—y en sucesivas intervenciones públicas—el presidente Raúl Castro ha expresado la necesidad de acometer “cambios estructurales” en los procesos de gestión económica y administración pública. Con ese fin se ha realizado un conjunto de medidas importantes: organización de una convocatoria nacional informativo consultiva—en barrios, centros de trabajo y estudio—con vistas a identificar una gama de problemáticas nacionales y conformar una potencial agenda de cambios; desaparición y fusión de organismos de la llamada Administración Central del Estado; remoción de cuadros acusados de corrupción o ineficiencia en su gestión; ascenso simultáneo de un grupo de dirigentes provenientes de las provincias, las fuerzas armadas y el aparato partidista, estrechamente vinculados al nuevo mandatario. Con similar persistencia (aunque con menos publicidad) han sido desmontados equipos de trabajo y planes sociales directamente relacionado con el liderazgo de Fidel Castro, y se apuesta por un modelo de administración estatal mejor planificado, con cuotas de autonomía estatales escalonadas y mecanismos de control fiscal y político más riguroso, que apuntan al logro de una mayor eficacia institucional.

No obstante, aún reconociendo la incuestionable legitimidad social y la demostrada solvencia de las Fuerzas Armadas tanto en su función específica defensiva como en algunas esferas productivas, se debe estar alerta al riesgo de que el proceso político cubano adquiera incorpore formas marciales, propias y efectivas de instituciones militares, pero difícilmente aceptables en la vida social civil. Estas formas pueden fortalecer las tendencias, existentes en el Partido y en instituciones gubernamentales, a enfatizar la dimensión centralista y autoritaria siempre presente en el llamado “centralismo democrático”—que significa realmente “centralismo burocrático” en la mayoría de sus manifestaciones concretas—abrazada con entusiasmo por los cuadros burocráticos partidistas y estatales de la Isla.

De cualquier forma, en un país donde el Estado es el dueño de tres tercios de la economía formal, controla los medios masivos y hegemóniza la esfera política, los contornos de una reforma institucional son mucho más laxos y sus repercusiones más profundas, lo que aconsejaría ante la actual crisis socioeconómica—potencialmente generadora de ingobernabilidad—mayores (y mejores) apuestas a un cambio profundo. Sin embargo, al plantear desde 2007 hasta la fecha, el nuevo gobierno su acertada demanda de mejorar el performance institucional, ha acudido a soluciones típicamente administrativas y tecnocráticas (más funcionarios para controlar funcionarios en agencias estatales de fiscalización, compactación de la burocracia existente), sin avanzar a una expansión de la participación ciudadana basada en la tradición socialista (consejos obreros, autogestión empresarial, asambleas populares abiertas) o en las innovaciones democráticas regionales (consejos gestores, contraloría social, mesas de concertación).

Frente a esto el discurso oficial prioriza una participación consultiva, territorialmente fragmentada y temáticamente parroquial y fragmenta los debates populares, todo lo cual incide en la desvalorización de la participación. Constantemente la prensa define al régimen cubano como una “democracia participativa”, mientras el ciudadano—al identificar al término con el magro desempeño de sus instituciones—asume una visión banalizada y restringida del acto de

participar, basada en la impronta de un ordenamiento estadocéntrico, vertical y centralista. Todo ello (al igual que la acotación o penalización de los debates autónomos desde la sociedad civil) favorece la debilidad del compromiso cívico necesario para la exitosa implementación de los cambios esperados o en curso. El diseño institucional, al conectarse con las asociaciones paraestatales, deviene un modo de organización de la vida colectiva donde la sociedad constantemente se funde con (y es subsumida por) lo estatal, en una relación asimétrica que beneficia de este último actor.

Sin dudas, una asignatura pendiente para la innovación institucional y la gobernabilidad en Cuba es el desarrollo de políticas de rendición de cuenta (RdC), a partir de las cuales los actores determinen la responsabilidad y sanción del desempeño gubernamental, lo cual supondría la interacción entre agentes sociales y estatales.⁷ La RdC, al reunir mecanismos de control institucional, defensa de los derechos ciudadanos y fiscalización de sus representantes, debería recabar inclusión en un reformulado sistema político cubano. Esta desplegaría su accionar en tres niveles: horizontal, vertical y transversal.⁸

Pero en el escenario isleño enfrentamos un primer problema de índole discursiva, toda vez que en los barrios cubanos se realizan desde hace 30 años las llamadas “asambleas de rendición de cuenta”, en las cuales los representantes locales del gobierno y sus empresas intercambian con los vecinos-electores, quienes les interrogan acerca de las soluciones a las demandas expuestas anteriormente. El potencial democrático indudable de este proceso se erosiona porque :a) se limita casi exclusivamente a funcionarios de bajo y medio rango, b) las demandas giran casi siempre alrededor de bienes y servicios insatisfechos y no sobre procedimientos o asuntos de mayor alcance, c) la

7. Hablar de RdC es referir procesos multidimensionales, de impacto desigual, donde se responsabiliza a algún actor (individual u organizacional) por el saldo de sus acciones. Fox (2006: 39-40).

8. La noción de RdC ha sido desarrollada por Catalina Smulovitz y Enrique Peruzotti (2002); la diferenciación entre su forma horizontal y vertical la debemos a Guillermo O'Donnell en Mainwaring y Melna (2003) mientras que la innovadora transversal es fruto del investigador mexicano Ernesto Isunza Isunza y Olvera (2006).

experiencia poblacional en remover representantes tiene muy contados ejemplos. Sí a todo eso se le suma el desgaste producto de los efectos de la crisis y el funcionamiento vertical del sistema (que limita los recursos y facultades a disposición de las autoridades locales), entendemos que a la gente rendir cuentas puede no decirle mucho, al identificarse con prácticas tradicionales.

Una *RdC horizontal* tendría que desarrollar el control intraestatal, mediante agencias legalmente capacitadas y dispuestas para emprender acciones de control sistemático, sanciones o incluso impugnación respecto a actos u omisiones de carácter ilícitos realizados por agencias o funcionarios estatales. Aunque esta basa su funcionamiento en una clásica división de poderes—legislativo, ejecutivo y judicial—con su sistema de contrapesos mutuos (algo inexistente en el unitario diseño del Estado socialista cubano, de inspiración soviética) también incluye entidades supervisoras como las auditorías, defensorías, contralorías, fiscalías y órganos afines. En esa dirección la creación de una Contraloría General de la República ofrece soluciones parciales pues se trata de funcionarios controlados por funcionarios o cuadros políticos, con prácticamente nula incidencia ciudadana en el desempeño de dichas instituciones y procesos fiscalizadores.

Por su parte, *la RdC vertical* (mediante elecciones) tiene limitada su potencialidad ya que la elección directa solo se efectúa hasta nivel de diputado, sin dejar de incluir aquí el impacto nocivo de la propaganda masiva a favor de línea oficial (el llamado por un Voto Unido que elija la nómina de candidatos), la imposibilidad de campañas alternativas que visibilicen aptitudes, criterios y prioridades de los candidatos y la escasa operatividad de procesos de revocación de mandato más allá de los representantes locales.

En cuanto a la *RdC transversal*, donde los ciudadanos participan en procesos de implementación y fiscalización de políticas públicas, este formato puede encontrarse con *performances* limitados en la actuación de algunos Consejos Populares y experiencias como los Talleres de Transformación Integral del Barrio. Sin embargo, aun a escala local, la

cercanía y mayor protagonismo de población, así como la relativamente mayor transparencia del desempeño institucional se ven limitados por la subordinación vertical de los órganos de poder local, por un enfoque convencional acerca del rol del Partido Comunista como fuerza rectora de la vida nacional y sobre todo, por la persistencia de estilos de liderazgo y participación tradicionales.

Por último, es preciso referir el papel de los medios de comunicación cubanos como mecanismos de *RdC social*. Si bien es cierto que la prensa cubana ha abierto desde hace 15 años espacios para el debate y crítica; que la responsabilidad máxima de una publicación pertenece formalmente (por definición legal y directriz partidista) a la dirección del medio; y que existen impresos y audiovisuales que sostienen cierta línea reflexivo-crítica (y no justificativo-movilizativa) dentro de los márgenes sistémicos; subsisten varios problemas fundamentales. La existencia de temas tabú—vinculados a políticas en curso, al prestigio e imagen de la clase política y en particular a la figura, legado y acciones de la máxima dirigencia del país—unida al blindaje de la prensa plana y la televisión a aquellos discursos críticos que rebasen la crítica puntual o la política oficial del momento, corroboran el estado del tema.

Además se constata la proliferación de los llamados *circuitos de comunicación* (Guanche, 2008) esencialmente confinados al mundo intelectual, donde los debates y propuestas públicas son fragmentados y desconectados entre sí y con respecto a los espacios formadores de opinión de masas, como resultado de políticas estatales deliberadas. Todo ello refleja la suprema fragilidad de la prensa cubana para desarrollar una auténtica *RdC social*, más allá de temas puntuales de inocultable incidencia social (insuficiencia salarial y alimenticia) y la dependencia para el debate de la magra incidencia de redes comunicativas informales—vía listas de correos electrónicos—, la labor de espacios y medios alternativos—Observatorio Crítico, Kaosenlared, Havanatimes—o las iniciativas de los *blogueros*.

Todas estas insuficiencias apuntan a las dificultades vigentes para redimensionar y refuncionalizar el rol de un Estado monopólico, que debe crear instituciones y políticas proactivas hacia la sociedad civil, lo cual choca con las visiones monopolizadoras y esquemáticas del núcleo tradicional de la burocracia isleña. Ciertamente existen algunas experiencias de agencias estatales proactivas, donde el componente profesional y/o el objeto social las lleva a tener que evaluar, sancionar o corregir políticas públicas de otras estructuras, dando como resultado la conexión del desempeño institucional con las demandas de colectivos culturales, ambientalistas y vecinales, enfrentando acciones gubernamentales y empresariales depredadoras. Pero son casos limitados en temáticas, alcance y difusión.

Otro tema crucial para cualquier reforma democrática y participativa es la cuestión del rol desempeñado por el derecho dentro de la sociedad e institucionalidad cubanas y el estado de los derechos humanos en particular. En Cuba, los derechos humanos son identificados por los funcionarios y—gracias a la propaganda y cultura política oficiales—por una parte de la población como mero “instrumento de las campañas enemigas”, lo que deriva en la inexistencia de organizaciones defensores de estos derechos legalmente inscritas dentro del Registro de Asociaciones del Ministerio de Justicia de la República de Cuba. El tratamiento de los derechos humanos en la isla parece obviar la variable claramente emancipadora del fenómeno, que emerge como resultado de luchas sociales contra los autoritarismos de los gobiernos aliados al imperialismo y de acciones opuestas a los ajustes estructurales impulsados por el neoliberalismo, por lo cual se les reduce a ser valorados como mero componente de la estrategia desestabilizadora de las potencias occidentales.

A los ciudadanos cubanos se les hace virtualmente imposible (y punible) la acción misma de testimoniar, vigilar y denunciar, de forma organizada, las violaciones cometidas—a veces contra la propia Constitución socialista de 1992—por funcionarios e instituciones estatales, dada la capacidad de control social del Estado y la subordinación de los medios masivos a las directrices gubernamentales. Se trata de una

actividad condenada a priori, lo cual genera que se meta en idéntico saco a activistas autónomos, vinculados a sus comunidades u ONG internacionales de reconocido desempeño, o simples mantenidos de las embajadas occidentales. El problema es, como en otras esferas, estructural, y se puede resumir gráficamente contraponiendo a la precariedad del Estado de Derecho—donde los ciudadanos pueden hacer uso de atribuciones para ejercer los derechos garantizados por su Constitución y proteger ésta de abusos burocráticos—, una amplísima, arbitraria y cotidiana ejecutoria de los Derechos del Estado, carentes de control y retroalimentación.

Este fenómeno posee una historia e inserción más amplias, íntimamente ligadas a la construcción del Estado, la sociedad civil y la ciudadanía resultantes del triunfo de 1959. El proceso cubano ha promovido un modelo de ciudadanía-militante, que identifica orden estatal y nación, y tiende a la unanimidad como forma de expresión de criterios. Con un referente de acotada matriz republicana, se estimula la redistribución popular de la riqueza, el rechazo a la polarización social y a la exclusión por género y raza, pero se sospecha de la reivindicación de otras identidades y de los derechos individuales o de colectividades alternativas. Se promueve el apoyo y encuadre ciudadano de las políticas públicas, que garantiza el predominio estatal en el ordenamiento y provisión sociales, pero se penaliza toda forma de disenso organizado. Y los derechos sociales y culturales adquirieron preeminencia en el imaginario colectivo, pasando los políticos y civiles a concebirse (y realizarse) de forma reducida dentro de las instituciones y políticas del nuevo poder.

La crisis de los 90 lesionó los consensos establecidos y dejó clara la necesidad de reformar el modelo socialista, cosa que el gobierno acometió entonces sólo parcialmente. Hoy la sobrevivencia del proceso iniciado en 1959 pasa por una profunda reforma del sistema político, sus prácticas, instituciones y la reivindicación de la participación y los derechos humanos son componentes centrales de dicho proceso. Sobre todo porque la demanda de ampliación de derechos económicos, de viaje, acceso a información y expresión de disensos—todos

posibles dentro de un replanteo del proyecto socialista—sigue incumplida.

El tratamiento de los derechos humanos debe ser integral y no selectivo. Ello supone reconocer los considerables logros sociales de la nación caribeña, en materia de salud, educación, deportes, seguridad social, acceso a la cultura, que garantizan la base social y legitimidad del proceso y han sido compartidas con decenas de pueblos hermanos a lo largo de medio siglo. Pero también dar cuenta de las limitaciones a derechos de expresión, reunión, asociación, movimiento y autogestión económica y comunitaria existentes en la isla, verbigracia una concepción monopólica y colonizadora del Estado, de cara a la sociedad y sus capacidades de organización autónoma. Pues sólo con una expansión de la participación popular, con instituciones democráticas, eficaces y controladas por la ciudadanía organizada y con el establecimiento del derecho como principio rector del funcionamiento estatal y la convivencia social se podrá perfeccionar *socialistamente* el proceso cubano, deteniendo la deriva autoritaria y la restauración neoliberal, que amenazan desde el trasfondo de una grave crisis económica, social e ideológica.

Conclusiones

Cualquier propuesta de reforma democrático participativa (y no meramente tecnocrática) de la institucionalidad cubana debe tomar nota de la crisis estructural del modelo socioeconómico y político vigente, considerar el importante refuerzo que los impactos de la crisis global otorgan a sectores conservadores y/o corruptos de la burocracia, deseosos en extender la lógica militarizada de “país campamento” o pactar de forma opaca y predadora con el capital trasnacional. Dicha reforma debe analizar las puntuales coyunturas, lugares y estrategias de interacción dinámica en cuyo marco los actores renovadores (hoy débiles y fragmentados) puedan ganar fuerza dentro del Estado y la sociedad civil para impulsar las políticas democratizadoras.⁹ No se

trata, por tanto, de concentrarse en construir una administración pública eficiente o instituciones más operativas y menos costosas.

Resulta imprescindible que, desde las esferas del propio poder partidista y estatal, a tono con los llamados a profundizar el debate y la participación hechos por el presidente Raúl Castro, se fomente y proteja un auténtico espacio público de deliberación. En este sentido vale la pena tener en cuenta una advertencia de Jürgen Habermas en la que, al defender la necesidad del fomento simultáneo de la autonomía colectiva y la privada, recordó que éstas sólo pueden alcanzarse por *“a fuerza legitimadora de un proceso discursivo de formación de la opinión y de la voluntad, en el que las fuerzas ilocucionarias y unificadoras de un uso del lenguaje comunicativo y argumentativo sirven para unir razón y voluntad y para llegar a posiciones convincentes con las que todos como individuos pueden estar de acuerdo sin coacción”*. (Segovia, 2008: 57-58)

Utilizando una metáfora espacial, creemos que existen diversas vías potenciales para promover la reforma institucional y la democratización que Cuba necesita: una reforma integral, propiciada por la dirección estatal (cambio desde arriba); transformaciones a partir del protagonismo y la presión de la sociedad civil (cambios desde abajo); transformaciones desplegadas por ciertas agencias y segmentos del funcionariado aliados a actores sociales (reformas parciales, desde adentro) o cambios impulsados por la injerencia de actores internacionales (reformas desde afuera). Consideramos que en Cuba el potencial transformador socialista pasaría por poder articular procesos generados desde las tres primeras fuentes que, aislando los sectores conservadores domésticos y preservando la soberanía nacional, garanticen el desarrollo de un proceso heterodoxo de reformas económicas no neoliberales (con impulso a la participación de los colectivos de trabajadores, planificación democrática y mercado regulado) y una

9. Un autor nos recuerda que “Después de todo, las iniciativas pro-rendición de cuentas constantemente fracasan. Sin embargo, algunas veces estos fracasos logran debilitar a las fuerzas contrarias a la RdC y, por consecuencia, constituyen pasos parciales hacia una reforma en una coyuntura subsecuente” por lo que, para llevar a feliz término su estrategia “Los actores pro-RdC que forman parte de las instituciones estatales, y los provenientes de la SC, deben descubrir estrategias de coalición que de modo mutuo se refuercen y articulen Estado y sociedad.” Fox (2006: 61).

gobernabilidad ampliada con participación ciudadana y respeto por todos los derechos humanos. Este proceso debe establecer, como colofón, la capacidad de un control popular de las élites sociopolíticas capaz de tornar inviable tanto la contrarreforma burocrática como la neoprivatización de los recursos del país y avanzar hacia una verdadera democracia socialista. Cambios que hoy sólo parecen habitar los predios de la urgencia, la resistencia y la esperanza.

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5 Usos y desusos del derecho en la Cuba socialista actual

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I. INTRODUCCIÓN

Cuando escribimos sobre algún fenómeno social desde el punto de vista científico debemos enmarcar los parámetros metodológicos en los cuales estará inmerso el análisis. Al escribir sobre Cuba socialista más, debido a las múltiples pero sobre todo, equidistantes posiciones que con respecto a ella se expresan en los círculos intelectuales. Por honestidad académica debemos plantearle a nuestro lector desde un principio por dónde y hacia dónde vamos en nuestro decursar analítico sobre el caso cubano.

En este sentido, este trabajo pretende realizar un análisis crítico-dialéctico del comportamiento del fenómeno jurídico en los últimos años del proceso revolucionario cubano (2002-2010), teniendo en

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cuenta algunos antecedentes relevantes de la década que acontece. El objetivo principal es investigar del derecho cubano, sus contradicciones, entre aportaciones e involuciones; sus peculiaridades, entre el devenir histórico y la actualidad del proceso revolucionario; sus prospecciones como parte del futuro de continuidades y cambios de la Revolución Cubana.

A partir del uso de la razón crítica se realizará un ejercicio hermenéutico sistémico, histórico y dialéctico desde los significados del derecho en la realidad social cubana actual, es decir, partiendo de las contradicciones sociales de la isla ubicada dentro de la matriz latinoamericana. Es así que este artículo construido sobre la base crítica-dialéctica lleva en sí pretensión de verdad, pretensión en cuanto que será un conocimiento científico falible desde el mismo momento en que se construye. La condición de falibilidad de estas reflexiones está dada inevitablemente por su propio carácter crítico-dialéctico, sustentado en la realidad social y para ella. Además, esta investigación también presenta pretensión de objetividad. Pretensión en cuanto una investigación crítica reconoce, explicita y trata de ver que el condicionamiento histórico comienza en el propio investigador y en su objeto de investigación, siendo el sujeto parte del objeto pues también participa en su construcción (De Sousa Santos, 2003, p. 23 y ss).

El derecho es entonces en esta investigación, el fenómeno socio-político normativo que existe en una sociedad determinada, donde su naturaleza, instrumentaciones, funciones y fines se determinarán teniendo en cuenta el contexto histórico social en donde se desenvuelve. Desde la crítica dialéctica no se podría invocar al derecho solamente como dogmática jurídica, aunque ésta tenga un papel relevante, sino como un fenómeno social dentro de la totalidad social (Horkheimer y Adorno, 1969: p. 67; Concheiro, Modonessi, Crespo, 2007), interactuando entre relaciones políticas, económicas y sociales. El derecho así se comportará como regulador social pero también como instrumento de transformación para la sociedad, siendo un elemento de refundación y dinamización dialéctico del proceso social.

De esta manera, se constituye el derecho como una de las mediaciones políticas-institucionales existentes donde se ejercita el poder delegado por la comunidad política. Los mandatos del poder delegado han sido determinados por la comunidad mediante consenso con el objetivo primordial de reproducir la vida, que es a su vez, la esencia de la política.² En este sentido, la legalidad se fundamenta en la legitimidad del pueblo que por consenso construye y reclama sus derechos, pero el respeto de los derechos todos y para todos, no de los pocos que detentan propiedad privada. Si ponemos la vida digna del ser humano como principio material de existencia, nos damos cuenta que esta no puede existir sin la alimentación, vivienda, salud adecuadas, junto al proceso espiritual de la educación, la cultura, la información, en conjunto con el derecho a participar de las decisiones del conglomerado sociopolítico en el cual se desarrollan las personas. Todas estas son necesidades básicas del ser humano individual y colectivamente que se han transformado históricamente en derechos para que sean protegidos, respetados y cumplidos. Por tanto, concebimos a los derechos y su cumplimiento sin jerarquías, de manera interdependiente y

2. Asumimos la *política* como la actividad que organiza y promueve la producción y reproducción de la vida de los miembros de una comunidad en cuanto a creación de satisfactores para cubrir sus necesidades. Para ejercer la actividad política la comunidad debe tener *poder*, que es la capacidad de *poder-hacer* de los seres humanos, como conjunto comunitario que es, en cuanto a empuñar o inventar medios de sobrevivencia para la satisfacción de sus *necesidades*. Esas necesidades son negatividades como el hambre, la sed, el frío, la ignorancia, que deben ser cubiertas por satisfactores como el alimento, el agua, el vestido, la educación. Por lo tanto, el poder-hacer se fundamenta en el querer vivir de los seres humanos, el querer no morir, denominada *voluntad de vida* que nos lleva a buscar los mecanismos necesarios para reproducir la misma individual y socialmente. Entonces, el *poder político* consistirá en la forma en que se articularán las voluntades de los miembros de la comunidad política para poder llevar a cabo la vida, como principio básico material de existencia. El poder político por tanto, reside en la comunidad política, no se toma, no se alcanza, es *poder positivo*, no es *negativo* (que es el poder que existe limitando el actuar institucional porque por esencia es dominador y hegemónico). El poder político de la comunidad política es *potencia* y debe articularse buscando la unión de los objetivos, propósitos, fines estratégicos en aras de la vida. Si los miembros de la comunidad buscan satisfacer sus intereses privados, múltiples, contrapuestos, la potencia o voluntad de uno anularía la del otro, por tanto ocurre la *impotencia*. Todas estas articulaciones se rigen por principios normativos de *materialidad* (vida-necesidades-satisfactores del ser humano), *legitimidad democrática* (instituciones o mediaciones políticas con poder delegado que ejercitan las decisiones de las voluntades articuladas-consensuadas de la comunidad como por ejemplo, el derecho) y de *factibilidad* (reproducciones fácticas necesarias para la reproducción de la vida como por ejemplo, la economía). Ver en (Dussel, 2005: p. 13-84).

con la características de universalidad, integralidad, inalienabilidad, imprescriptibilidad e indivisibilidad, distinguiendo que el derecho a la propiedad privada no las tiene, porque es particular, excluyente, alienable, prescriptible, por tanto, no es un derecho humano que no debe tener el mismo tratamiento jurídico, sino ser limitado por el propio derecho en aras de que se protejan los mecanismos de satisfacción de las necesidades básicas de las personas por encima de los intereses individuales patrimoniales.³

No obstante, el derecho en una sociedad también puede manifestarse como un instrumento hegemónico del poder político fetichizado.⁴ El fenómeno jurídico en este caso se usa instrumentalmente en aras de la dominación, del mantenimiento del status quo, de manera coyuntural, autoreferencial, sin que se asome un diálogo socializador ni toma de decisiones consensuadas por la comunidad política, el pueblo.

3. Cuando hablamos de propiedad privada nos referimos a la propiedad y explotación de medios de producción, -que incluyen bienes y servicios-, y trae como consecuencia la apropiación y acumulación de recursos generando estatus sociales desiguales, asimétricos, marcados sobre todo, por la dominación entre las personas de una comunidad política; entre los que detentan los bienes y servicios vs los que no las tienen. Esta relación de hegemonía está dada por la relación de explotación que se da entre poseedores (con propiedades y posesiones) y desposeídos (sin propiedades ni posesiones), donde los primeros extraerán *in crescendo* plusvalor a lo que producen los segundos sin retribuirle realmente por lo que trabajan. Por supuesto, no estamos hablando de la propiedad personal que puede tener una persona en cuanto a sus bienes de uso cotidiano, desde una casa, un auto, su ropa, etc. Para profundizar en el concepto de propiedad personal se pueden remitir a la teoría marxista del derecho que distingue entre propiedad privada de medios de producción y propiedad personal.

4. El poder se expresa empíricamente positiva y negativamente, donde el *poder positivo* consiste en el poder delegado a las instituciones, como *potestas*, por el pueblo, en el cual radica el verdadero poder como potencia. Con respecto al poder político fetichizado nos referimos al poder político que funciona con carácter autoreferencial, porque ha perdido su condición de mediador de la comunidad política—el pueblo— para convertirse en su propio referente, el poder detentador del poder, poder caracterizado entonces como *negativo*. (Dussel, 2005: 15 y ss). Ver nota 2.

II. EL DERECHO EN EL PROCESO REVOLUCIONARIO: DE LA PARTICIPACIÓN AL CENTRALISMO, DEL CENTRALISMO A LA PARTICIPACIÓN.

Para analizar el derecho en Cuba debemos partir de que nuestra tradición jurídica tiene asiento en raíces romanas francesas debido a la dominación colonial española. Incluso, el sistema romano francés en la isla ha sido históricamente resistente a las penetraciones del common law, sobre todo en el período de la República que comienza en 1901, y que hasta 1959 fue dominada por Estados Unidos en el ámbito político y económico.⁵

El triunfo de la Revolución llega a la isla como un proceso de ruptura político-económico que indudablemente abarcó lo jurídico. El derecho cubano como fenómeno político social desde entonces se ha expresado de manera zigzagueante, en forma dialéctica, contradictoria. Sus manifestaciones han sido complejas, bien como mecanismo de participación social, consensuado, legitimado; bien como mero instrumento de legalización de políticas centralistas, autoreferenciales del poder político. Lo curioso, es que estas manifestaciones no siempre han sido excluyentes, en momentos la participación y la centralización se han mostrado entrelazadas, legitimadas y legitimándose la una a la otra en función de cometidos políticos.

Desde 1959 hasta la década del año 2000 hay múltiples expresiones del comportamiento de estos fenómenos: desde las Declaraciones de la Habana a principios de los años 60s, documentos programáticos de la política social, económica e internacional del país, aprobados por millones de cubanos en asamblea popular abierta; cómo las medidas tomadas por la denominada contraofensiva revolucionaria del 68, donde se eliminaron todo tipo de negocios privados pequeños, empresarial y de servicios pasando, asumiéndolo el estado centraliza-

5. La dominación de los Estados Unidos sobre los países de América Latina posterior a sus procesos de independencia colonial se pueden analizar desde la teoría de la dependencia. La dominación referida se manifiesta entre países centrales (EUA) y periféricos (América Latina) y tiene una base económica fundamental que abarca los sectores políticos, con evidentes repercusiones sociales. (Cueva, 1977); (Bambirra, 1974).

damente; también, todo el proceso de institucionalización del estado socialista cubano en la década de los 70s, dónde no sólo se crean consensuadamente los mecanismos estatales y administrativos del ejercicio mediador de la política sino que se aprueban mediante arduos procesos participativos casi toda la legislación cubana vigente que regula los mismos, desde la Constitución hasta sus leyes ordinarias, reglamentos, etc.; hasta, la reformas llevadas a cabo a partir de 1992 al magno texto constitucional y a la legislación secundaria por los nuevos contextos históricos emergentes: la caída del campo socialista y la inserción de Cuba en el mercado internacional, sobre todo hispanoamericano.

Aunque no es objeto de este artículo exponer todo el devenir del fenómeno jurídico cubano durante esos 40 y tantos años, podemos resumir que la isla ha tenido cuatro etapas de construcción de lo jurídico dentro del proceso revolucionario cubano: la década corta de los años 60s (1959-1968) donde ocurre el proceso de ruptura y comienzo de la construcción del nuevo poder político-jurídico; la década larga de los años 70s (1968-1986) donde se consolida la legalidad socialista en sustitución del ordenamiento liberal burgués existente; posteriormente, el período de los errores y rectificaciones, crisis y rupturas, donde inmersos en nuevas realidades y nuevos actores sociales y políticos es reformado el sistema jurídico (1986-2002)⁶ y por último, el período que analizaremos del 2002 al 2010, donde Cuba ha realizado un grupos de cambios experimentales buscando su propio destino, entre prácticas socialistas y capitalistas, entre procesos participativos y centralizadores, entre la subsistencia económica y la ideológica. Nos centraremos en lo que pasa hoy con el derecho en la isla, cuáles son sus usos y sus retos respecto a las transformaciones que se están dando en la sociedad cubana actual.

6. Para mayor profundización sobre el comportamiento histórico del derecho en el proceso revolucionario cubano ver: (Fernández Bulté, 1998-99) y (Burgos, 2009).

2.1. El derecho cubano entre la instrumentalización política y la necesaria profundización participativa. (2002-2009).

En el devenir actual del sistema jurídico cubano se puede hacer referencia a una serie de hechos vinculados al derecho que comienzan con la reforma constitucional del 2002 y terminan con los recientes cambios legales que se han estado llevando a cabo desde la asunción oficial como Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros por Raúl Castro Ruz.⁷

En esta etapa el funcionamiento sistémico jurídico se ha caracterizado por un uso político instrumentalizado del derecho, lo mismo para dar respuestas políticas a situaciones internas o externas, que para administrar las relaciones socioeconómicas. También, se han manifestado algunos procesos participativos, algunos con mayores o menores resultados, otros coartados, pero sin la necesaria profundización que requiere la concepción de un sistema que construye emancipación, donde el sujeto popular es un ente activo dentro del proceso de construcción de la política en todos sus ámbitos incluido, el derecho.

Para comentar lo antes señalado se abordarán primero las reformas legales que han sido meras instrumentalizaciones políticas. El primer ejemplo es la reforma constitucional que se realizó en el 2002 en respuesta al denominado Proyecto Varela presentado por un grupo de disidentes en 1998⁸ al utilizar el recurso que prevé la Constitución en su artículo 88 iniciso g, acerca de que los ciudadanos en la cantidad de 10 000 pueden presentar iniciativa legislativa ante el órgano legislativo

7. A partir del 31 de julio de 2006, Fidel Castro Ruz por razones de enfermedad, realizó la salida provisional y después definitiva (elecciones 2008), de los cargos de Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros de la República de Cuba. Ver la Proclama al Pueblo de Cuba del 31 de julio de 2006 donde se comunica la salida provisional de sus funciones, http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/secciones/siempre_con_fidel/art-021.html, y el Mensaje del Comandante en Jefe del 18 de febrero de 2008 cuando refiere que no asumirá ningún cargo en la dirección del país después del proceso electoral que se llevó a cabo y fue electo diputado nacional. <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/secciones/ref-fidel/art11.html>.

8. Ver el contenido del Proyecto Varela en la web de su creador fundamental. <http://www.oswaldopaya.org/es/proyecto-varela/>, Consultado noviembre 2010.

en funciones. La respuesta, ante la ciudadanía nacional y desde el Estado fue promover la reforma a la normativa constitucional antes mencionada donde se prevé el carácter irrevocable del sistema político socialista y la defensa incluso, mediante las armas si es necesario.⁹ Hay que aclarar que la reforma también tuvo fundamento—declarado en los Por Cuantos de la propia ley—, en todas las actividades beligerantes realizadas por el gobierno de los EEUU en ese período, aún más, por cumplirse 100 años de haberse fundado la República en 1902. Lo que es cierto es que la misma refleja una instrumentalización política del derecho ante amenazas internas o externas al sistema político, como en otras ocasiones, pero ahora con una reiteración, en mi criterio innecesaria porque la propia Constitución prevé protecciones al sistema desde su propio aparato normativo. El Proyecto Varela,—como muchos otros que podrían seguir emergiendo—, primero, podía haber tenido una respuesta negativa a los pedidos realizados con fundamentación legal, es decir, teniendo en cuenta la propia normativa constitucional; segundo, tiene una cuestionable legitimidad ante la mayoría de la población cubana producto de que son proyectos contruidos desde la llamada disidencia cubana, reconocida por su naturaleza mercenaria al recibir fondos para su funcionamiento desde gobiernos extranjeros como el propio EEUU. Además, teniendo en cuenta la cultura política nacional, después de más de 40 años—en ese momento—, de construcción popular y sistémica de un sustrato ético, social y político—que pervive en la sociedad cubana hoy a pesar de las innumerables dificultades que existen—, no se le puede tener temor a la discusión y la polémica de temas que llevan en sí cambios en el sistema político por el que y mediante el cual, la mayoría de los cubanos han luchado y vivido en la isla durante el proceso revolucionario. La articulación de consensos, teniendo en cuenta todas las opiniones, es decir, una democracia participativa incluyente, es un reto constante para un sistema socialista o emancipador como teleología esencial.

9. La reforma fue votada con firma pública y voluntaria por 8 198 237 electores. Ver la Ley de Reforma Constitucional de 26 de junio de 2002 en <http://www.bibliojuridica.org/libros/6/2525/53.pdf>, Consultado noviembre 2010. La reforma fue aprobada posteriormente de modo unánime por los diputados de la Asamblea Nacional en sesión extraordinaria celebrada los días 24, 25 y 26 de junio de ese propio año.

Reflexionar, argumentar, teniendo como principio la vida del ser humano como contenido material y espiritual, la socialización económica y productiva, y no las relaciones individualistas, egoístas, mercantilistas, propias de muchas de estas propuestas es el argumento principal a debatir en las mismas. Hecho evidente son las manifestaciones de este tipo de valores en la economía cubana hoy, —por necesidades coyunturales—, que sí han puesto en vilo los rubros éticos fundamentales construidos y buscados en un proyecto emancipador. La libertad no consiste en tener sino en liberarse de los poderes dominantes, fetichizados, incluso el de la mercancía y el consumo. En este sentido, las propuestas a analizar tanto legal como popularmente podrían haber sido rechazadas en la discusión popular legitimando más aún el carácter participativo del proyecto político cubano.

Otra de las reformas importantes de este período, —que marcó una tendencia en el sistema financiero estatal mostrando una diferencia sustancial con las medidas tomadas en la década anterior—, fue la Resolución 80 del 2004 del Banco Central de Cuba sobre la tenencia y uso de divisas convertibles dentro del país.¹⁰ La reforma legal tiene fundamento en medidas prácticas tomadas por EEUU acerca de las prohibiciones de uso del dólar estadounidense en operaciones comerciales donde se encuentre el Estado Cubano como parte.¹¹ El hecho es que la divisa estadounidense hoy tiene un uso marginal en cuanto al manejo de efectivo en el territorio nacional, debido a los gravámenes que se le impusieron, provocando afectación a los cubanos residentes

10. Resolución no. 80/ 2004 <http://www.granma.cubasi.cu/2004/10/26/nacional/articulo06.html>, consultado noviembre de 2010.

11. Ver el caso específico de la investigación judicial anunciada en julio de 2004 por Estados Unidos sobre la ruta que siguieron 3 mil 900 millones de dólares que Cuba cambió en billetes deteriorados a través de la Unión de Bancos Suizos (UBS), como parte de un mecanismo regular de reposición de efectivo, autorizado en el mundo por la Reserva Federal estadounidense. El órgano de la Reserva Federal de EEUU impuso una multa de 100 millones de dólares a la UBS por facilitar ese mecanismo a Cuba, bajo una norma que prohíbe el acceso a ese mecanismo a un país, como la isla, considerado “patrocinador del terrorismo”. En este sentido, si seguían realizando estas acciones Cuba corría el riesgo de quedarse en cualquier momento con montañas de dólares estadounidenses como simple papel por no poder usarlos en operaciones comerciales. Ver Arreola, Gerardo, *Cuba elimina el dólar de todas sus operaciones comerciales internas*, 20 de octubre de 2004, en <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=6736>, consultado noviembre de 2010.

en la isla que reciben remesas desde el exterior donde prima el cambio en divisas con la moneda estadounidense.¹²

Ejemplo relevante en cuanto a la instrumentalización del derecho para la administración de la economía en la sociedad cubana actual estuvo determinado por la nueva política económica de centralización que constituyó la creación de la “Cuenta única de ingresos en divisas al Estado”.¹³ Esta recentralización económica que se gestó en el área financiera constituyó el parteaguas a la descentralización que se había llevado a cabo en el país en la década de los noventa y que ya llevaba poco más de diez años. Las explicaciones han sido muchas y las ofrecieron detalladamente a la población. Desde el descontrol con el uso de la divisa convertible al generarse un ambiente competitivo entre las empresas que provocó cadenas innumerables de impagos desde los niveles centrales del Estado hacia empresas extranjeras y entre las propias empresas radicadas nacionalmente; hasta procesos de corrupción por la apropiación del recurso monetario o la mala inversión del mismo en bienes de consumo superfluos o innecesarios. Se manifestó un fenómeno de desorden financiero con repercusiones económicas y sociales que el Estado centralmente no podía controlar y que además tampoco provocaba esas articulaciones descentralizadas mejoras en la economía nacional en cuanto a mayor eficiencia, productividad y por ende, mejor economía familiar para los cubanos.

Las medidas legales de carácter político económico enunciadas anteriormente marcan distancias de las políticas de la década anterior, incidiendo de manera concreta en la economía familiar del sujeto popular cubano. Las mismas se tomaron realizando un proceso de participación bastante coartado que es la fundamentación por los dirigentes

12. El cambio oficial de dólares estadounidenses en efectivo dentro de la isla está a 1 cuc=0.90 usd. Así el dólar devaluado incide en la capacidad adquisitiva de los cubanos que lo tienen como un ingreso importante desde las remesas familiares, teniendo en cuenta que lo deben cambiar a pesos convertibles cubanos, moneda usada para adquirir algunos bienes de consumo básicos en las denominadas tiendas de recaudación de divisas y que, al cambio en moneda nacional está representado por 1 cuc=24 pesos moneda nacional. En moneda nacional se paga la mayoría del salario de los ciudadanos cubanos.

13. Resolución no. 92/2004 de 29 de diciembre de 2004 y comenzó a funcionar en el año entrante, 2005. Ver en; http://www.eleconomista.cubaweb.cu/2004/nro245/245_704.html, consultado noviembre de 2010.

ante la población de las razones de las mismas, pero sin un proceso más completo de interacción y retroalimentación con la comunidad política acerca de las medidas ya tomadas. El derecho se constituye así en un instrumento de políticas necesarias ante determinadas coyunturas nacionales e internacionales que rebasan el proceso político transformador y se torna parte de un proceso político de contingencias por las propias necesidades económicas.

Dentro de estas políticas de centralización se generaron decisiones del Estado que mucho afectaron al proceso institucional cubano. Nos referimos a la doble institucionalidad que se fue creando,—al margen de la construida en todo el proceso revolucionario—, destinando recursos económicos y financieros para llevar a cabo los programas de la denominada Batalla de Ideas.¹⁴ En aras de llevar a cabo medidas rápidas y contingentes para mejorar la vida de la población cubana en crisis constante desde el principio de los años 90, la dirección política del país creó esta doble estructura que se encargó de programas para la reparación de escuelas, instalaciones de salud pública, programas políticos culturales, la denominada revolución energética con incidencia en la economía familiar y, de ayuda solidaria a países latinoamericanos fundamentalmente,—naciones que incluso, tienen mejores recursos económicos y financieros no cuentan con los recursos humanos como los formados durante todo el período revolucionario en áreas como la salud, la educación y el deporte.¹⁵

Estos procesos han tenido y tienen las buenas intenciones de mejorar la vida cotidiana de los cubanos y de mantener el espíritu de soli-

14. Esta doble institucionalidad tiene antecedentes desde el año 2000 con todo el movimiento político que se generó por el secuestro del niño Elián González en EEUU durante los siete meses que duró su estancia en ese país. Pero se acrecentó cada vez más generando este proceso de institucionalidad paralela con la denominada Revolución Energética.

15. Estos programas de ayuda solidaria son de dos tipos: a) los referidos a la construcción y manutención de las Escuelas Latinoamericanas de Medicina y Deporte radicadas en la isla. En ellas asisten jóvenes con mínimos recursos, principalmente de países latinoamericanos y sin acceso a estos estudios en sus propios lugares de residencia; y b) los programas de ayuda que solidariamente presta Cuba con personal de la salud, la educación y el deporte en muchos lugares del planeta y que aunque pueden ser programas autosustentables son rectorados política y económicamente por la dirección del país.

daridad internacional con los países dominados, periféricos, de este mundo. Pero también, los proyectos internos hicieron que casi colapsara y se inmovilizara el aparato institucional cubano por unos pocos años, realizándose todo tipo de actividad al margen del derecho, de manera experimental, improvisadas donde todavía se perciben resultados positivos y negativos. La crítica no va dirigida al contenido de los programas, sino a la funcionalidad centralizada por un lado, y anárquica por otro, que provocó un *shock* caótico para el actuar de las estructuras institucionales del país. Por otro lado, sus resultados materiales concretos han sido positivos por su propia dinámica desburocratizadora ya que se eliminaron los cortes de energías eléctricas (apagones), se arreglaron las escuelas y las instalaciones de salud pública de base, en fin, mejoraron las condiciones de vida de la población pero con un costo institucional innecesario. El reto no era crear doble institucionalidad sino dinamizar los propios aparatos institucionales, hacerlos más eficientes, menos burocratizados, pero sobre todo, más participativos, mediante mecanismos que permitan a la comunidad política no sólo saber cómo se hacen las cosas, sino incidir en el qué se hace y para qué se hace, esencia del actuar democrático que se ha querido ir exponiendo en este estudio. Por supuesto, esto también es derecho, que la población construya consensuadamente las políticas desde sus necesidades, criterios y valores haciendo accionar a las instituciones para que los ejecuten.

Los procesos descritos hasta ahora en esta etapa, tuvieron un impasse, más bien una rearticulación desde que en el 2006 cambiara la dirección del país. Primero comenzó a cambiar el discurso oficial anunciando que había que realizar cambios, incluso conceptuales y estructurales, mencionando todos los problemas internos de ineficiencia económica y burocrática, que generaban en última instancia, falta de satisfacción de las necesidades de la población. Por este motivo se convocó a un debate participativo con toda la población para que se discutieran y salieran a la luz todas las dificultades más acuciantes de los cubanos de manera pública, abierta y crítica.¹⁶ También se pidió que se aportaran soluciones. Se realizaron 215 687 reuniones entre los

meses de septiembre y octubre de 2007, donde más de 5 millones de ciudadanos realizaron 1 301 203 planteamientos recogidos a partir de 3 255 344 intervenciones realizadas, de los cuales el 48.8% fueron críticos. Según informaciones oficiales las principales dificultades que habían expresado los cubanos en las reuniones de debate y reflexión versaban sobre la alimentación, el transporte, la vivienda, los salarios, la doble moneda, el uso de la tierra vinculado a la producción alimenticia y algunos problemas en la educación y la salud.¹⁷ Curiosamente uno de los pedidos de la población fue eliminar las medidas legales prohibitivas excesivas e incoherentes que más que control social, generaban insatisfacciones en la reproducción y adquisición de bienes y servicios en la comunidad política, además de una articulación continua y consensuada de ilegalidades. La dirección del país respondió positivamente a estas cuestiones y comenzó a tomar medidas no sin antes remarcar las ideas de que la resolución de los problemas debía ser racionalmente, según los recursos disponibles del país, con ahorro, mayor productividad, eficiencia, y articulando el consenso entre todos.¹⁸

En este sentido, se comenzaron a acometer acciones en aras de fortalecer la institucionalidad cubana actual, rearticularla, hacerla más eficiente, organizada y en función de las necesidades del país.¹⁹ El espíritu ha estado encaminado a que la economía nacional produzca, tenga mayor eficiencia, organicidad, autoabastecimiento de las necesidades nacionales posibles, un mayor fortalecimiento de controles económicos y financieros para evitar despilfarros y corrupciones, con un eje central de revitalización del trabajo como valor fundamental de

16. Discurso pronunciado por el compañero Raúl Castro Ruz, en el acto central con motivo del aniversario 54 del asalto a los cuarteles Moncada y Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, en la Plaza de la Revolución Mayor General Ignacio Agramonte Loynaz de la ciudad de Camagüey, el 26 de julio del 2007. <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/secciones/raul26/index.html>.

17. Datos obtenidos de las intervenciones del compañero Raúl Castro Ruz, ante la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular el 28 de diciembre de 2007, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2007/12/30/nacional/artic01.html> y en el Tercer Período Ordinario de Sesiones de la VII Legislatura de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, el 1º de agosto de 2009, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2009/08/01/nacional/artic19.html>.

18. *Idém.*

la sociedad, que las personas trabajen y vean el fruto del mismo en la cotidianeidad de su vida. Para realizar estos cometidos se tomaron algunas medidas, no suficientes en ese momento, demoradas y sin los resultados que la población requiere. Las mismas han implicado modificaciones jurídicas interesantes que son parte de la articulación del derecho como instrumento de cambios socioeconómicos necesarios, aunque han tenido inmersos algunos procesos de participación peculiares que serán explicados más adelante. El sistema jurídico de manera general sigue siendo el mismo pero está siendo incidido de manera específica por estas políticas rearticuladoras.

Las modificaciones legales han sido de carácter administrativo, laboral y agraria. Las de carácter administrativo versan sobre dos campos: la eliminación de las excesivas prohibiciones de consumo y algunas regulaciones en materia de salud pública. Las primeras tienen que ver con la venta de servicios y artículos de consumo que estaban prohibidos para el mercado nacional como celulares, equipos de reproducción de video, servicios turísticos en hoteles y en establecimientos de renta de autos, etc. Aunque no son de gran relevancia económica,

19. A partir del 2007 principalmente, con pasos lentos, se ha venido rearticulando toda la institucionalidad cubana a sus cauces anteriores. Esto se ha reflejado no sólo en el ámbito discursivo oficial sino en acciones concretas, eliminándose todo una serie de oficinas administrativas de diferentes programas de la Batalla de Ideas y pasándolos a los ministerios correspondientes según la rama. Este proceso ha tenido culminación durante el año 2009. Desde el punto de vista del discurso el tema del fortalecimiento de la institucionalidad ha estado latente durante los últimos tres años en casi todas las intervenciones oficiales. Ver en discursos pronunciados por el compañero Raúl Castro Ruz en: las conclusiones de la sesión constitutiva de la VII Legislatura de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, el 24 de febrero de 2008, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2008/02/24/nacional/artic35.html>; en las conclusiones del VI Pleno del Comité Central del PCC, el 28 de abril de 2008, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/secciones/pleno-ccpcc/pleno01.html>; en el Tercer Período Ordinario de Sesiones de la VII Legislatura de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, el 1º de agosto de 2009, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2009/08/01/nacional/artic19.html>; en la clausura del IV Período Ordinario de Sesiones de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, el 20 de diciembre de 2009, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2009/12/21/nacional/artic01.html>; así como los respectivos del año 2010, la clausura del IX Congreso de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas el 4 de abril de 2010, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2010/04/05/nacional/artic03.html>; y los realizados en los períodos ordinarios de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular el 1 de agosto y 18 de diciembre, ambos del 2010; <http://www.juventudrebelde.cu/cuba/2010-08-01/la-unidad-es-el-arma-estrategica-de-los-revolucionarios-cubanos/>, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2010/12/20/nacional/artic07.html>.

estas medidas tienen gran incidencia en el imaginario social popular por considerarse ya desde hace tiempo prohibiciones innecesarias y arbitrarias en función de la vida social del país. Las segundas son de mayor relevancia, tienen que ver con la autorización de operaciones para cambio de sexo para personas transexuales en el sistema de salud pública nacional, junto a algunas desregulaciones sobre la venta de medicamentos. Por Resolución del Ministerio de Salud Pública en el 2008 se autorizaron las operaciones de cambio de sexo en el sistema de salud pública nacional para las personas que, previos estudios psicológicos y de sexualidad, fueran determinados como transexuales. Esto es el producto de un arduo trabajo que comenzó la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas desde 1979 creando un grupo multidisciplinario para la ayuda y estudio a personas de sexualidad diferente. En este sentido, hoy existe el Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CENESEX), que desde el 2005, convierte este grupo en una Comisión Nacional de Atención Integral a Personas Transexuales. El Centro, su Comisión y las personas que se sienten sexualmente diferentes, todos juntos, han generado un movimiento social realizando campañas sociales con incidencia mediática, familiar y estatal, en aras de los derechos de estas personas.²⁰ Estas acciones son demostraciones de reconstrucciones de la realidad desde el accionar popular, colectivo, exigiendo derechos y usando el fenómeno jurídico como un elemento final de cambio social. No obstante, apenas son pequeños avances dentro de los muchos reclamos que podría tener el cubano en su cotidianidad.²¹

En cuanto a materia agraria, se considera que se realizó un paso de gran importancia para la renovación del sector y sobre todo de la producción alimenticia nacional y la sustitución de importaciones.²² Por el

20. Ver en http://www.cenesex.sld.cu/webs/la_atencion_integral_36.html.

21. Es relevante destacar que el movimiento social que se agrupa alrededor del CENESEX de gays, lesbianas, transexuales, travestis, etc., también han propuesto otras reformas legales al Código de Familia respecto a las uniones consensuales, temas hereditarios y de seguridad social, entre otros, los cuales siguen sin aprobarse por el parlamento nacional.

22. Al término del año 2008 Cuba importaba alimentos por un total de 2200 millones de dólares para el consumo nacional. Ver en http://www.one.cu/aec2008/esp_08_tabla_cuadro.htm 8.11. Importaciones de mercancías según secciones de la Clasificación Uniforme para el Comercio Internacional (CUCI).

Decreto-Ley no. 259 de 2008 emitido por el Consejo de Estado,²³ se autorizó la entrega en usufructo de las tierras estatales ociosas a personas que demuestren que son campesinos, es decir, que pueden trabajarla, que se dedican a esta profesión. En ellas tendrán la posibilidad de construir una vivienda e instalaciones de trabajo. Hasta ese momento, de las 3.5 millones de hectáreas cultivables en el país, más de la mitad eran tierras ociosas o subexplotadas.²⁴ Los retos de tal medida para el derecho son muchísimos por ejemplo: en lo laboral en cuanto a la contratación de personal,—es ilusorio pensar que estas tierras serán trabajadas sólo en el ámbito familiar—, por lo que hay que pensar en temas de seguridad social y relación salarial;²⁵ también en cuanto al derecho de propiedad y el derecho sucesorio ya que se están autorizando las construcciones de inmuebles dentro de la tierra usufructuada, por sólo mencionar algunas relevantes. Es de destacar que junto con estas disposiciones se han adoptado otras de carácter administrativo pero relevantes para la dinamización del sector agrario. La primera es la descentralización del sector agropecuario estatal en cuanto a su administración. Se crearon direcciones municipales con facultad para tomar decisiones y asumir responsabilidades, poner en explo-

23. Ver el Decreto-Ley No. 259 sobre la entrega de tierras ociosas en usufructo <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2008/07/18/nacional/artic05.html>.

24. En el mes de Julio de 2009 se habían realizado 110 mil solicitudes de entrega de tierras ociosas en usufructo a campesinos y se habían aprobado cerca de 82 mil, abarcando unas 690 mil hectáreas que implican el 39 por ciento del área ociosa que se tenía en país. De la tierra ya entregada se ha declarado libre de marabú y otras plantas de este tipo cerca de la mitad y se han sembrado casi 225 mil hectáreas, es decir, la tercera parte. Ver en: Discurso pronunciado por el compañero Raúl Castro Ruz en el acto central en conmemoración del 56 aniversario del asalto a los cuarteles Moncada y Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, en la plaza Mayor General “Calixto García”, Holguín, 26 de julio de 2009, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2009/07/26/nacional/artic33.html>; González, Ana Margarita, “Entrevista a Orlando Lugo Fonte, Presidente de la Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (ANAP)”, Periódico *Trabajadores*, 22 de junio de 2009, <http://www.trabajadores.cu/news/2009/6/22/tenemos-que-dar-saltos-cualitativos/?searchterm=tierra%20usufructo%20campesinos>. En el año 2010 el país avanzaba en la entrega de tierras ociosas a partir de las solicitudes en más del 60 por ciento, pero el reto está aún en que las mismas sean productivas para que incida en el mercado interno nacional de productos alimenticios.

25. Es muy importante cuidar, regular y fortalecer las relaciones salariales entre los campesinos, debido a que si estas son acometidas mediante la relación oferta-demanda del mercado nacional sin una regulación y control coherente desde el estado, podrían generarse situaciones de explotación entre el campesino usufructuario y el campesino obrero que trabaja la tierra directamente.

tación la tierra y perfeccionar la comercialización de los productos agropecuarios. Con esto, se concretan ideas de localización mediante la municipalización de soluciones. La segunda medida es el aumento de precio por el Estado a la compra a los campesinos de su producción agraria relacionada como la papa, hortalizas, café, coco, carne de cerdo y leche.

La otra regulación de importancia tomada en este período es la aprobación de la nueva Ley de Seguridad Social²⁶ y su Reglamento.²⁷ Esta ley modificó en esencia temas muy sensibles para la población como fue la prolongación de la vida laboral debido a la baja natalidad poblacional y el envejecimiento de la población económicamente activa, además, amplió derechos y los actualizó en función de las nuevas realidades, teniendo en cuenta nuevas medidas salariales, de empleo y actores laborales que no tenían protección alguna de seguridad social como eran los trabajadores por cuenta propia.²⁸ Lo relevante de esta modificación legal, además de su contenido, fue su carácter participativo. Se llevaron a cabo 85 301 asambleas de traba-

26. Ver *Ley No. 105 de 2008 de Seguridad Social*, Gaceta Oficial No. 004, Extraordinaria, de 22 de enero de 2009. <http://www.gacetaoficial.cu/>

27. Ver en Lee, Susana, “En vigor Reglamento de la Ley de Seguridad Social”, Periódico *Granma*, 9 de mayo de 2009, <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2009/05/09/nacional/artic03.html>

28. La vida laboralmente activa se modificó a 30 años de edad laboral, teniendo 65 años los hombres y 60 años las mujeres para poder retirarse. La anterior regulación preveía la edad de retiro en 60 y 55 años respectivamente. Con respecto a los derechos “se modificó el cálculo de las pensiones para que su cuantía tenga mayor correspondencia con el aporte y la permanencia del trabajador. Se puede percibir más de una pensión de seguridad social a la que se tenga derecho, eliminándose la prohibición sobre el tema, lo cual beneficia a los menores huérfanos de ambos padres y a las viudas que se jubilaran como trabajadoras. En el caso del viudo se otorga un nuevo derecho, optar por la pensión que le sea más favorable. Se elimina el tiempo mínimo de servicios prestados, para que el trabajador tenga derecho a la pensión por invalidez total y parcial, con lo que aumenta la protección a este riesgo al sólo tener que acreditar el vínculo laboral. Se incorpora un régimen especial de la seguridad social para todos los trabajadores por cuenta propia, con lo cual la cobertura abarcará a todos los trabajadores del país. Los pensionados por vejez que cumplan los nuevos requisitos de edad y tiempo de servicios, pueden reincorporarse al trabajo y devengar la pensión y el salario íntegro del cargo que ocupen, si se incorporan a un cargo diferente al que desempeñaban al momento de obtener la pensión. Los pensionados por vejez reincorporados al trabajo cuando se enfermen o accidenten tienen derecho al cambio del subsidio, además de la pensión que reciben”. <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/secciones/seguridad-social/art-004.html> y <http://www.gacetaoficial.cu/>.

jadores para discutir el Anteproyecto de Ley, en ellas participaron más de tres millones de personas con 900 000 intervenciones aproximadamente, el 93,8% de los convocados aprobó el documento, según cifras oficiales.²⁹ A pesar del proceso participativo, hubo respuestas interesantes desde la población trabajadora de que no estaban de acuerdo con la medida de aumentar la vida laboralmente activa, pero sobre todo reclamaban que no se tenían en cuenta sus opiniones a la hora del debate, bajo la propia reflexión que participar no es opinar, sino también decidir.³⁰ Este es uno de los grandes retos en la democracia socialista, emancipadora, liberadora, o como se le quiera denominar. Tener en cuenta minorías existentes en la comunidad política,—o incluso las propias mayorías—, que quieren profundizar el sistema socialista democráticamente, participativamente, solidariamente, es algo que el sistema cubano debe revisar a fondo. Dentro del proyecto socialista pueden existir y existen opiniones diversas que deberían implicar diálogo, debate, rearticulación de consensos y no silencio, menos invisibilidad. Si se tienen en cuenta todas estas opiniones, se estará fortaleciendo, pero incluso experimentando una verdadera articulación política democrática, republicana y socialista que desean muchas personas en la isla.

También en esta etapa se han tomado medidas administrativas de importancia para la organización del Estado como la fusión de Ministerios y reubicación de funciones. Por otro lado, aunque no en consecuencia de lo que se desea para la vida cotidiana de la población, se han subido salarios a sectores como la educación y el sector de justicia (Fiscalía y Tribunales), ámbitos sociales que han venido teniendo desde la década de los 90s disminuciones paulatinas en su personal profesional producto de la poca retribución monetaria, entre otros aspectos. Además, ha habido modificaciones para aumentar el monto

29. Ver en <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2009/05/09/nacional/artic03.html>.

30. Para estos temas ver en Pérez, Pepe, "Participar, además de opinar, es decidir. A propósito de las discusiones en Cuba sobre la nueva ley de seguridad social que debería someterse a referendo", *Kaos en la Red*, 14-11-2008, www.kaosenlared.net/noticia/cuba-participar-ademas-opinar-decidir; Gracias, Manuel Ángel, "Cuba: entre la participación y la decisión de sus ciudadanos", *Kaos en la Red*, 17-11-2008, www.kaosenlared.net/noticia/cuba-entre-participacion-decision-ciudadanos.

de las pensiones por retiro en varias ocasiones y, finalmente, la que es consideraba más importante, la aceptación del pluriempleo y por consiguiente de la eliminación de topes salariales.³¹ Este paso, además de las implicaciones jurídicas que tiene en el ámbito fiscal,—impuestos por ingresos en labores que los impliquen—, y laboral—con respecto a la implementación de horarios laborales flexibles, formas de contratación parciales, aportes y beneficios para la seguridad social según ganancias, etc.—, si podrían incidir con mayor fuerza en el ingreso salarial de la población en los sectores autorizados.³²

Por último, comentar que en la misma línea de rearticulación del estado cubano, en el año 2010 se han comenzado a disponer de cambios muy relevantes para el funcionamiento del sistema económico y social del país. Cómo se conoce, se está llevando a cabo un proceso complejo en el sistema burocrático estatal de reducción de plantillas de más de un millón de trabajadores; en una primera etapa comprende entre septiembre de 2010 y abril de 2011, serán declaradas interrumpidas 500 000 personas, posteriormente, se llevará a cabo un segundo proceso que aún no se define. El objetivo, desburocratizar el estado, eliminar cargas económicas innecesarias, frenar el paternalismo en el cual se ha visto inmerso el gobierno cubano durante el proceso revolucionario. Es decir, cambiar la noción de que el trabajo es un valor vinculado sólo al estado sino que es el factor que genera la producción, reactiva la economía, y produce bienestar social, siempre y cuando sea honesto y realizado en un dialéctico devenir entre la satisfacción individual y colectiva del pueblo cubano.

Por supuesto, esta es la primera vez durante el proceso revolucionario cubano que se lleva a cabo un “despido masivo” de trabajadores

31. Ver el Decreto Ley No. 268 “Modificativo del Régimen Laboral” del Consejo de Estado, *Gaceta Oficial* No. 022, Extraordinaria, de 29 de junio de 2009. <http://www.gacetaoficial.cu/>.

32. El pluriempleo no sería aplicable a los cuadros y funcionarios, técnicos y profesionales de la salud, investigadores, profesores, maestros y auditores, excepto para el ejercicio de cargos docentes, de investigación científica u otros que le sean aprobados por decisión expresa de la autoridad u órgano que los designó o eligió. <http://www.trabajadores.cu/news/2009/6/29/dictan-decreto-ley-no-268-201cmodificativo-del-regimen-laboral201d/?searchterm=decreto%20ley%20268>.

estatales, más bien, el estado cubano se ha caracterizado en proteger derechos laborales al punto de generar improductividad e ineficiencia, que al final afectaba a todos, desde el salario por su poca validez fáctica hasta la escasez y poca variedad de los bienes de consumo para la vida cotidiana. La medida social y económica paliativa para poder realizar estos cambios ha sido abrir la gama del trabajo privado, el denominado trabajo por cuenta propia en modalidades de oficio, pero también en la liberación de la contratación de personal y la reducción de trámites burocráticos para la autorización legal de nuevas y reformadas actividades.

Hay que plantear que el cómo se van a llevar a cabo todas estas acciones,—reducción de plantillas y aumento exponencial del trabajo privado—han sido establecidas legalmente en innumerables resolutiveos legales como decretos-leyes, decretos, resoluciones que se han publicado en sendas gacetas oficiales extraordinarias del 1 y el 8 de octubre de 2010.³³ El análisis de estas impactantes medidas tiene mucha tela por donde cortar, política, económica y jurídicamente. Pero los análisis serían prematuros porque apenas se están llevando a cabo los procesos sin que se vislumbren apenas resultados. Lo único que se puede manifestar es que al parecer, estas medidas, son medios para resolver y canalizar los problemas de la economía nacional, lo cual queda claro que necesita una reactivación, oxigenación y vuelco con suma rapidez. Podríamos comentar,—porque los datos no se han publicado concretamente—, que estos problemas y soluciones son hasta cierto punto una síntesis de los pedidos de la población en los debates que se han realizado en los últimos cuatro años en el país, convocados por la dirección gubernamental.

Por otro lado, se ha convocado oficialmente al VI Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba después de una larga espera, y en estos momentos, se discute en todo el país, a todos los niveles sociales el Proyecto de Lineamientos de la política económica y social donde se plantean muchas de las cosas expuestas anteriormente.³⁴

33. Ver Gaceta Oficial No. 11 y 12, Extraordinaria, de 1 y 8 de octubre de 2010, respectivamente. <http://www.gacetaoficial.cu/>.

El reto, es cómo se llevan a cabo los procesos de debate y de ejecución jurídica y políticamente, es decir, cuánta participación decisoria va a tener la población en los mismos, qué nivel de transparencia y de mecanismos podrán ser habilitados y cuestionados a la vez para una reconstrucción democrática de tan delicados pasos. Mientras más participativo con efectividad, más conflictos y soluciones propuestas desde la base popular, mientras más local se haga, mientras todo lo planteado se ejecute después y no quede como simple catarsis social, tendremos un proceso con buenos resultados, más socialista, más democrático, más popular y de seguro más efectivo.

Se están moviendo pilares económicos y sociales del sistema cubano revolucionario, si se lleva a cabo un análisis con respeto y profundidad acerca de la cosa pública y su relación entre lo personal, lo colectivo y el estado, el resultado puede ser loable; sino podría estarse perfilando la entrada de un capitalismo de estado al estilo chino, dónde habrá necesidades cubiertas pero al costo de desigualdades abismales, descuido de logros sociales y por supuesto, nada de republicanismo socialista.

III. EL DERECHO SOCIALISTA EN EL PROYECTO DE LA REVOLUCIÓN CUBANA.

3.1. Lo que el derecho socialista ha sido en el proyecto de la Revolución Cubana.

Mirando en retrospectiva cómo se ha comportado el derecho en Cuba desde el triunfo revolucionario hasta hoy,—sobre todo en su ámbito constitutivo—, se pueden determinar diferentes situaciones en el devenir histórico de este fenómeno político-social-normativo.

El sistema jurídico cubano ha sido construido como parte de la institucionalidad del proceso revolucionario con influencias neor-

34. Ver el Proyecto de Lineamientos de la política económica y social del VI Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba. <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/secciones/Proyecto%20de%20Lineamientos%20del%20VI%20Congreso%20del%20PCC.pdf>.

románicas, de los sistemas jurídicos-políticos del socialismo real pero con un sustrato ético propio, producto de las tradiciones históricas de la isla, con un espíritu nacionalista, antiimperialista y solidario, propio de la ruptura revolucionaria en el que se ha venido construyendo.

Este derecho se ha expresado dialécticamente, como un fenómeno socio político que se ha manifestado en su fase constitutiva entre la participación y la centralización, es decir, entre la creación democrática y la instauración mediante la instrumentalización política contingencial. Los procesos participativos han tenido grados, desde amplias discusiones masivas, con retroalimentación entre la comunidad política y la dirigencia estatal junto a la aprobación plebiscitaria de las normativas jurídicas en cuestión, hasta; debates de menor grado, donde no ha existido proceso de interacción consensuado entre la comunidad política y sus representantes, sino que la participación de la población ha devenido foro de opinión y no de decisión de las regulaciones a aprobar.

La implementación del derecho como un instrumento de decisiones políticas centralizadas ha estado marcada por un actuar político fetichizado, y en muchas ocasiones por situaciones coyunturales socio-económicas que han determinado este proceder. Estas manifestaciones demuestran concepciones normativistas formales del fenómeno jurídico que se expresan desde diferentes aristas:

a) La aprobación de normativas como meros trámites formales para legalizar una política central ya decidida o ya establecida.

b) Existencia de hiperregulación que infiere la noción fetichizada de que la disposición jurídica por ser solamente vigente es resolutora de problemas sociales o, debe establecerse todo tipo de regulación para tener la capacidad de hacer -sobre todo desde el ámbito institucional administrativo—sobre la base del axioma de que “lo que no está reglado está prohibido”. Estas últimas acciones siempre han suscitado incoherencias, inorganicidad e incongruencias sistémicas, provocando fenómenos de inconstitucionalidad y de irrespeto a todo el conjunto legal, lo mismo desde los órganos estatales que desde la

comunidad política. Los primeros, convirtiendo al sistema en un ente burocratizado y utilitario en aras del poder fetichizado; la segunda, determinando desprecio, futilidad y consecuente irreverencia a tanta normatividad sin sentido.

c) Se manifiestan amplios márgenes de discrecionalidad para la autoridad en parte de la legislación mencionada lo que determina situaciones sin la debida transparencia, información y garantía de los derechos para los sujetos. Es decir, la existencia de lagunas jurídicas,— sobre todo referente a derechos—, está motivada también por la concepción normativista del derecho al no importar sus funciones teleológicas ideológicas y sociológicas para con el proyecto social estudiado.

Todas estas situaciones se vinculan de una manera u otra a ese fenómeno que parte del derecho, pero que es la vinculación sociopolítica de realización más importante que emerge del propio sistema jurídico para con el ámbito sociopolítico, la cultura jurídica. Los fenómenos negativos descritos demuestran la inexistencia o depauperación de una cultura jurídica profunda en el sujeto popular cubano, dígase representante o miembro de la comunidad política en cuestión. Lo que trae como consecuencia, la disminución de la participación activa de este sujeto en las construcciones jurídicas, que es a su vez, la coartación de la participación popular en lo político y en la construcción-reconstrucción dialéctica de una sociedad emancipada o al menos en camino hacia postulados liberadores.

3.2. Lo que el derecho socialista debe ser en un proyecto emancipatorio.

El derecho es un fenómeno sociopolítico con contenido ideológico, político y socioeconómico. Es decir, es un sistema normativo pero no sólo normativo, donde se expresan tres ámbitos a deducir: el normativo ya mencionado, el ideológico, y el de regularidades y causalidades de relaciones económico-sociales y políticas. En este sentido, el

sistema jurídico presenta un componente volitivo-político, desde y hacia la comunidad política y sus representantes institucionales, en relación dialéctica, capaz de impulsar a la sociedad hacia los rumbos que se desea debido a su profundo contenido ético. El contenido ético del derecho socialista tiene que ser un contenido ético alternativo al del sistema capitalista.

El derecho capitalista liberal-neoliberal—, es individualista, fragmentario, cosificado y falazmente liberalizado dentro de los cánones de libertades (económicas y políticas con consecuencias sociales) que no existen para muchos,—sino sólo para pocos. Es un derecho aparential, regula derechos pero no deja garantizarlos, regula pluralidad política para un voto exiguo que deja al margen la participación popular real, masiva, efectiva sobre la construcción de lo político,—la reproducción de la vida—, regula control al poder que *per se* es fetichizado, negativo, para que sea ejercido por élites económicas que a la vez son políticas.

El derecho socialista no puede repetir estos fenómenos; regular derechos y no garantizarlos, basarse en la participación popular y coartarla, cosificarla, no puede convertirse en un instrumento de dominación sino de construcción de emancipación. Para esto, debe ante todo, contener al ser humano, a las personas en su totalidad social, en su relación con el otro, incluidos todos, iguales-no igualitarios, diferenciados, dinámicos, cambiantes, contruidos-recontruidos, desde la particularidad hacia la colectividad. Su contenido ético alterno debe normar el deber ser de una sociedad liberadora.

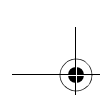
El derecho es un fenómeno deontológico y teleológico, por lo que en el socialismo debe estar integrado en torno a un aparato ético que sirva de alternativa radical al egoísmo, al individualismo y al patrimonialismo del derecho capitalista, es decir, solidario, socializado, colectivista sin perder los niveles de particularidad y diversidad que comprenden los seres humanos. Si se impone una normativa jurídica sin este fundamento ético, el derecho deja de ser revolucionario, aunque se crea justo. En Cuba no se requieren construir principios

artificiales, ni imponerlos, sino buscarlos, reconstruirlos desde sus raíces, desde su tradición histórica, donde ha primado un sentido de humanidad y de donde es hijo el proceso revolucionario.

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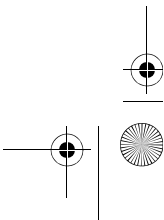
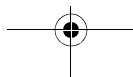
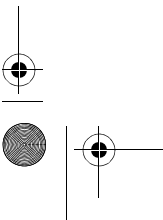
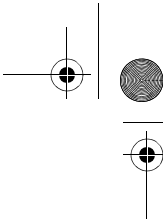
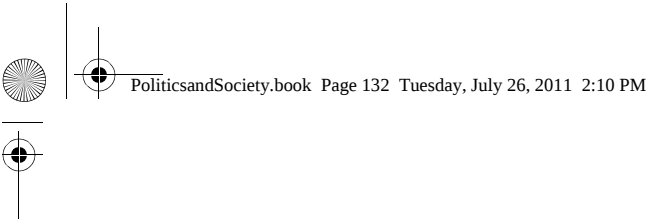
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6 Legal Dissent: Constitutional Proposals for “Cambio” in Cuba

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Abstract: The Revolution is 50, Raúl has succeeded Fidel, and many dissidents who participated in the 2002 Varela Project initiative are in jail. What hope for “cambio” (change) in Cuba? Legal dissent—constitutional proposals, a legislative agenda and grassroots civil rights organizing—may be the key. The Movimiento Cristiano Liberación (MCL), led by the Nobel Peace Prize-nominated Oswaldo Payá, presents the strongest challenge to the power of Cuba’s 50-year old Revolutionary government. This dissident group is at the heart of the development of the 2002 Varela Project and forms the core of the leaders arrested in the 2003 Cuban Spring crackdown. This paper traces the history of MCL’s “legal dissent” strategy, from the evolution of the Varela Project to their development of an entire legislative agenda, crafted with nation-wide grassroots participation over the last six years since the crackdown. Using data from international NGO surveys conducted within Cuba, we analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the MCL’s proposal vis a vis the political and economic concerns and interests of the broader population. Cuba’s government seeks to consolidate its rule through its institutions, specifically, through the Cuban Communist Party. It remains to be seen whether the MCL’s legal dissent strategy can successfully mobilize a broad segment of the Cuban population, and channel the political aspirations of reformers whose interests are not served under one-party rule.

In January 2009, the Cuban Revolutionary government marked its 50th year in power, having survived substantial economic, social, and political challenges. During these 50 years, a succession of dissident

groups has challenged the Cuban government, seeking to establish domestic and international support for an alternative national vision (Encinosa 2004). The challenge for both the Cuban government and the dissidents is to build a political project that is capable of effectively channeling the range of competing desires among interest groups in Cuba, from those clamoring for political, economic and social reform and renewal (“cambio,” or “change”) to those invested in systemic continuity and stability (LeoGrande 2002). One dissident group in particular, the “Movimiento Cristiano Liberación” (MCL, or Christian Liberation Movement), has sought to create a competing political vision and movement by developing and proposing a legislative agenda through means that are legal and legitimate under Cuba’s 1976 Constitution. This paper reviews the history, status and potential of the MCL’s work.

THE EVOLUTION AND CONTEXT OF THE MCL’S CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS

This section reviews the evolution and context of the Varela¹ Project referendum proposal, the subsequent “Todos Cubanos” legislative agenda (derived after the 2004 National Dialog process), and ongoing efforts to achieve their implementation (through the “Foro Cubano,” “Unidos en la Esperanza,” and the 2009 National Dialog). Figure 1 illustrates the MCL’s major initiatives, which help craft and disseminate their message:

Figure 1. MCL’s Major Initiatives

“Proyecto Varela”
 “Dialogo Nacional”
 “Programa “Todos Cubanos””
 “Foro Cubano” - Local Committees
 “Foro Cubano” - National Committee
 “Unidos en la Esperanza”

1. The Varela Project is named after Félix Varela, a priest, intellectual, abolitionist, and social activist from the early 19th century, who was an active figure in Cuba’s struggle for independence.

The Varela Project: a Constitutional Citizen Petition for a Legislative Referendum

In 1989, Willy Brandt, the former chancellor of West Germany, visited Cuba. He met with Gustavo Arcos, a key representative of the Cuban Committee for Human Rights, who brought with him a young colleague—Oswaldo Payá (J. Rodríguez, personal communication, June 18, 2007). Brandt had negotiated treaties between East and West Germany, laying a key piece of political groundwork for Germany’s eventual unification. Asked how to build support for their movement, Brandt replied, “If you act outside the law, you will never get any international support. However, if you act within the law, and peacefully, then the world will support you—people’s ideas have changed, the world no longer tolerates violence and terrorism as it once did.” (J. Rodríguez, personal communication, June 18, 2007).

It was 1989—twenty years ago—and change was in the air. Payá took this idea of “legal dissent” back to a dialog and reflection group he was a part of, consisting of young Catholic professionals, mostly friends and co-parishioners (J. Rodríguez, personal communication, June 18, 2007). They pulled out existing laws and a magnifying glass. One of them, 17-year old Regis Iglesias, found the loophole they were searching for: Article 86g² in the Cuban Constitution of 1976, which stated that any citizen petition with 10,000 signatures would be reviewed as a legislative initiative by the National Assembly (J. Rodríguez, personal communication, June 18, 2007).

This seminal idea of legal dissidence as a platform for reform grew throughout the 1990s. It fed on the reformist desires of pro-Pere-stroika sectors of Cuban society and government, and flourished in spaces opened for National Dialog by the Cuban government in the early 1990s (Pérez-Stable 2003: 34). The idea of systemic reform through legal, pluralist and peaceful means also animated efforts such as the Corriente Socialista Democrática platform (1992), the Cambio Cubano effort at dialog with the government (1993), the Concilio

Cubano coalition building effort (1995-6), the discussions at the most recent Congress of the Cuban Communist Party (1997), and the Mesa de Reflexión de la Oposición Moderada (1999) (Pérez-Stable 2003: 14, 34, 36).

In the early 1990s, Latin America, Canada, the European Union, the United States, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were all pursuing policies of constructive engagement towards Cuba (Pérez-Stable 2003: 14). However, mid-decade, all of these efforts were stymied by the Cuban government's decision to not engage on issues of civil and political rights, symbolized by their continued repression of dissidents, lack of cooperation with the United Nations special procedures mechanisms, and shooting down in February 1996 of two civilian aircraft, which ultimately (and against the will of President Bill Clinton) led to a tighter U.S. embargo through the Helms Burton law (Pérez-Stable 2003: 14, Corrales 2004: 54). In this context of government retrenchment, the efforts to graft a common reformist platform onto a viable legal mechanism for mobilizing popular support came to fruition in 1996, when the MCL launched the Varela Project (J. Rodríguez, personal communication, June 18, 2007).

2. In its relevant portion, Chapter 10, Article 86 of the Cuban Constitution of 1976 reads: "The following have authority to present a legislative initiative:

- a) the representatives of the National Assembly for Popular Power;
- b) the Council of State;
- c) the Council of Ministers;
- ch) the committees of the National Assembly for Popular Power;
- d) the national Committee of the Cuban Workers Central, or the national Directorates of other social and mass organizations;
- e) the Supreme Popular Tribunal in matters regarding the administration of justice;
- f) the Attorney General of the Republic, in matters of their competence;
- g) *the citizenry. In this case it is an indispensable requisite that the initiative be exercised by ten thousand citizens, at least, who are members of the electorate.*"

Constitution of the [Cuban] Republic. (12 July 1992). Ch. X, Art. 86, Translated by author, emphasis added..cu/. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from the Cuban government's "Gaceta Oficial" Web site: <http://www.gacetaoficial.cu/>. The Constitution was subsequently amended in 2002, but the language highlighted in the clause above remains unmodified. Constitution of the [Cuban] Republic. (26 June 2002). Ch. X, Art. 88.ch.4. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from the Cuban government's "Gaceta Oficial" Web site: <http://www.gacetaoficial.cu/>.

The Varela Project’s goal was to collect at least 10,000 signatures on a citizen petition, triggering (per the Constitution’s Article 86g) a legal duty for Cuba’s legislature to discuss the petition’s proposal: the organization of a national referendum on five key issues: 1) freedom of speech, 2) freedom of association, 3) amnesty for political prisoners, 4) freedom to organize corporations, and 5) a new electoral law (Payá 1998). The MCL, with the support of other opposition organizations, began the arduous task of collecting signatures. The government’s monopoly on all means of communication in Cuba and active persecution and infiltration by the political police hampered collection efforts, which spread by extraordinary, person-to-person grassroots organizing (O. Rodríguez and F. Hernández, personal communication, September 8, 2008). Signature collection efforts benefited from the temporary economic reforms of the early 1990s (legalization of dollars, farmers markets, and self-employment) and the temporary relaxation of repression that accompanied Pope John Paul’s 1998 visit to Cuba (Corrales 2004: 36; Newman 1998). On May 10, 2002, Oswaldo Payá, Antonio Díaz and Regis Iglesias of the MCL personally delivered over 11,020 signatures in support of the Varela Project petition to the National Assembly of People’s Power in Cuba (*BBC World News*).

The delivery of the Varela Project signatures was immediately hailed in international human rights circles. Former President Jimmy Carter, then on a visit to Cuba, spoke of the Varela Project during his uncensored appearance on national television in May 2002—the first time the Project was mentioned by the national press (Carter 2002). Oswaldo Payá was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Czech President Vaclav Havel, (*Zenit*, June 14, 2002) and received awards from the U.S. government (the National Democratic Institute’s W. Averell Harriman Prize) and the European Parliament (Andrei Sakharov Prize for Human Rights). The Cuban Diaspora’s reaction was mixed; while many supported the project (over 3,000 signatures were symbolically collected in Miami’s Ermita de la Caridad), many others (including prominent figures) voiced vocal opposition, unhappy with

the project's legitimation of the 1976 Constitution and with Payá's willingness to engage the Cuban government (Pérez-Stable 2003: 36; J. Hernández, personal communication, June 18, 2007). However, a 2003 survey showed that out of 800 South Florida residents polled, two-thirds supported the Varela Project (Bendixen 17; Pérez-Stable 2003: 36).

The Cuban government never acknowledged receiving the properly delivered signatures (Pérez-Stable 2003: 16). However, its reaction to the Varela Project was swift and negative. The Cuban government regularly casts itself as an underdog, and survivor of the attacks of powerful imperialists (Bustamante and Sweig 2008). Thus, alleging U.S. interference in Cuban sovereignty, it proposed a constitutional amendment, declaring the irrevocably socialist nature of the Cuban Revolutionary government (Pérez-Stable 2003: 16). By June 2002, over 98% of the Cuban electorate had been mobilized to vote on and approve the amendment, (*BBC World News*, June 27, 2002) with Fidel Castro himself leading a march of over one million past the U.S. interests section in Havana (*BBC World News*, June 12, 2002). The Cuban press denounced the dissidents as mercenary agents, with no further discussion of the project's actual content; Varela Project signatories were pressured to retract their support and denounce the project. (*BBC World News*, June 12, 2002).

Then, on March 17, 2003, as the world's attention turned to the Iraq War, the Cuban government cracked down; 75 activists, most of them Varela Project organizers and many of them MCL members, were jailed with sentences of 8 to 28 years in prison (Amnesty International 2003; Human Rights Watch 2003). Payá was left untouched, but his key supporters and colleagues (including Regis Iglesias, Antonio Díaz and other members of the MCL) were jailed. Then in April, the government arrested, summarily tried, and executed three men unrelated to MCL for trying to escape Cuba by commandeering a Havana harbor ferry (*BBC World News*, April 10, 2003).

In December 2003, in spite of these conditions, Payá and his wife, Ofelia Acevedo, delivered 14,320 additional Varela Project signatures, bringing the total to 25,340 (Payá 2009). Despite the 2002 constitutional amendment, Article 86g (now Article 88.ch.4) of the Cuban Constitution remains valid national law. To date, the constitutionally-required legislative debate of the Varela Project is still open and pending.

The National Dialog and the “Program for All Cubans”: A Legislative Agenda

Undeterred, Payá and the MCL launched the “Diálogo Nacional” (National Dialog) initiative in 2004. Throughout the year, over 11,000 Cubans met in small groups and discussed the essential question of what they wanted their country to look like (Payá 2006). In 2006, four years after the presentation of the Varela Project signatures, the collected results of this process were published as the “Programa “Todos Cubanos;” (Program for All Cubans), a roadmap for a peaceful transition to democracy (Payá 2006). The Program contains four proposals: 1) a re-drafted Constitution, 2) “Cuba Primero” (Cuba First) plan of necessary changes, 3) a re-drafted Electoral Law (re-issued during the 2007 elections), (*ACI Press*, September 2, 2007) and 4) a re-drafted Associations Law. Two additional laws have also been drafted as complements to the “Programa “Todos Cubanos”: 5) Amnesty Law (Payá 2007b), and 6) National “Reencuentro” (Re-encounter) Law (Payá 2007c). Together, these proposals serve as a legislative agenda that reflects an alternative political vision, crafted “by Cubans, for Cubans” (Payá 2006). They seek to further peaceful and democratic legislative reform by developing proposed solutions from within the existing legal framework and process, and requesting that they be presented to the Cuban people for debate and approval in a voter’s referendum.

By December 2007, the text of all of these documents had been delivered to the Cuban National Assembly. The Cuban government has not formally reacted to these submissions, instead targeting the

MCL with continued repression, unremitting harassment, infiltration, and delegitimization (*ACI Press*, August 13, 2007; *ACI Press*, April 22, 2008; *ACI Press*, June 19, 2008). Since July 2006, most of the media attention around Cuba has focused on the transfer of power from Fidel Castro to Raúl Castro, on the subsequent yet limited reforms, on alternative dissident proposals (such as the comparatively well-publicized and U.S.-supported “Agenda para la Transición,” launched in April 2008, after most of the MCL work had been completed) (FOCAL 2008), and on the human rights abuses perpetrated against the prisoners of conscience. Thus, the Cuban public remains largely unaware of the MCL’s proposals; their existence and their true content has barely been mentioned in Cuba’s national media (Pérez Roque 2003).

“Campaña Foro Cubano,” National Dialog 2009, “Unidos en la Esperanza,” and the Varela Project, Revived

Having developed the core content of a legislative agenda, the MCL then shifted gears to pursue implementation. In 2007, the MCL launched the “Campaña Foro Cubano” (Cuban Forum Campaign), which seeks to build an organization and infrastructure that can succeed in implementing the proposals of the Varela Project and the All Cubans Program. The Cuban Forum Campaign has four priority goals: 1) freeing the political prisoners, 2) achieving legislative changes/proposals, 3) free elections, and 4) promoting national reconciliation for all Cubans. With regards to implementation, the Cuba Forum Campaign has a two-pronged structure. First, it seeks to establish a forum for Cuba’s civil society by organizing multiple local and one coordinating Civic Dialog and Reconciliation Committees. Second, it aims to promote a Cuban Forum National Meeting (no date has been fixed) with participation from the civic committees as well as the Cuban government. During 2007, over 400 dialog committees were formed throughout Cuba (J. Hernández, personal communication, June 18, 2007). However, most of them have been systematically

disbanded by the efforts of Cuba’s internal security forces (J. Hernández, personal communication, June 18, 2007). The proposal, in all of its complexity and sophistication, is proving difficult to disseminate broadly, and the high degree of repression has a chilling effect on the number of people willing to risk participating (J. Hernández, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

In October 2008, the MCL also relaunched the Varela Project, and is currently conducting additional signature collection to further strengthen the project’s effective legality (*ACI Press*, 8 October 2008). In January 2009, the MCL launched a second round of the National Dialog, open to all interested participants but principally involving the hundreds of members in the group’s core leadership (Payá 2009). This second National Dialog has yielded the “Unidos en la Esperanza” (United in Hope) declaration,³ which proposes a path forward for change on the island, with steps that include freedom without exile for political prisoners, a National Media Commission to ensure access to the national press, a National Electoral Commission to oversee free elections, and a subsequent assembly to review the Constitution (Payá 2009). In both Commissions, the MCL proposes that the government, the democratic opposition, and civil society have seats at the table (Payá 2009). The government’s reaction continues to be one of official silence and persecution. Internal security forces are employing a ‘catch and release’ strategy intended to frighten and harass activists, detaining dissidents and threatening them instead of jailing them and creating new “prisoner of conscience” figures around whom international networks can rally (Payá 2009; Human Rights Watch 2009).

Thus far, this paper has focused on the history of the MCL’s strategy of legal dissent, the content of its legislative proposals and the ways it seeks to implement them. The next section analyzes the theoretical basis of the MCL’s legal dissent strategy.

Theoretical Basis of the MCL's Legal Dissent Strategy

As a domestic civic movement, the MCL is a well-integrated actor in what Keck and Sikkink call “transnational advocacy networks” (TANS) which also include research and advocacy organizations, foundations, media, churches, unions, intellectuals, intergovernmental organizations and members of governments—international and

3. United for Hope proposes six key steps for change: 1. Freedom without exile for political prisoners. 2. Freedom of expression, of religion, of conscience and the press, guaranteed through a national media commission composed of members of the government, of the democratic opposition, and civil society to ensure access to means of communication. 3. Freedom of association ensured through passage and enforcement of laws that legalize and ensure the functioning of: political parties, electoral movements, socio-economic associations, private companies, worker movements, social organizations, environmental organizations, professional organization, religious organizations, and other civil society institutions. 4. Free elections, ensured by a) a law that secures the right of each citizen to be directly nominated for elections without intervening candidacy commissions and to be directly and democratically elected, and b) a national electoral commission integrated by citizens nominated by the government, the democratic opposition, and civil society, capable of convoking national elections and coordinating with international monitoring organisms to ensure fairness. 5. Freedom of movement and national reencounter, ensured by a) legally securing the right of all Cubans to travel freely from province to province and settle in the place of their choice, and b) the right of all Cubans to enter and leave the country freely, eliminating the “definitive exit” emigration category, and the exit or entry permit requirements for Cuban citizens, c) ensuring that Cubans outside can return freely and live in Cuba, d) the facilitation of family reunification by all governments, and e) the condition that previous owners may not dislodge (by direct or indirect means) nor require indemnification from current possessors of their former property. 6. Ensure economic and social rights by a) guaranteeing free access to health, education and essential services without imposing political-ideological pre-conditions, b) upholding the right to religious education, c) eliminating all laws that disadvantage Cubans vis a vis foreigners, d) guaranteeing the right to travel freely from province to province and settle freely in the site of their choice, e) eliminating the “frozen zones” and restrictions on free exchange of sale of housing that do not damage legitimate family interests, f) revising the Penal Code to eliminate causes of action that violate internationally recognized human rights, g) allowing independent unions in accordance with International Labor Organization (ILO) standards, h) creating conditions whereby salaries and pensions permit dignified living standards, i) recognizing and defending freedom of contract between workers and employers, particularly with respect to international companies (where the government currently retains salary earned), j) guaranteeing the right to establish a private company and to hire employees, k) promoting the creation of small and medium enterprises where Cuban entrepreneurs can be creative and create wealth, l) unifying the country’s dual currency system into one currency, m) undertaking agricultural reform whereby individual parties can put land into production. 7. A Future Vision of Institutional and Economic Transformation, including a new Constitution which recaptures the rights enshrined in the 1940 Constitution and subsequent constitutions, the design of a medium and long-term national project, a revision of the past in a framework of truth, justice and reconciliation, an integral environmental conservation and protection program, for a more free, fair and humane society.

national—all capable of mobilizing collectively around a principle or issue (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 9). For groups such as the MCL, the advocacy and activism of such transnational networks “can amplify the demands of domestic groups, and may pry open space for new issues and then echo back these demands into the domestic arena.” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 13). Keck and Sikkink refer to this as “the boomerang effect,” whereby pressure exerted internationally has a domestic impact (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 12). The concept assumes that combined pressure on a government from the inside out (by the domestic civic organization) and the outside in (by the transnational advocacy network) will cause the government to shift its position or change its behavior.

Under the Keck and Sikkink model, external pressure is a major trigger for political will to change or reform. It bears noting, however, that Cuba's political strategy is built around the mythology of internal unity, sacrifice, and resistance to external pressure. Witness the text added to the Constitution in June 2002, just one month after the presentation of the Varela Project signatures:

“Socialism and the revolutionary political and social system established in this Constitution and proven through years of heroic resistance in the face of aggression of all types and economic warfare waged by the successive administrations of the most powerful country that has ever existed, and having demonstrated their capacity to transform the country and create an entirely new and just society, are irrevocable; and Cuba will never again return to capitalism.” (Ch. I, Art. 3, Cuban Constitution, 26 June 2002)

If the past is precedent in Cuba, the government can effectively interrupt dynamics of international pressure by increasing repression, reversing reforms, slowing the pace of promised reforms, and lowering expectations (Corrales 2004: 47). Despite the perennial existence of political factions in the Cuban government that favor change, during past political crises the hard-liners have triumphed over the reformists (Corrales 2004: 48).

Despite the legal basis and moderate nature of their proposals, the MCL is apparently trying to dialog with a government whose key decision-makers, for the moment, remain “inaccessible or deaf” to claims that the democratic opposition and the issues it represents deserve a space at the table (Keck and Sikkink: 1998: 13). If international pressure alone is insufficient to create a space and trigger momentum for reform, the question arises: can domestic pressure make the difference? If so, what kind of domestic pressure can be effective, and what sectors of society must exert it?

During the 1990s, many in Cuba became familiar with Vaclav Havel’s 1985 book *The Power of the Powerless* (Pérez-Stable 2003: 59). Related concepts of strategic non-cooperation also animate a more recent work on non-violent social movements—Gene Sharp’s *From Dictatorship to Democracy*:

“Dictators require the assistance of the people they rule, without which they cannot secure and maintain the sources of political power. These sources of political power include [authority, human resources, skills and knowledge, intangible factors, material resources, and sanctions to ensure submission]. All of these sources, however, depend upon acceptance of the regime, on the submission and obedience of the population, and on the cooperation of innumerable people and the many institutions of the society. These are not guaranteed. [...]” (Sharp 2002: 17).

The Varela Project, with over 25,000 signatures to date (and still counting), is one on-going example of expressed non-consent. FLAMUR’s single currency campaign, which also involves acts of civil disobedience (such as paying for goods priced in CUC with CUP pesos) is another (Anel 2008). A third example of resistance in Cuba designed according to the Sharp model is the “Yo No Coopero” campaign, promoted by a coalition led by the Miami-based Directorio Democrático and key dissidents in Cuba, most prominently Jorge Luis García Pérez Antúnez. The campaign calls on people to withdraw their consent from the government by not participating in violent acts of repression (“Yo No Reprimo”), not informing on their neighbors

(“Yo No Chivato”), and not attending mass meetings (“Yo No Asisto”) (Directorio 2006). This campaign was modified during Cuba’s 2007 elections to include “Yo No Voto” (I don’t vote), and claims partial credit for the high number—over 1 million—of voter abstentions (Gershman and Gutierrez 2009). Compare these numbers with Fidel Castro’s original armed revolutionary movement, the 26th of July, which had at its peak, 2,000 fighters (Pérez-Stable 2003: 26).

Total non-cooperation, ostensibly, would culminate in a spontaneous, magical, TV-ready moment where masses of flag-waving people join each other, joyfully and peacefully in Cuba’s Plaza of the Revolution, to celebrate the achievement of a key freedom or shift that symbolically breaks with the past. Pure non-cooperation, however, is not without its dangers. Recent years have seen popular non-violent uprisings in Ukraine (Orange Revolution), Lebanon (Cedar Revolution), Georgia (Rose Revolution), Venezuela (electoral referendum), Burma (Crimson Revolution), and Iran (Green Wave) either beaten back by heightened repression or falling apart in the aftermath due to their relatively weaker political coalitions and subsequent lack of sustainable political leadership. Popular movements without a viable alternative political coalition, project and leadership run a similar risk.

Despite the 2003 crackdown and the government’s subsequent efforts at political isolation, the MCL has been quietly building the foundation of just such an alternative political project. Its evolution has been unspectacular and often unheralded, but incremental (J. Hernández, personal communication, June 18, 2009). Its proposals are rooted in domestic law, relying on the structure of the current Cuban Constitution, but also in the spirit of the progressive Cuban Constitution of 1940; they also draw on international human rights law, as codified in key canonic documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), instruments for the prevention of torture and inhumane treatment, and on regional Latin American human rights instruments such as

Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) (1997) and the Inter-american Democratic Charter (2001).

Documents relating to its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the United Nations Human Rights Council emphasizes how Cuba's current human rights policy promotes economic, social and cultural rights (food, health, education, sports, music) at the expense of civil and political rights (speech, press, movement) (United Nations 2009). MCL's proposals, in effect, urge the Cuban government to rectify this imbalance, proposing the enforcement of all rights (economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political) within a unified framework of a pluralist democratic political system guided by a socially progressive ethic.

The MCL has also drawn inspiration from the principles and mechanisms applied by international civil society. The Varela Project draws, methodologically speaking, from the example of the 1988 Chilean Plebiscite, led by a coalition between Christian and Social Democrats, whose strategic goal was ultimately not just to dislocate a dictatorship, but to trigger free and fair elections and a return to democracy (Payá 2009). Similarly, the MCL's emphasis on reconciliation draws on the various religious and civil society-supported human rights commission experiences in South Africa, South and Central America. The legal agenda's creative nature reflects the vision of "Another World is Possible," enshrined in the World Social Forum Declaration of Principles (2001). The World Social Forum is both a process and an "autonomous" "parallel space" created by international civil society to focus media attention, catalyze action, increase coordination, and create a space where otherwise unaddressed concerns can be aired (Álvarez 2003: 203); its original gathering was held as an "Anti-Davos" meeting (Amin 2003: 5). Similarly, the "Foro Cubano" campaign was launched as an effort to create a parallel gathering (the proposed National Forum) or 'counter forum' for the discussion of the topics on the MCL's legislative agenda that existing media and political forums (Council of Ministers, National Assembly, Communist Party) had failed to address (Payá 2007d).

International perception, pressure and the boomerang effect are most relevant in that they contribute to the “socialization” of states, pushing them to adopt and institutionalize human rights standards (Risse and Sikkink and 1999: 9). Following the transfer of power from Fidel to Raúl, Cuba signed the ICESCR and the ICCPR in February 2008 (Amnesty International 2008); although it highlighted this fact in its UPR before the United Nations Human Rights Council, Cuba has given no indication as to when it will ratify the conventions (United Nations 2009). If Cuba ratifies these treaties, the government acquires legal obligations for domestic enforcement of treaty obligations and becomes subject to monitoring by treaty bodies that review whether domestic laws and institutions are in compliance said duties. Ricardo Alarcón, President of Cuba's National Assembly, stated that Cuba “was not interested” in re-joining the Organization of the American States (OAS), despite the April 2009 revocation of the 1962 Resolution expelling them (CNN 2009 June 4; OAS 2009, 1961). If they were to rejoin, they would have to subscribe to the OAS Charter, which commits states to “promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of non-intervention” (OAS 1997: Ch. I Art. 2b). Encouraging the Cuban government to ratify the ICCPR and ICESCR treaties and to join the OAS is an important pending task for members of transnational activist human rights networks. The Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, which is overdue since 1997 and which Raúl Castro announced will take place during 2009, is one potential opportunity to raise these issues (Vicent 2009).

However, the core questions relating to the potential success or failure of the MCL's legal dissent agenda in Cuba hinge on the elusive mix of ingredients in the recipe for “effective domestic pressure.” Is it top-down political will that is determinative? Bottom-up popular pressure? Or are incremental, middle-out proposals the secret ingredient to change in Cuba? Can the MCL's legal dissent strategy exert sufficient and sustained domestic pressure that successfully challenges the basis for the existing government's established legitimacy? Can its legislative agenda successfully channel popular desires for change such

that popular complicity with dictatorship, whether coercively extracted or voluntarily given, is withdrawn or shifted? Can they shift the perception of their current situation as a marginal movement to the framers and disseminators of solutions that go to the heart of resolving the conflicts in Cuba?

Sharp establishes that the three most important factors that limit a government's power and control are 1) the population's desire to impose limits on government power, 2) the strength of independent organizations and institutions to collectively withdraw the aforementioned sources of power, and (3) the population's ability to "withhold their consent and assistance." (Sharp 2002: 19). It is with these questions in mind that we move on to the next section, to analyze how popular interests and concerns support the respective positions of the government and the MCL, in order to analyze what possibilities exist in Cuba today for the MCL's proposals to be implemented.

GOVERNMENT VS. DISSIDENTS: INTERESTS GROUPS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

What contributes to the government's ability to maintain power over its political base, and what possibility do the MCL's legal dissent proposals have of appealing to and mobilizing a sufficiently broad population? This section reviews the conflicting claims of the Cuban government and the dissidents, analyzes the range of interest groups and attitudes towards change, presents priority popular concerns reflected by recent surveys, and compares these priorities to the ones expressed in the MCL's legal dissent proposals.

Government v. Dissidents

Cuba's government and its dissidents offer two competing visions of Cuba. Fidel Castro referred to the competition for global political-ideological allegiances broadly as the "battle of ideas."⁴ The Cuban government's claim to power is based on the argument that the

Revolution, and the reasons for which it was fought, have on-going legitimacy, “mystique,” and popular support (Pérez-Stable 2003: 22). The government and its leaders project a vision of a victorious socialist Cuba continuing indefinitely into the future; on a military, economic, and social level, they have concentrated power and limited freedom in ways that make this a viable possibility (Freedom House 2008). The alternative claim presented by the dissidents is based on the argument that Cuba’s current political and economic structure is deeply flawed, and cannot be viably maintained without double standards, on-going human and civil rights abuses, and the maintenance of a repressive domestic security apparatus. It projects a vision of an open society, based on universal human rights, fundamental freedoms, plural political participation, and an increase in officially-sanctioned capitalism. The question arises: within Cuba’s population, what is the range of attitudes and who favors which of these visions?

Attitudes Towards Change

Broadly speaking, the range of attitudes regarding “change” in Cuba can be broken down into four interest groups: 1) “true believers,” who are committed to the Cuban government’s existing system, 2) “disaffected stakeholders,” whose interests and livelihoods are vested in the system but who support varying degrees of reforms, 3) “disengaged parties” whose interests and livelihoods are (to varying degrees) vested in the system but are ideologically neutral or disengaged, and 4) “dissidents,” who generate active and public opposition, both organized and individual, and are often marginalized by the system (R. Colás, personal communication, April 18, 2006). This section analyzes these four interest groups to determine national attitudes towards change.

4. The origin of the term “batalla de ideas” can be traced to Fidel’s speeches during the immigration and custody battle that centered on Elián González in 2000. Today, the “Battle of Ideas” has its own museum, run by the Ministry of Culture in Cárdenas, Elián’s home town. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from the Museo Batalla de Ideas Web site: <http://www.museobatlaladeideas.cult.cu/>.

While there have been very few surveys conducted by international non-government organizations in Cuba, surveys conducted in recent years⁵ have provided useful statistical conclusions that allow us to conceptually extrapolate broad numbers from the island's total population of 11,423,952 (CIA Factbook 2009). In looking at the two extremes, it is clear where the balance of power currently lies.

True Believers. The percentage “true believers” falls in the range of 20-35% of the Cuban population, and demographically, it tends to be older.⁶ Corrales refers to Cuba as having a “small winning coalition” that is currently in political power, consisting of: “the [Communist] party (with a membership in 1997 of 780,000...), the military (with 50,000 troops in 1999), the security apparatus, whose size is unknown,” supported by multi-national companies allied in joint ventures with the government (Corrales 2004: 37, 54).

Dissidents. From the other extreme of the power spectrum, the actual number of overt and “active political dissidents” in Cuba constitutes a small but dedicated fraction, under 1% of the total popula-

5. The Freedom House 2008 Special Report cites five surveys conducted by international NGO actors: 1) Solidaridad Española con Cuba survey in 2005, with 541 respondents in 13 out of 14 provinces, 2) a Gallup Poll in 2006 with 1,000 residents from Havana and Santiago, 3) the International Republican Institute's (IRI) September 2007 survey with 584 respondents, 4) IRI's follow up survey in April 2008 with 587 respondents from 14 provinces, and 5) Freedom House's own April 2008 survey with 180 respondents from 5 provinces. With the exception of Gallup, the other three organizations sympathize with the arguments of the dissidents and conducted their surveys clandestinely. See also the work of Directorio Democrático Cubano for a document that reviews the scale of the activities of Cuba's active dissidents. Amador, Dora and Rivero, Janisset. *Cómo Se Protesta en Cuba*. (2008). Centro Para Una Opción Nacional. Hialeah, FL. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from the Directorio Web site: <http://www.directorio.org/pdffdocs/Como-se-Protesta-en-Cuba.pdf>.

6. “Do you think the present government will succeed in solving Cuba's major problems?”: 26.9% yes, 70.5% no, N=577. “Would a democratic government, elected by the people, be better suited to resolving the country's problems in these next years?” 53.3% yes, 42.6% no. Slide 13. “If next week you could vote in free and fair elections and have your choice of different parties, would you vote for the Communist Party candidate?” 61.3% no, 36.1% yes. Breakout of previous question by age of respondent: 70-75% of respondents 18-39 would not vote for a Communist candidate, 48-60% of respondents age 50 would vote for a Communist candidate. International Republican Institute (IRI). (2008). *Presentation of Cuban Public Opinion Survey: March 14, 2008 - April 12, 2008*. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from the IRI Web site: <http://www.iri.org/lac/cuba/pdfs/2008%20June%205%20Survey%20of%20Cuban%20Public%20Opinion,%20March%2014-April%2012,%202008.pdf>.

tion, who are marginalized from political power. In many cases, the pressure is such that dissident individuals opt to leave the country. Marta Beatriz Roque, a well-known dissident, estimates that in 2002, the number of active dissidents was around 30,000 individuals (Diversent 2008). Another key dissident, Francisco Chaviano, estimates that today the number is much higher (Diversent 2008). Consider the 25,000 Varela Project signatories, and the 1 million abstentions in the 2007 election. Consider also the peak of 3,322 recorded acts of non-violent civic resistance in 2006, with 2,768 recorded in 2007, 1/3 of which were in support of the political prisoners (Directorio 2006; Amador and Rivero 2008). The total number of participants in these protest activities (which include vigils, meetings, fasts, public declarations, opening independent libraries, etc.) is unknown (Directorio 2006).

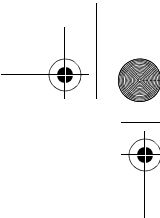
The total number active dissidents is subdivided into numerous organizations that reflect differing perspectives along the entire political spectrum (FOCAL 2008). The tendency towards fragmentation can be attributed to a natural diversity of opinions, as well as to more egotistic self-promotional tendencies (“protagonismo”). However, fragmentation is also fed by the often-successful efforts of the Cuban intelligence services to infiltrate organizations and undermine trust in both long-standing and newly-built collaborative relationships (Payá 2009). When the 2006 movie about the East German Staasi agent, “The Lives of Others,” screened briefly in Havana as “La Vida de Los Otros,” it was jokingly referred to as “La Vida de Nosotros,” (Our Life) (O. Visiedo, personal communication, August 6, 2007). Not coincidentally, the Staasi played a key role in training Cuban intelligence agents (A. Vaatz, personal communication, June 23, 2007), and that the Cuban intelligence actively promotes the impression that the dissident movement is fragmented and isolated (Payá 2009).

Despite the diverse range of political perspectives among Cuba’s many dissident groups, there is broad agreement on basic principles. An example is the 2006 “Unidad por la Libertad” (United for Liberty) declaration, which closely tracks MCL proposals and was signed by

leaders from a range of political tendencies, including the Christian/Center Democratic (Oswaldo Payá), Social Democratic (Vladimiro Roca), Liberal (Héctor Palacios Ruiz) and Conservative (Martha Beatriz Roque), as well as a prominent dissident economist (Oscar Espinosa Chepe), the head of the Committee for Human Rights (Elizardo Sánchez) and representatives of the “Damas de Blanco” (Ladies in White) (Miriam Leyva and Laura Pollán), of behalf of political prisoners and their families. The declaration also echoes earlier consensus-based declarations of principles issued by dissidents, including “Todos Unidos” (All Together) (2002) and “La Patria es de Todos” (The Nation Belongs to All of Us) (1997).

Disaggregating the Middle. Having separated out the “true believers” and the dissidents, we are left with 79%-65% of the population, most of whom are under the age of 50 and fall into the middle categories of “disaffected stakeholders” and “disengaged parties.”⁷ There is no foolproof way to disaggregate the disaffected from the disengaged, but the degree to which people are economically dependent on and vested in the resources they derive from the government is a helpful indicator. Using state-employment, self-employment, and underemployment information as a proxy, we estimate a proportion of $\frac{3}{4}$ disaffected and $\frac{1}{4}$ disengaged. In 2003, there were 3,104,900 state employees in Cuba, comprising 76.2% of the total employed population of 4,073,900 employees. Additionally, there were 969,000 non-state sector employees in Cuba, comprising 23.8% of the total employed population, of which 3.7% are “self-employed” (Pérez-López 2007). These broad statistics do not reflect underemployment,

7. “If you were given the opportunity to vote to change from the current political system to a democratic system—with multi-party elections, freedom of speech and freedom of expression—would you vote in favor of, or against, that change?” Respondents 19-29 years old, 30-39 years old, and 40-49 years old voted 68-69% for “In favor of political changes,” and 18-20% “Against political changes.” Respondents 50-59 years old voted 53% in favor of political change and 23% against political change. Respondents older than 60 voted 43.5% in favor of political change and 47% against political change. This slide aggregates responses from surveys in October 2007 and April 2008. International Republican Institute (IRI). (2008). Presentation of Cuban Public Opinion Survey: March 14, 2008 - April 12, 2008. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from the IRI Web site: <http://www.iri.org/lac/cuba/pdfs/2008%20June%20Survey%20of%20Cuban%20Public%20Opinion,%20March%2014-April%2012,%202008.pdf>.



which has been estimated at 20% of the labor force, and which is often a driver of participation in Cuba’s informal or “black” market (Espinosa Chepe 2007). Figure 2 illustrates this breakdown of interest groups vis a vis attitudes toward change, or “cambio,” in Cuba:

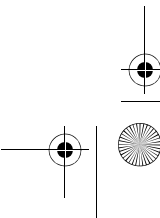
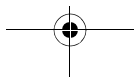
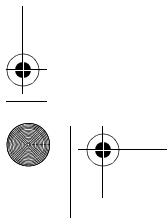
Figure 2. Range of Cuban attitudes towards “Cambio”

true believers	disaffected stakeholders	disengaged parties	active dissidents
20%-35%	59%-48%	20%-16%	~1%

Disaffected Stakeholders. Broadly speaking, “disaffected stakeholders” tend to share some characteristics with the “true believers,” in that they often work for the government, study in government universities, or participate in para-governmental organizations. These persons either still feel or once felt an emotional affinity with the original yet tarnished ideals of the Revolution; either they or their parents were probably active supporters of the Revolution in their youth, and they have been educated in its institutions (Pérez-Stable 2003: 22). The degree of “disaffection” and the degree of “cambio” that different “disaffected stakeholders” would advocate varies, for surely some are more deeply disaffected than others.

As a result of their deep involvement in the system, the “disaffected stakeholders” and the “true believers” together are the repository of the professional expertise needed to run the state on a day-to-day basis. One strength of the MCL’s legal dissent agenda is that it is designed to appeal to society’s middle ranks—a key repository of leadership for peaceful change, capable of simultaneously reaching down to the grassroots level and up to higher levels of authority to mobilize the political will and popular support needed for a successful political opposition movement (Lederach 1997: 39).

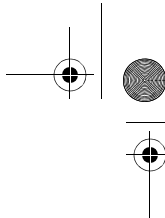
For the moment, however, the “disaffected stakeholders” are the pool of “closeted reformers,” who might be willing to support less orthodox, reformist proposals, perhaps even those fundamental reforms proposed by the dissidents, if there was a perceived window of opportunity with a possibility of success (Corrales 2004: 44). How-



ever, because their livelihood and future are at stake, they are inclined to “complain and conform” (Freedom House 2008).

Under the circumstances, conformity is an understandable survival strategy. Failure to do so could result in losing a hard-earned job, being expelled from university, being harassed by the local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution—a progressive narrowing of avenues for social progress. One recent example is the case of 22-year old Eliécer Ávila, a computer engineering student, who spoke out about travel restrictions, economic scarcity and the country’s dual currency system at a nationally televised town hall meeting at his university with Ricardo Alarcón, the President of Cuba’s National Assembly. Despite having been an active participant in the political system, his critical comments resulted in his expulsion from the university several months after the incident (Méndez Castelló 2008). Deprived of a university education and permanently stigmatized as a troublemaker, this bright young man now has few real opportunities that don’t involve leaving Cuba or ending up marginalized or in jail. Another example involves a recent internet video shows a man, “Pánfilo,” who while drunk interrupts an amateur video stating that what Cuba needs is “jama” (food) (America TeVe 3 June 2009). A second video shows the same man carefully explaining that he has received visits from Ministry of the Interior and the police, that “no one paid him to say what he said” and that “he does not want to get involved in politics, anywhere” (America TeVe 3 June 2009). The broad population seems unwilling to trade continuity and stability for vague aspirations of change, which, if pursued, might push an already precarious existence over the edge. People justifiably fear the consequences of political dissidence—incarceration, exclusion, isolation, harassment, forced exile. The cost of dissent is just too high for most people to relinquish the status quo to pursue a crusade for change against an opponent with overwhelming military, political, and economic advantages.

Disengaged Parties. This label characterizes people who live in Cuba that have achieved a certain level of economic independence from the political-economic system, through government-authorized indepen-



dent activities (“cuentapropistas”), employment in joint venture enterprises between the government and foreign investors, self-employment in black market activities, and survival on remittances from family members overseas. These persons tend to comply with the formalities of the political system in order to live with a minimum of negative interference, and expand their activities during period of tolerance, but must live in a constant state of “anxiety,” given the permanent possibility of a crackdown (Corrales 2004: 51).

A possible coalition? The willingness of the disaffected and the disengaged to continue their tacit support of the true believers’ political project is arguably the major inertial factor in Cuba’s current political, economic and social situation. Given the current balance of power, it is unlikely that any political project from the dissidents can succeed unless it has sufficient government support and popular and participation. In theory, the MCL’s legislative agenda constitutes the basis for a viable reformist political project. Were a coalition to emerge from among disaffected, disengaged, and dissident stakeholders (as illustrated in Figure 3) it could gain traction as a political movement.

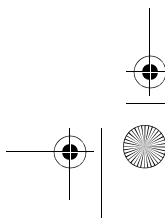
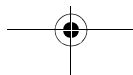
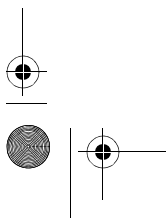
Figure 3. B+D=A possible coalition?

A	B	C	D
True believers 20%-35%	Disaffected stakeholders 59%-48%	Disengaged parties 20%-16%	Active dissidents ~1%

In viewing these interest groups as potential constituencies, it is important to know what their underlying priority concerns are, and whether they are reflected in the competing political programs of the Cuban government and the MCL dissidents.

A Comparison of Priority Concerns: the Cuban Public and the MCL Proposals

Is the vision embodied in the legal dissent proposals congruent with the public’s priorities? This section reviews the priority concerns of



the Cuban public as reflected in recent surveys, compares them to the MCL's proposals, and analyzes the comparison.

Solidaridad Española's December 2005 survey took place before the transfer of power from Fidel to Raúl, and indicates that the top five problems in Cuba were 1) low salaries/cost of living/lack of job (30.5%), 2) isolation/the embargo (25.9%), 3) food (14.6%), transportation (9.6%) and housing (6.7%). Gallup's December 2006 poll of 1,000 respondents indicated that just one in four Cubans was satisfied with political freedom. IRI's September 2007 survey indicated that Cuba's top three problems were: 1) low salaries/high cost of life (43.1%), 2) lack of liberty/political system (18.2%), and 3) food shortages (11.6%). IRI's April 2008 survey indicated that Cuba's top five problems were: 1) low salaries/high cost of life (42.5%), 2) the country's double currency (13.1%), 3) lack of liberty/political system (8.9%), 4) the embargo/isolation (8.5%), and 5) food shortages (6.8%). Freedom House's September 2008 survey, asking about the types of reforms that Cubans most desire, found that the top reforms included 1) freedom of movement (to travel both within Cuba, and to leave and re-enter the country freely), 2) a single currency system, and 3) freedom of expression.

Table 1 shows a side-by-side comparison of these top priorities of the dissidents and of the population at large.

An analysis of the surveys demonstrates that they are dominated by economic concerns: low salaries, high cost of living, the single currency system, and even the restrictions on freedom of movement (which curtail the possibility of emigrating in search of better economic horizons). These are classic day-to-day survival issues. The regular and ominous presence and fear of food shortages on the list of concerns reflects the persistent ghost of the "Special Period in Times of Peace," when per capita caloric intake "plummeted from 3,109 calories a day in 1989 to 2,357 by 1996, a dramatic 24 percent drop in the space of a few years" (Corrales 2004: 38). Other areas of concern, such as transportation and housing, require a policy-driven, govern-

TABLE 1. Comparison of Top Priorities of MCL and Surveyed Populations

#	The Varela Project (2002)	Solidaridad Española (2005)	IRI#1 (2007)	IRI#2 (2008)	Freedom House (2008)
1	amnesty for political prisoners	low salaries/ cost of living/ lack of job (30.5%)	low salaries/ high cost of life (43.1%)	low salaries/ high cost of life (42.5%)	freedom of movement (inside & out- side Cuba)
2	freedom of speech	isolation/the embargo (25.9%)	lack of liberty/ political system (18.2%)	the country's double cur- rency (13.1%)	a single cur- rency system
3	freedom of association	food (14.6%)	food shortages (11.6%)	lack of liberty/ political system (8.9%)	freedom of expression
4	freedom to organize corpo- rations	transportation (9.6%)	no problem (6.3%)	the embargo/ isolation (8.5%)	
5	a new electoral law/free elec- tions	housing (6.7%)	embargo/isola- tion (4.8%)	food shortages (6.8%)	

ment-supported solution and substantial amounts of capital. Of the Varela Project's proposals, the most appealing one is likely to be the freedom to organize a company, given its potential impact on individual economic conditions.

The appearance in the 2008 Freedom House survey of the “single currency” as a top priority issue reflects the fact that a simple, economic message can make quick inroads because of its immediate daily relevance. The “Con la Misma Moneda” (With the Same Currency) campaign was launched in 2006 by the Federación Latinoamericana de Mujeres Rurales (FLAMUR) (Rodríguez Albacia 2006). Following the Varela Project model, FLAMUR is collecting 10,000 signatures under Article 88.ch.4 of the Constitution to request that the National Assembly consider the consolidation of Cuba's two currencies—the Cuban peso (CUP, used by Cuban citizens) and the Convertible Peso (CUC, linked to foreign currencies) into one, equally valid currency (Rodríguez Albacia 2006). This issue has a direct impact on men and women's pockets. The domestic CUC/CUP exchange rate is about 1:25, with the government imposing a 20% tax per exchange (González-Corzo 2006; oanda.com).

The recurrence in surveys of the embargo as an issue of “economic isolation” has an equally powerful psychological aspect. This

perception, bolstered by political rhetoric from both the U.S. and Cuban governments, persists despite the fact that the U.S. embargo today is an imperfect blockade. Since the mid-1990s Cuba trades actively with over 166 countries (Pérez-Stable 2003: 14) and the U.S. itself is the country's 7th largest trading partner (Mesa-Lago 2007). However, in recent years the effect of the embargo has been felt at a personal level, particularly in the bite of the restrictions that operated between June 2004 and April 2009 which limited Cubans in the U.S. to visiting immediate family on the island more than once every three years, and sending a maximum of \$1,000 in remittances per family member per year (Human Rights Watch 2005; Sullivan 2009: 6).

The surveys are also striking in that "lack of political freedom" is listed as a priority only occasionally, and by small percentages of the population. The MCL's primary focus is on these important yet less popular political issues, from the priority emphasis on the political prisoners, to the emphasis on goals such as free elections, freedom of association, and freedom of expression (Payá 1998). In the surveys, it is freedom of movement and freedom of expression—more personally oriented freedoms—that resonate most widely. The government has tried to assert itself in the area of freedom of expression, with Raúl Castro calling for "critical debate" (Castro 2007). Some changes have occurred, as Cubans with sufficient money can now purchase computers and cellular phones and can now enter hotels) (BBC World News 21 May 2008). However, the initial rush of expectation has been dampened by news that fundamental changes are still being postponed, and that instances of public critique or serious opposition continue to be dealt with heavy-handedly, a tactic reminiscent of the crackdown that followed hints of reform in the early 1990s (Human Rights Watch 2009; Corrales 2004: 39).

Not surprisingly, the consistently disappointing results of failed past efforts to deliver the key reforms long-sought by reformers and dissidents has fed skepticism and sapped Cuban reserves of hopefulness and optimism with regard to politics, leaving behind a "residue" of pessimism (Lederach 2005: 51). The status quo, dissatisfying

though it may be, is a “known evil,” and representative of basic safety and security for the broad population. There is considerable anxiety about the future, stoked by government propaganda and lack of information about alternatives (Freedom House 2008). Democratic political change seems to be associated with an inchoate fear of violence and chaos (Freedom House 2008). Some Cubans on the island fear confrontations over political and social differences, property rights, and the ability of those who stayed to compete against the economic purchasing power of those who left but choose to return (Freedom House 2008). Some also fear an increase in violent crime and a decrease in personal safety, similar to the crime wave that is currently gripping the rest of Latin America (IRI 2008).⁸ They fear that Cuba would repeat the experiences of post-dictatorial and post-Communist countries where economic conditions and public order disintegrated once government’s strong arm lost its grip. “A low crime rate” and “the sense of security that you feel in the streets” are among the most valued characteristics of life in Cuba today (Freedom House 2008).

In conclusion, it appears that the bulk of the population continues to support the government’s position, whether by the firm conviction of true believers, or the inertia and fears of the disaffected and disconnected, who are focused on surviving and on carving out spaces for personal freedom. Issues relating to immediate economic conditions, safety/stability, and psychological isolation/mobility can penetrate and mobilize the population. Abstract political-ideological issues such as free elections or the fate of dissidents or political prisoners are easily drowned out by the pervasive government propaganda and silenced through repression.

Without a strong coalition that includes current government supporters, and a steady anchor in the basic human needs issues that form the core of popular concerns, the political program presented by

8. Asked “What might get worse if political changes were to occur?” 34.6% did not answer, 22.8% answered “nothing,” 11.9% responded “other,” and 11% answered that “insecurity will increase.” International Republican Institute (IRI). (2008). Presentation of Cuban Public Opinion Survey: September 5 - October 4, 2008. Retrieved June 10, 2009, from the IRI Web site: <http://www.iri.org/lac/cuba/pdfs/2007-10-18-cuba.pdf>.

the MCL cannot successfully compete against the government. However, the legislative agenda and the Varela Project are strong building blocks for such an alternative.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS: THE POTENTIAL OF LEGAL DISSENT

The constructive engagement policies that supported Pope John Paul II's 1998 visit to Cuba contributed to the liberation of nearly 300 political prisoners (Pérez-Stable 2003: 78) and opened a political space in which over 25,000 of people were inspired and empowered to take action by signing the Varela Project. The presentation of signatures in 2002 was an undisputed success for the dissidents and their supporters, and even today, Cuba's legislature has not discharged its constitutional duty to discuss the project.

Similarly, Barack Obama's election after an inspiring campaign that emphasized change, hope, modern-day civil rights and individual participation, his commitment to constructive engagement, and his initial gestures have attracted attention in Cuba. Questions remain: How can Obama and U.S. policy help create conditions for the release of the political prisoners, who are otherwise at risk of wasting their potential and lives by serving out their sentences in full, while publicly validating the content of the proposals for which they went to jail? How can U.S. policy contribute to creating an environment where Cuba's political reformers are willing, so to speak, to come out of the closet, and implement substantial and sustainable structural reforms? The role of international actors in creating the "boomerang effect," and amplifying the content of the proposals of principled domestic movements such as the MCL is a valuable and legitimate one.

Reality must temper expectations. Spontaneous, bottom up change in Cuba in the form of a mass grassroots movement is unlikely. Surveys show that despite high rates of dissatisfaction, people are focused on issues of day-to-day survival, not deep political restructuring. Top-

down transformation is also improbable. Today, Cuba is ruled by the same people who have kept a grip on power for 50 years by repeatedly opting for re-entrenchment and against deep and sustained reforms (Corrales 2004: 36). For as long as the MCL is perceived as threatening these interests or superseding the historical Revolution, is unlikely that they will be granted the relief from persecution and the domestic public space they require to truly expand and disseminate their message in the domestic sphere.

By developing their legal agenda (despite severe persecution), the MCL has laid important structural groundwork for the next phase in the political battle of ideas for hearts and minds. Designed to have an incremental impact and to appeal to the middle layers of society, it remains to be seen whether this political project can serve as an “elemento aglutinador”—a catalyst to mobilize a wider civic movement or coalition. To be credible, the legal agenda must be articulated by political leaders who have the authority and skills to successfully implement it. A coalition between MCL dissident leaders and younger government reformers from the ranks of disaffected stakeholders could bring this to fruition. While greater economic development does not necessarily lead to democracy, greater democracy is correlated with greater economic prosperity (Przeworski 2000: 336). The MCL’s legal dissent agenda will have succeeded if its contents become a viable platform for a renewed political consensus on the future of a democratic Cuba.

Since the Varela Project was first presented, the Americas have seen four political referendum efforts: to recall the governor of California (2003), on constitutional modifications in Venezuela (2004), on regional autonomy Bolivia (2007), and this year, Manuel Zelaya’s aborted attempt at a constitutional modification referendum in Honduras. What in 2002 seemed an unfamiliar idea is now a fresh and relevant political tactic. Referendums in Latin America are being used to establish legitimacy, and wielded with equal avidity by opposing groups in need of a legal lever to pry open a constructive democratic space, and by leaders seeking to expand their power beyond existing

constitutional limitations. Cuba's new Foreign Secretary Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, in his official press conference, called for Honduras political parties and National Assembly to "adhere to liberty and their Constitution" (Granma 2009 June 28). In a response posted on his website, Oswaldo Payá asked "A Varela Project for Honduras? Why not a referendum for Cuba?" (Payá 2009b).

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7 Cuban Freemasons in the Development of Civil Society and of a Political Opening

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Abstract: Cuban Freemasons have been largely ignored by researchers of Cuban civil society, in spite of such institution being one of the oldest, largest, most widely spread throughout the country, and most democratically organized. Its characteristics, including its tolerance and open-minded philosophy, can positively contribute to strengthen civil society, and to start the necessary dialogue that must take place in Cuba, to bring about an opening. Such defines the importance of studying Cuban Freemasons in detail. This paper seeks to fill such civil society literature gap. We examine the composition of Cuban Freemason using data from a demographic analysis undertaken by the author and a colleague, for the Grand Lodge, in Havana. The most important characteristics of the institution, relevant for developing both civil society and a healthy dialogue among Cubans, are discussed. Finally, some ideas to enhance the participation of Cuban Freemasons in civil society, and their contribution to an opening, are presented.

Introduction and Background

The idea of writing this paper was born during the previous Bildner Center symposium on Cuba's Futures, in 2006. There, several papers

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on the embryonic Cuban civil society were presented, dealing with a plethora of groups, inside the island. These went from Catholics, to the Abacua, from internal dissidents, to the remnants of the small Jewish community in Havana. We noticed how this same situation occurred in other forums. Somehow, most researchers missed a civil society group that has existed for over 150 years, with nearly 30,000 members, distributed among 314 lodges, in every province, town and city in the country: the Cuban Freemasons (hereon, CF).

There are several possible reasons for the total omission, or at best a slight mention of the role of CF in the research literature of Cuban civil society. One is lack of knowledge, which is acceptable among laymen, but which denotes professional incompetence when talking about researchers of the Cuban civil society. A second reason is that researchers are emphasizing dissident groups that oppose, in some manner, the current Cuban regime, which the Grand Lodge, as an institution, has not. But civil society is not exclusively composed by opponents of *the establishment*. A third reason may be an existing prejudice against Freemasons in general, something well-studied and documented by the Centro de Estudios Historicos de la Masoneria Española (CEHME). Finally, more than one of the above reasons may be combined. For a detailed discussion of the omission of CF in the Cuban civil society research literature, see Romeu (2010).

The result of such omission is a gap in the literature of the Cuban civil society. The objective of the present paper is precisely, to fill such gap.

Freemasons are an international organization self-defined as “the institution of morality.” They are independent of any government, including the current Cuban one. They are run democratically, at every level, periodically electing the leadership of every Lodge, as well as of the Grand Lodge. Masons allow adult men of every walk of life, race, religion, or political philosophy to join. They discourage discussions about *partisan* politics or *partisan* religion. But any topic of legitimate nature and importance can be developed in the Lodge. Perhaps

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because of these characteristics, men of the stature of Washington, Lincoln, Bolivar and Marti, in the XIX Century, and of Salvador Allende, Lazaro Cardenas and Winston Churchill, in the XX Century, have been attracted to, and have joined, the Freemasons. We will not dwell on its origins in this paper. Readers interested in the history of Freemasons in general, are referred to Harwood (2007). For a history of CF, readers are referred to Miranda (1933). And for contemporary developments of CF, readers are referred to Torres-Cuevas (2003), and Romeu and Pardo Valdes (2010).

Freemason principles are based on tolerance, and include the three postulates of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. There are strict rules for debate and questions of order that govern interaction within the organization. And there is a fully developed legal body and an internal legal system, to deal with those who break them.

Its members include Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Santeros, Abacua, etc. The Cuban Communist Party Congress of 1992, allowed party members, as well as government officials, to join the CF. Thirteen of the 75 Prisoners of Conscience convicted during the Spring of 2003, are also CF. Based upon such membership, we can safely say that CF constitute a true cross-section of contemporary Cuban society.

This wide constituency constitutes a singular characteristic among current civil society organizations inside Cuba. It also provides one of the strongest features that CF offer for rebuilding civil society, a prerequisite for bringing about an opening in the island. For more information on the topic of an opening of the Cuban society, see Romeu (2008).

For, the Masonic Lodge provides a forum for the different elements of the Cuban society. In it, CF mix, get to know each other better and respectfully exchange ideas, providing a vehicle to arrive to a consensus. No other such open forum currently exists, inside the

island, including the Cuban National Assembly (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular).

Asserting that Freemasons contribute to enhance civil society as a whole is nothing new. For example, Jacobs (1991) studied the contribution of freemasons to civil societies in Europe, and Rich (1993), the role of freemasons in the education of Elites in future governments. Strengthening Cuban civil society is particularly important because, after fifty years of a single-party rule under the same leader, this aged and ailing Fidel Castro has finally transferred power to his brother Raul, also an aged member of his inner circle.

On the other hand, we also affirm that Raul is pursuing the path of change, even if slowly and cautiously. Several former cabinet ministers and highly placed government officers have now been dismissed. New areas of the economy, such as agriculture and lesser commerce, have been opened to private enterprise. And a past-due Cuban Communist Party Congress has been called for the Spring of 2011. Thence, the urgent need to also start a national discussion inside Cuba that can effect the changes to be made.

Moreover, economic conditions inside Cuba are very weak. The combination of these two factors, political and economic change, and an impoverished people, are lethal and could lead to a crisis, generating violence and civil war, triggering foreign intervention.

To prevent this, a peaceful and negotiated transition, such as the ones that occurred under somewhat similar situations in Brazil, Chile and Spain, is preferred. But for such outcome to occur, there must first exist a strong civil society, where free discussions can take place, and where new ideas, leaders, and social groups can arise, so that such an opening can be negotiated. We believe that CF can greatly contribute to such a development.

In the rest of this paper we will discuss the particular characteristics that CF bring to the table, and their specific contributions for building a stronger civil society in the island. We will first show, using results from a demographic study of the second half of the XX Cen-

ture, the current composition of CF. We will then present the main qualities of CF, and how these can positively impact civil society. Finally, we will suggest specific ways that CF can influence an opening of the Cuban society, and we will propose specific tools they require to successfully accomplish such goal.

Summary of the Demographic Study

The time series of annual development of the membership of Cuban Freemasons is shown in Figure 1. Part A (left) shows the annual members in thousands. Part B (right) shows the *population at risk* which we call *Effective Masons*. Since women cannot join the Freemasons, neither men below the ages of 21, nor the sick, or those with police records, or very poor, this reduces the *population at risk* to approximately one-fourth of the total population. Hence, we divide the total members by one fourth of the population. These results yield the number of Freemasons, per thousand men eligible for belonging to the Institution, which is what we have defined as *Effective Masons*. Such indicator allows a fair comparison of membership across countries, and across different time periods. It is akin to what demographers, studying a specific cohort such as pregnant women, would do to assess their impacts and results.

Freemasons have lost membership in many countries, during the second half of the XX Century. For example in 1960, of 180 million US citizens, there were 4.1 M Freemasons, yielding 91.5 Effective Masons, or masons for every 1000 eligible males in the country. In 2000, this indicator had dropped to 25.6 per 1000 eligible: a four-fold reduction.

In Cuba, due to the political and economic changes brought in by the 1959 revolution, the situation is somewhat different. Membership first follows a stronger decay than abroad. Then, after 1990, the institution recovers strongly. Highlights of the membership figures, by decade, for Total and *Effective Masons*, are given below.

Table 1. Membership by year: A) Totals; B) Effective Members

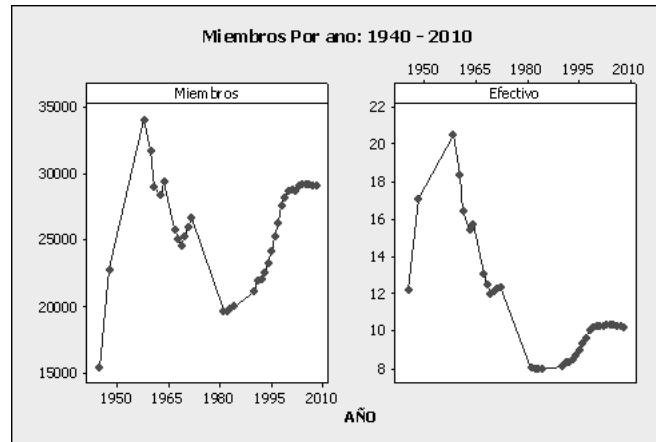


TABLE 2. Example of Freemasons relative impact in the 2nd half of the XX Century

	Year	Population	Masons	/1000s	Effective
USA	1960	179,323,175	4,103,000	22.8	91.5
	2000	281,421,906	1,800,000	6.4	25.6
Cuba	1960	6,000,000	3,400	5.7	22.8
	2000	11,000,000	29,000	2.6	9.6

TABLE 3. Development of Cuban Freemasons, approximately by decade

Year	Members	Lodges	Population	Effective Masons
1948	22,757	259	5,329,100	17.08
1958	34,025	340	6,638,133	20.50
1968	25,072	332	8,040,800	12.47
1981	19,690	326	9,794,900	8.04
1990	21,153	314	10,433,000	8.11
2000	28,689	314	11,142,000	10.30
2008	29,110	316	11,417,246	10.20

We show in bold, the highest and lowest membership figures, corresponding to the start of the revolution of 1959 (highest), and right after the 1980 Mariel Boatlift (lowest). This membership reduction is mainly due to three factors: (1) the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Cubans, which included several thousand masons; (2) the resigna-

tion, due to the strong government restrictions on CF and their lodges, as well as to the preference for the new political order and ideology, by some CF; and (3) fewer affiliations of younger members, to replace the natural deaths, due to the same issues described in (2) above.

For example, in the sixties and seventies, when practically all the economy was in state hands, citizens had to fill long forms which asked their religious and fraternal affiliations. In turn, such affiliations would determine which college careers could or could not be pursued, what jobs could or could not be held, and how fast one could be promoted. The Lodges had to report to the government the names of those attending their meetings, what was discussed, by whom, etc., under severe fines and other strong penalties.

Then, in 1992, the IV Congress of the Cuban Communist Party allowed both, party members and Cuban government officials, to join religious and fraternal organizations. The resolution also sent a message to the population at large, in the sense that it was no longer so negatively perceived, to become a Mason. Finally, the loss of Soviet subsidies triggered governmental economic reforms, allowing some forms of private enterprise and international tourism. An opportunity of independent employment suddenly appeared. As a result, the Institution started growing again, with this additional infusion of members.

Below, we show the annual membership growth, under two indices. First, using the growth index before the IV Congress (2.1%); then after it (3%). The difference between the two is an estimation of new membership from party, government officials, and formerly concerned citizens. Such new membership represents about 8.3% in year 2000.

In the years 2000 to 2008, membership growth again slowed down. Circa 2007, the distribution of members and lodges, by province, is given below. Notice how the Western provinces (P. del Rio, Havana, Havana Metro, Matanzas, Cienfuegos and Villaclara, in Yellow), with

TABLE 4. Membership growth after the IV Congress of the Communist Party

Year	Population	Estimate 1	Members	Estimate 2	IV-PCC	Diferential
1990	10,433,000	0.007	21,153	0.03	0.021	*
1991	10,574,800	10,506,031	21,918	21,788	21,597	190
1992	10,645,700	10,648,824	21,962	22,441	22,051	390
1993	10,716,660	10,720,220	22,539	23,114	22,514	601
1994	10,787,500	10,791,616	23,321	23,808	22,987	821
1995	10,858,400	10,863,013	24,169	24,522	23,469	1,053
1996	10,929,300	10,934,409	25,301	25,258	23,962	1,296
1997	11,000,200	11,005,805	26,344	26,016	24,465	1,550
1998	11,071,100	11,077,201	27,635	26,796	24,979	1,817
1999	11,142,000	11,148,598	28,173	27,600	25,504	2,096
2000	11,176,406	11,219,994	28,689	28,428	26,039	2,389

higher urban population and stronger economic development, have a larger number of members and of lodges, in their more numerous urban centers.

For example, approximately 1/3 of all Lodges, and 30% of all CF, have traditionally resided, and still live, in the metropolitan area of Havana. A significantly lower percentage of members and of lodges are found in the largely rural, and more sparsely populated provinces, of Cuba's East. However, we can affirm that, in almost every town or village in Cuba there is at least one Masonic lodge. In addition, one often finds other lodges, of two well-known para-masonic organizations: Caballeros de la Luz, of Cuban origin and roots, and the Odd-Fellows.

Notice how total membership, in 2007, is again up to around 30 thousand. But by now, the Cuban population has almost doubled, from six to eleven million. Hence, the Effective Masons have halved, from 20.50 in 1959, to 10.20 per thousand, eligible males.

Summarizing, we have shown how there are, in every province, at least several hundred (and in some cases, several thousand) CF. We have shown how their Lodges include, in addition to all races, religions and ages, also members of the Cuban Communist Party, govern-

TABLE 5. Distribution of (total and effective) Freemasons and Lodges, by Provinces

Province	Area (km ²)	Population	Lodges	Members	Effective
Total	109,886.19	11,177,743	316	29,127	10.42
Pinar del Rio	10,904.03	726,574	17	2,706	14.90
Prov. Habana	5,791.59	711,066	29	2494	14.03
Ciudad Habana	721.01	2,201,610	111	9,329	16.95
Matanzas	11,802.72	670,427	28	2,370	14.14
Villaclara	8,412.41	817,395	29	2667	13.05
Cienfuegos	4,180.02	395,183	14	1,387	14.04
Sancti Spiritu	6,736.51	460,328	11	991	8.61
Ciego de Avila	6,783.13	411,766	8	449	4.36
Camaguey	15,615.02	784,178	14	709	3.62
Las Tunas	6,587.75	525,485	6	604	4.60
Holguin	9,292.83	1,021,321	12	1,138	4.46
Granma	8,375.49	822,452	10	1,104	5.37
Stgo. de Cuba	6,156.44	1,036,281	19	1992	7.69
Guantanamo	6,197.97	507,118	7	1,187	9.36

ment officials, and political dissidents, as 13 of the 75 Prisoners of Conscience of the Spring 2003 are CF. Hence, CF constitute a legitimate cross-section of Cuban society.

Cuban Freemasons and the Civil Society

The presence of civil society is a continuous, and not a dichotomous indicator: there is always some form of civil society present. In addition, civil society is composed of independent organizations, not all necessarily opposed to the status quo. Finally, the degree of activity of the civil society is an excellent indicator of the existing freedom. It is very important to take these issues into consideration, when researching civil society.

We have shown how CF constitute an important and diverse group within Cuban civil society, forming a cross-section that includes most of its elements, neutral, favoring and opposing the status quo. This provides a natural forum for open discussion, based on the Masonic principles of fraternity and tolerance. But CF also bring additional

advantages that enhance the experiences of contemporary average Cubans.

Through their meetings within and between lodges, CF can help re-create the social capital within Cuban society, promoting faster and broader economic development. Lodges can become training centers for democratic procedures such as open debates, development and submission of proposals, etc. After the Third Grade (Master Mason), everyone is equal in the organization, with the same rights and obligations. Free elections for all Lodge and Grand Lodge leaders are held periodically, etc.

Lodges can also train average citizens in preparing and living with a budget, raising funds to operate the organization, the art of negotiating to obtain common objectives, etc., so important in a free and pluralistic society. The Grand Lodge has a legal body and runs a justice system so powerful that has recently expelled a Past Grand Master, the highest authority, from the organization. A national, representative, and freely elected assembly, la Alta Cámara, runs the organization. CF even have an institute for developing serious Masonic studies: la Academia de Altos Estudios Masónicos, a library, and a museum.

Since all masons have equal rights, it is feasible to respectfully object or debate opinions even from leaders, something that would be more difficult in hierarchical organizations such as churches and political parties. Respectfully and peacefully objecting to leadership decisions, is one of the key activities required by an open and pluralistic society.

Finally, Freemasons are an international organization. There are Grand Lodges in most Western countries, especially in Latin America, with which the Cuban Grand Lodge frequently interacts. In 2009, with participation from delegates of many foreign countries, including the US, the Cuban Grand Lodge celebrated its 150 Anniversary. Finally, CF inside the island and abroad, can now more easily visit each other, and their respective lodges. Such citizen diplomacy is, frequently, more efficient than the official one.

Discussion

Helping to strengthen and expand Cuban civil society can be accomplished by helping to strengthen religious, artistic, and fraternal, independent organizations, so that they can participate more actively in the everyday life of the country. But, to enhance further their participation, these organizations require a broader space, and additional resources.

For example, CF could contribute more within civil society if the Cuban government would reduce or eliminate the remaining restrictions it has imposed to Cuban Lodges, which we have discussed in the second section. In addition, many Lodges are old and deteriorated, and need urgent repair. The government could sell materials and furniture, and provide facilities, so Lodge buildings can be restored, just as the government does with catholic churches. For, just like these, some Masonic Lodges have historical value.

The government could also facilitate CF a greater access to the Internet and other media, so that individual Lodges and the Grand Lodge can create magazines and blogs, just like other churches and religious organizations currently do, and Lodge members can access them. The Grand Lodge has intermittently maintained a Web Page, whose cost weighs heavily, as the maintenance has to be paid in CUCs (Cuban Convertible Currency). A Cuban Masonic Listserve that operated in 2008, in which this researcher participated, disappeared for lack of support. La Colmena Blog (<http://www.desdecuba.com/mason/>) to which we also contribute, operates from inside the island. It confronts technical problems, and is not easy to access by CF inside the island.

The Cuban authorities could allow CF and their Lodges to acquire computers and support equipment (modems, printers, USBs, etc.) in CUPs (Cuban Pesos). Alternatively, the authorities could allow CF in the Diaspora, and other Grand Lodges abroad, to donate equipment to Lodges inside the island. Such donations are currently received by

churches and other civil society groups. The Cuban government could give Masonic institutions abroad the same facilities it provides to Caritas and other international organizations of the church, to send remittances and other forms of support to their branches inside Cuba.

In this manner, Cuban Lodges could again provide the populace in their communities, the social support work it used to provide successfully before 1960, which included operating schools and universities, homes for the aged, meal programs for the poor and ill, sports teams for children, etc., just as some churches are currently allowed to, inside Cuba.

The social projection, through the media and other public forms of citizen participation, of all institutions integrating Cuban civil society, is a key element for the development and growth of such civil society, and for its useful contribution to the country as a whole.

It is to the advantage of the Cuban authorities, as well as their moral duty, to allow the development of civil society. However, it is also the obligation of foreign countries not to utilize some elements of Cuba's civil society to support their foreign policy, or to meddle in Cuba's internal affairs. For, these actions would only provide the Cuban authorities with arguments to forestall civil society, to the detriment of all involved. For, it is through the existence and participation of civil society, that a peaceful opening can take place.

Conclusions

We have presented, and also supported with statistical results from a demographic study, a description of Freemasons inside Cuba, and of their complex development, through the second half of the XX Century. In addition, we have proposed specific ideas for their future development, so CF can contribute to the process of opening the Cuban society.

Traditionally, Freemasons have displayed their best features and colors in moments of national crises, such as during the struggles for

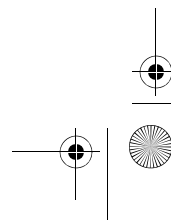
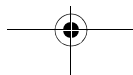
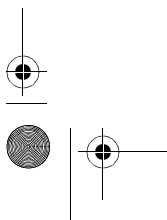
Latin American independence and the subsequent organization of our first republics, during the XIX Century (De los Reyes, 2010); or during the civil struggles for autonomy, in Cuba and Puerto Rico, at the end of the XIX Century (Soucy et al, 2009). In such trying times, many great men joined the Freemasons, and the broader society benefited significantly from their work.

But the times for violence and revolution have fortunately passed. Today, other forms of struggle, such as the press, the parties, the civil society organization, and other types of national problems such as education, health, labor, and open participation, exist. Because of their structure and ethics, Freemasons in general, and CF in particular, are prepared to successfully contribute to their successful and efficient resolution.

Freemasons are not a political party, or a political organization, even though, at times, they have acted as such (Vazquez, 2009). Freemasons define their own mission as: taking good men and making them better. But many of these better men, naturally become interested in the issues of their time, and then participate in them as individuals. Masons can then (1) meet others, similarly interested, and (2) disclose and discuss their new ideas peacefully, in the tolerant and open-minded milieu of their Lodges. This is the foremost social contribution that Masonic institutions make to civil society.

Ethically-oriented societies, such as religious ones, necessarily exclude members from other religions. Open societies, such as cultural and sporting clubs, do not have an ethical component that moves them. CF have both: the ethical foundation and the ethnically and ideologically broad membership that, under the principles of tolerance and fraternity, can work toward defining common goals, especially useful, when mediating conflicts, and in finding opportunities to help establish the badly needed dialogue among all Cubans.

We would like to close this paper with some words of Gustavo Pardo Valdes, Grade 33, distinguished CF, President of the Academy of Higher Masonic Studies of Cuba's Grand Lodge, and co-author of



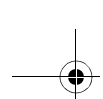
our demographic study (Romeu and Pardo Valdes, 2010). Pardo Valdes has commented very nicely on the active participation of CF in civil society:

“The Masonic Institution does not support one or another opinion, regarding politics or religion. But this does not preclude the Institution from stating its views regarding topics related to its very essential issues. Masons are obliged to become standard bearers of the Masonic ethical teachings.” (Pardo, 2010).

Therefore, working within civil society toward achieving a national understanding and an opening of the Cuban society, falls well within the charter of the Cuban Freemasons.

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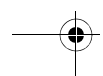
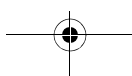
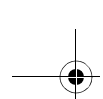


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8 The Impact of the Expansion of the Religious Media in Contemporary Cuba

Margaret E. Crahan¹

I. Introduction²

In order to better understand the role or roles of the religious media in contemporary Cuba, it is first necessary to examine the unique nature of civil society in Cuba. The classic definition of civil society is

1. Senior Research Scholar, Institute of Latin American Studies, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University. Paper prepared for the “Cuba Futures” Conference, Bildner Center, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, April 1, 2011, New York, NY. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Florida International University Journalists and Editors Workshop, May 26-27, 2010, Miami, Florida and the VI Encuentro Socioreligioso organized by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas y Psicológicas, Havana, Cuba, July 2010.

2. This essay reflects some ideas initially presented in Margaret E. Crahan (ed.), *Religion, Culture, and Society: The Case of Cuba* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003) and elaborated in Margaret E. Crahan's and Ariel C. Armony's “Rethinking Civil Society and Religion in Cuba” in Bert Hoffman and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Debating Cuban Exceptionalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007):139-63. The presenter wishes to acknowledge the support of the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Study and Conference Center and recognize support from the Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society of the City University of New York and of City University's Collaborative Grant #80209-02-12.

that it is constituted by the non-state sectors. However, in Cuba the state sector is all-encompassing and hence civil society, according to the classical definition, is particularly narrow and without a mass base. As a consequence, one needs to redefine civil society in the Cuban case in terms of which sectors of society, including those within the state sector, are discharging the traditional functions of civil society.

In Cuba, the functions of civil society, that is, imposing demands for services and accountability on the state are exercised largely by a society incorporated into mass organizations which contain within them sectors that sometimes generate alternative discourses to that of the state, as well as help modify public policies and programs.³ The all encompassing mass organizations have increasingly lost their capacity to impose orthodoxy on their members, as well as mobilize a civil society that is rife with complaints about the incapacities of the state. In addition, there are networks of individuals within the core state apparatus that consult regularly concerning state policies and programs with those who are fully or partially outside. These networks include some individuals who have been pushed out of the state sector due to their heterodoxy. Interestingly a fair number have ended up in the research centers and universities that are part of the state apparatus, but which allow for more divergence from the dominant ideology of the state. Hence, one finds “on the state payroll” scholars and other experts, together with filmmakers, painters, composers, and others, who produce alternative discourses to that of the state. Young people are emerging as an important civil society voice calling for expanded government services and accountability. Most recently the Damas de Blanco, relatives of prisoners, have assumed roles as icons of the widespread dissidence in Cuba.

3. Such redefinition has also been suggested by scholars studying civil society in China including Jean-Philippe Béja in “The Changing Aspects of Civil Society in China,” *social research*, 73:1 (Spring 2006): 53-74; Jude Howell, “Women’s Organizations and Civil Society in China,” *International Journal of Politics*, 5:2 (July 2003): 191-215; Guobin Yang, “The Internet and Civil Society in China: a preliminary assessment,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 12:36 (August 2003): 453-75.

It should be noted that within Cuban civil society there is a broad spectrum of opinions concerning the government ranging from an organized opposition that is seeking regime change to those who continue to support the government. The largest sector is constituted by unorganized critics of the government's increasing incapacity to provide for the basic socioeconomic needs of the populace, the provision of which the revolutionary state has used as the basis for its legitimacy. Cuban civil society therefore includes sectors within the state and within semi-state entities, as well as those that are fully autonomous of the state. As a consequence, Cuban civil society includes networks that incorporate individuals and groups that transcend the boundaries of the state, semi-state, and autonomous sectors. Some of these networks are rooted in those that have historically existed in Cuba.

These include religiously and ethnically based networks, some of which overlap, that increasingly serve to represent community interests.⁴ Since the 1980s some religions have used their publications to introduce alternative discourses to that of the state's, as well as critiques of state policies and programs. The major publications have websites where the number of hits has increased substantially. Believers, some closely linked to a denomination and others not, have also turned to blogs to disseminate their views.

4. The United Nations Development Program ranks Cuba fifty-first among the nations of the world in terms of the UN's Human Development Index based on a variety of socioeconomic indicators including life expectancy (77.7 years/ 2000-05), adult literacy (99.8%/1995-2005), combined gross enrollment ratio for all levels of education (87.6%/2005), population using improved water sources (91%/2004), infant mortality rate (6 per 1,000/2005), and maternal mortality rate (45 per 100,000/2000), as well as GDP per capita (\$6,000 PPP/2005) and expenditures on government services especially education (9.8% GDP/2002-05) and health care (5.5% GDP/2004). United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2007/2008*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>. The government bases its legitimacy, in large measure on the meeting of basic socioeconomic needs and in recent years has admitted to problems in terms of food provision, housing, and public transport. Cuban citizens complain about the limited acquisitive power of the peso, lack of consumer goods, as well as increasing problems in the public health system among other issues. Statistics relating to Cuba have long been subject to debate. For a discussion of some of the issues involved see Carmelo Mesa-Lago & Jorge F. Perez-Lopez, *Cuba's Aborted Reform: Socioeconomic Effects, International Comparisons, and Transition Policies* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

Traditionally, Cubans have identified themselves, in part, according to their ethnic, familial, and geographic backgrounds, together with their religious beliefs. Afro-Cubans, for example, have used spiritist based religions to organize to resist exploitation and demand their rights going back to the earliest importation of Africans as slaves. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when Cubans of African descent increased to more than half the population, Afro-Cuban religious beliefs served to unite them in their struggle for basic rights. This continues to be the case. Among the most pervasive networks in Cuba today are those rooted in spiritist beliefs as communities increasingly have to meet their own needs in the face of the limitations of the state in providing public services. However, given the decentralized nature of spiritist religions their media production is substantially less than that of institutionalized religions.

Religious institutions, including the Catholic and Protestant churches, together with the Jewish community, all of which can tap into international resources, have assumed more visible civil society roles particularly with respect to meeting basic needs for food and medical supplies, as well as spiritual sustenance. Old and new NGOs, including the Masons, and more recently the independent libraries' and journalists' movements, are expanding their influence. Finally, political parties are reappearing in Cuba, in part, as a result of resources provided by the Christian Democratic, Social Democratic, and Liberal Internationals. However, the most extensive national networks are those that are religiously based. Add to this the fact that recent surveys indicate that approximately 75-85% of all Cubans believe in the divine, even after decades of official atheist materialism, religions have considerable potential to exercise influence within civil society and occupy more public space.⁵

A critical question is how much space the Cuban government is willing to accord non-oppositional civil society that may not be mobilizing for regime change, but is increasingly critical of socioeconomic and political conditions.⁶ It is into this category that most of the Cuban religious media fits. Complicating the situation is the fact that it

is hard not only for experts, but also for the Cuban leadership, to disentangle oppositional, dissident, and non-oppositional but critical sectors of Cuban civil society. Yet it is imperative to do so given that Cuba is clearly in the midst of a transition whose outcome is unclear.⁷ Closer examination of the role of civil society in a transition, as well as the multiple roles of religious actors is useful for a fuller understanding of the potential of the religious media.⁸

The expanding role of religion can be seen in the four hour meeting on May 19, 2010 between Cardinal Jaime Ortega Alamino, Arch-

5. In 1960 nominal Catholics constituted approximately 70-75 per cent of the total population of 7,500,000, while Protestants amounted to 3-6 per cent. The Jewish community numbered approximately 12,000 in the 1950s, while spiritists were estimated at about 65 per cent of the total population, overlapping with other religions. In the late 1980s the *Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociológicas* estimated that 65-85 per cent of Cubans believed in the supernatural, while 13.60 per cent did not. In the mid-1990s believers were estimated to constitute approximately 85 per cent of the population. Currently regular practitioners are estimated by various religious sources to be around 1-3 per cent. For an examination of Cuban religious statistics see Margaret E. Crahan, "Cuba," in: Paul E. Sigmund, (ed.), *Religious Freedom and Evangelization in Latin America: The Challenge of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 87-112; Margaret E. Crahan, "The Church of the Past and the Church of the Future," in: Max Azicri and Elsie Deal (eds.), *Cuban Socialism in a New Century: Adversity, Survival, and Renewal* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2004): 123-146.

6. Between September 1-15, 2006 Gallup polled 1,000 residents of Havana and Santiago de Cuba aged 15 and older. Undertaken shortly after Raúl Castro became acting head of state due to Fidel Castro's illness, 49% of those polled stated that they approved of Cuba's leadership and 39% disapproved. Only 42% of Cubans reported that they believed that they could improve their socioeconomic status by working hard, while 26% stated they were satisfied with the degree of freedom they had to determine what to do with their lives. Gallup World Poll. *ThinkForum: Cuba*. Princeton: The Gallup Organization, 2006, pp. 1-3.

7. Reportedly the Cuban government in the 1990s created units to analyze and make recommendations concerning a transition.

8. The proliferation of literature on civil society since Robert D. Putnam's landmark study, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), is well known. Following are a few of the works that suggest the complexity and diversity of civil society's actors: Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Ariel C. Armony, *The Dubious Link: Civic Engagement and Democratization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); Patricia Bayer Richard and John A. Booth, "Civil Society and Democratic Transition," in: Thomas W. Walker and Ariel C. Armony, (eds.), *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000): 233-254; Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (eds.), *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999); Mark E. Warren, *Democracy and Association* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

bishop of Havana, and the President of the Cuban Conference of Catholic Bishops, Monsignor Dionisio Garcia Ibañez, with the President of the Cuban Republic General Raúl Castro Ruz. Speaking afterwards at a press conference organized by the diocesan publication *Palabra Nueva*, the Cardinal characterized the meeting as very positive and opening a new period in church-state relations. He further asserted that the meeting constituted “a dialogue about Cuba” rather than about the Catholic Church. He also stated that it focused on Cuba at present and in the future. With respect to the recent intervention of the Cardinal on behalf of the Damas de Blanco’s right to demonstrate peacefully on behalf of their imprisoned relatives, he concluded that the role of the church as an interlocutor had been accepted. The meeting also focused on the status of the prisoners themselves. The prelate emphasized that the May 19th meeting had recognized that it was natural for the Catholic Church to play an intermediary role in Cuban society.⁹ The willingness of General Castro to meet with the prelates for such a wide ranging discussion reflected the reemergence of the Catholic Church as an increasingly important actor in Cuban society. This is, in part, a result of the growing influence of the religious media in Cuba today, as well as the increasing generalized societal ferment.

The religious media in Cuba struggled beginning in the 1980s to define itself and gathered strength in the 1990s as Cubans were buffeted by an economic crisis and sought explanations and solutions, as well as psychological and spiritual comfort. As a consequence, the religious media increasingly focused on socioeconomic problems prevalent throughout Cuba. By the early twenty-first century the religious media had emerged as a source of in-depth analysis and alternative discourses to that of the government. As a result, the religious media became somewhat influential not only among the faithful, but also among political and intellectual elites. Today religious publications range from bulletins focusing on the activities of local faith communi-

9. Enrique López Oliva, “El Cardenal Jaime Ortega Califico Hoy de ‘muy positivo’ el dialogo sostenido con el presidente cubano,” *Monitorhavana@enet.cu*, 5/20/10, pp. 1-2.

ties to publications that analyze socioeconomic and political conditions within Cuba from mildly critical to harshly critical perspectives. The most widely disseminated publications are those of the Catholic Church, particularly *Palabra Nueva*, *Espacio Laical*, and *Vitral*. *Convivencia*, an independent journal produced by lay believers, is also widely read. The Protestant Churches' publications are less broadly disseminated and reflect the differing postures of the institutions that publish them. These include *Caminos* produced by the Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Jr. and *Cuba Teológica* and *Didajé* published by the Seminario Evangélico de Teología in Matanzas. The *Boletín* of the ecumenical Centro Cristiano de Reflexión y Diálogo based in Cardenas is generally considered non-partisan. The Jewish communities' publications largely focus on explanations of biblical and Talmudic texts, as well as reports on community activities, while spiritist groups, when they publish, tend to focus on local concerns, for example, disseminating articles about organizing self-help networks. The most influential publication of the spiritist groups is the "Letra del Año" in which leading *babalaos* predict the upcoming year's events. It should be noted that in a good number of cases religious publications are read more widely outside Cuba than inside.

II. Religious Media in Cuba

An examination of *Palabra Nueva* reveals the degree to which this is the case. Founded in 1992 at the height of the Cuban economic crisis, it was in large measure a response to Pope John Paul II's recommendation to promote a new evangelization of Cuba. Its initial target audience was Catholics in the Havana Archdiocese. It has broadened its scope considerably since then reaching out to government officials, academics, artists, diplomats, journalists, and the general public, among others. Its focus from the outset was on the Cuban economy, culture, sports, social sciences, as well as religion. It has commissioned articles by both Cubans and non-Cubans.¹⁰ It publishes 12,000 copies

10. http://palabranueva.net/contens/pn_qs.htm. 5/20/2010.

per month with an estimated readership of 8-10 each. However, a recent calculation of the number of “hits” on its website (www.palabranueva.net) for February 2010 was 305,812. This was a 36.65% increase over January 2010 and a 98.28% increase over February 2009. Of note is the fact that in January-February 2010 the largest number of visitors was from the United States (27,829) with Mexico close behind (27,167). Cuba registered only 1,306 visitors, but there were a substantial number of unknowns possibly Cubans (25,486). Argentina, Spain, Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, Peru, and China all logged more identifiable visitors than Cuba.¹¹ In short, the bulk of the visitors were from outside Cuba.

Espacio Laical, the official publication of the Consejo Arquidiocesano de Laicos de La Habana (CAL-Habana), is emerging as widely read and influential. Its objective is to serve as a forum for dialogue among the laity in order to promote analysis and solutions to problems that affect all Cubans, as well as the Catholic Church. Furthermore, it promotes the insertion of lay Catholics in evangelizing the island and assisting in the amelioration of generalized societal problems. It consciously tries to reach out to the general public and in recent years has emphasized in-depth analysis of economic and social problems by a wide variety of Cuban and non-Cuban authors, some of whom are not Catholics. *Espacio Laical* insists that it is non-partisan and, as a consequence, does not publish statements by political groups, including the Varela Project, which is identified with the Christian Democratic International. *Espacio Laical* publishes 4,000 copies of each number and its editors estimate that each one is read by 5-7 persons for a total of 20,000-28,000. Like *Palabra Nueva*, however, the bulk of its readership is via its website (www.espaciolaical.org). A prime objective of the editors is to expand dialogue within Cuba and provide bridges to all sectors of society, particularly about social issues.¹² In this sense they are increasingly occupying political space

11. www.palabranueva.net, “Análisis Estadístico Febrero 2010”.

12. Interview 01913.

ceded by the government, as well as offering alternative discourses and policy options to those of the state.

Each of the Cuban Catholic dioceses has a bulletin, as do most parishes. These generally focus on local activities and official statements of the Church. Some occasionally publish excerpts from *Palabra Nueva* or *Espacio Laical*. The diocese of Pinar del Río, at one time, had the most talked about religious publication in Cuba, namely *Vitral*. Begun in 1994 its stated objective was civic and religious formation to facilitate the reconstruction and fortifying of civil society in Cuba. This included recreating the links, autonomy, and creativity of intermediary organizations as a guarantee of an autonomous future and democratic participation for all citizens.¹³ The most outspoken of Catholic publications, it encountered increasing difficulties with the government and on May 14, 1997 the editorial staff, headed up by Dagoberto Valdes, was called to a meeting with party and provincial officials. The stated purpose was to communicate reservations about the criticisms *Vitral* had published of state policies. Government representatives held that 30% of the articles appeared impartial, while 60% distorted Cuban realities. The officials also claimed that the publication reinforced right-wing opponents of the revolution.¹⁴ In response, the *Vitral* editorial staff argued that their objective was to fulfill the exhortation of Vatican II to develop pastoral work that reflected the intersection of faith and society, as well as faith and culture. They also stated that they wanted to reflect a broad spectrum of opinions both within and without the Catholic Church. The editorial staff held that *Vitral* was not intended to be either a political or scholarly journal, but rather reflect the concerns of ordinary Cubans. In short, it was not the purpose of the editorial team to oppose the revolution, but rather make it more responsive to the ordinary Cuban. Nor was *Vitral* recommending a neoliberal economic model instead of socialism, as alleged.¹⁵

13. www.vitral.org/vitral/main/socciv.htm. 5/20/2010.

14. "Memoria: Transcripción del diálogo efectuado entre representantes del gobierno y del partido y miembros de redacción de la revista Vitral del Centro de Formación Cívica y Religiosa de la Diócesis de Pinar del Río," May 14, 1997, 1-8.

Overall, the publication was aimed at stimulating citizen activism around a change oriented agenda, although the latter was not clearly defined. Rather than offering specific proposals, *Vitral* urged ordinary Cubans to become more proactive. While the Castro government regarded it as a dissident and partisan publication, its editorial board believed that by providing space for diverse opinions they were being non-partisan and were operating within the revolution. The officials disagreed and in 2000 Fidel Castro publicly criticized *Vitral* for going beyond legitimate criticism.

The attitude of Catholic Church officials towards *Vitral* varied, reflecting a lack of consensus within the church concerning change and how to accomplish it. Some supported what they felt was its challenging of the ideological hegemony of the government, while others were uncomfortable with the content of the publication and regarded it as causing problems for the Church. Others felt it played a useful purpose in expanding the boundaries of the political space available for debate. Subsequently, the editor, Dagoberto Valdes, and some of the staff, established a new journal, *Convivencia*, which is independent of the diocese of Pinar del Río. It provides a forum for Cubans to voice their opinions of the government. In particular it has encouraged younger contributors, as well as focused on cultural issues, including music. Its overall emphases are civil society, economics, history, ethics, politics, human rights, art, music, and literature. Its editorial criteria state that “Controversies based on arguments will be encouraged....”¹⁵ *Convivencia* is an outlet for criticism of the government and is widely regarded as identified with dissidents. *Vitral* has continued to be published, but with a greater focus on spiritual and ethical formation. Both have websites (www.vitral.org) and (www.convivencia.org.es).

Among other Catholic publications, *Imago*, a quarterly, issued by the diocese of Ciego de Ávila, focuses primarily on evangelizing Cuban society and promoting human and Christian values in the cultural,

15. Ibid., 18-24.

16. <http://convivenciacuba.es/content/view/16/43,5/20/2010>.

social, and religious spheres. This objective has led it to occasionally comment on issues such as the government's initiation of a national dialogue in 2007 of problems facing Cuban society. This stimulated considerable public discussion, particularly of socioeconomic problems and the government's capacity to devise solutions for them. The Claretian parish of Santísima Trinidad in Santiago publishes *Vinya Joven* in an effort to promote dialogue and interaction within Cuban society primarily through the arts. Citing José Martí's admonition that in order to be free, one must be cultured, the journal promotes dialogue within the context of developing Cuban culture. Reflecting the diversity of Catholic media are the publications and website of the Centro de Bioética de "Juan Pablo II" in Havana. Aimed at individuals and groups in the biomedical sciences, as well as philosophy and ethics, the Center works with a wide spectrum of individuals many of whom are not identified with any particular religion. Its publications include the bulletin *Reflexiones*, as well as monographs, together with its *Revista Digital*. All are aimed at generating discussion of moral and ethical issues generated particularly by advances and practices in the medical sciences and public health. The Center has strong links to international counterparts and to the Vatican. (www.cbioetica.org).

The Protestant Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba (CIC) (www.consejo-deiglesias.co.cu) publishes bulletins and monographs including the periodical *MENSAJE* which focuses on theological and biblical questions relevant to Cuban Christians. The CIC's bulletin *Tribuna Ecueménica* contains information about Protestant activities and projects sponsored by CIC. The Consejo also has an electronic bulletin that covers the same material. In addition, it has sponsored a monthly radio program "El Evangelio en Marcha" the first Sunday of the month that is transmitted by CMBF Radio Musical Nacional (8-10 am) which focuses on biblical reflections. The Consejo de Iglesias de Cuba has undergone considerable evolution during the course of the Cuban revolution and in recent years has become more oriented towards newer denominations rather than the historical ones, some of which are not members. The latter include the Baptists who are the

most numerous Protestant denomination in Cuba. The CIC has been criticized by some as being too supportive of the government.

Caminos, a publication of the Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Jr., has published substantive articles on church history, as well as contemporary topics. The reputation of the Centro as supportive of the government has led some to criticize *Caminos*. Its focus is broad including such issues as sexual diversity, disarmament, environmental issues, gender, participation, racism, and theology, and pedagogy. It is widely disseminated outside of Cuba via the internet (www.revista.ecaminos.org).

The publications of the Centro Cristiano de Reflexión y Diálogo in Cardenas reflect its ecumenical and autonomous nature (www.ccrd.org). Its objective is to encourage analysis, participation, insertion, and solidarity among Cubans in order that they contribute to overcoming societal problems and conflicts. There is a special emphasis on promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation between Cubans on the island and abroad. The Centro's *Boletín* reflects the strongly pastoral nature of its work which involves community gardens, meals on wheels, sustainable agriculture, youth groups, and reduction of environmental degradation among other projects. The CCRD has assumed a good number of social welfare activities not provided by the government. In addition, it provides seminars and courses on teen age sexuality, women's rights, family crises, as well as spiritual and moral formation. All this is catalogued in the *Boletín* along with homilies that raise ethical issues concerning contemporary Cuban society. The Center is strongly supported by foreign religious groups, especially in Canada and Europe, that regard it as an exemplar of an autonomous and non-partisan non-governmental organization and a model for future community groups. As a consequence, the Centro's publications are monitored as an indicator of the degree of political space such an organization can occupy.

The Jewish communities in Cuba are concentrated primarily in Santiago, Santa Clara, and Havana. The most active Jewish communi-

ties in the capital are Adath Israel and the Patronato. Their publications, such as the bulletin *JAIM* are primarily focused on elucidation of texts from the Old Testament and the Talmud, as well as reports on activities and services (www.adathcuba.org/boletin.html). More influence is exercised through study groups with all of the Jewish communities experiencing a resurgence, including among young people, a good number of whom come from non-religious families.

Some publications and blogs claim a religious identity, but do not have a formal affiliation with a particular domination. Among these is the *Revista Cubana Amanecer* (www.amanecerdecuba.blogspot.com/) which describes itself as serving both Jesus Christ and civil society in Cuba. Its affiliated blog *Desde Cuba* is sponsored by the Consejo de Relatores de Derechos en Cuba, which is highly critical of the Cuban government. Launched in December 2004 *Desde Cuba* is associated with the well-known bloggers Yoani Sanchez (Generación Y) and Reinaldo Escobar. Over time it has been transformed into the blog portal *VocesCubanas.com*. In late 2008 a *Bloggers Cuba* group was formed in Havana and more recently there was established an *Academia Bloguer de Cuba* to train individuals in the use of the internet to disseminate information on and within Cuba. It is associated with *Portal Voces Cubanas*. In response a number of blogs supportive of the government have been established. To date the various religious denominations have tended to maintain distance from both the pro and anti-government blogs. What is notable is that the blogosphere and religious media has grown substantially since the 1990s.

III. Conclusion

The religious media in Cuba currently provide the most substantial alternative to the official media, other than academic and cultural publications such as *TEMAS* and those of the universities and research centers. Given that the academic and cultural publications are published by institutions technically within the state sector, the religious

media is, using a strict definition, the only fully autonomous media sector in Cuba, other than the independent journalists' movement.

With respect to the religious media in Cuba, it should be noted that virtually all suffer from a scarcity of resources. Most of the material resources come from abroad and are subject to government regulation and control, thereby encouraging caution on the part of churches and other religious organizations. They, as well as foreign religious donors, have been careful not to become identified with some of the dissident or oppositional sectors of civil society. Even so, the increased role of religions in responding to the socioeconomic needs of the population has expanded the credibility and influence of most religions within civil society and hence their publications. Overall, while religions and the religious media are emerging as critical elements of a revitalizing civil society, there is an understandable desire on their part not to precipitate serious conflicts with the government. While religious leaders, by and large, may have become more publicly critical of the government, this has not translated into substantial efforts on their part to directly mobilize civil society.

In order for religions and the religious media to become more influential a number of prerequisites need to be fulfilled. One such precondition is that there exists sufficient space to allow for generalized pressures for a greater role for civil society to be effectively exerted, together with an increasing capacity on the part of civil society to occupy it. There has been some progress in this realm. The government since the late 1970s, for example, has increasingly allowed some autonomous civic, cultural, and religious actors to move away from the margins of society. This is partially a result of the government's need for assistance in meeting the basic needs of the population, as well as its efforts to compensate for the erosion of support from some other sectors. The government's inclination to accord more public space for religious actors was confirmed in the early 1990s by the elimination of the prohibition on believers becoming members of the Communist Party, which had blocked religious activists from holding influential positions in government or in education.

In 1992 a constitutional amendment transformed Cuba from officially an atheistic state to a lay state. The increased space for religions was further recognized by the May 19, 2010 meeting between General Castro and the Catholic prelates.

Given that religions in Cuba are increasingly playing an intermediary role (both formally and informally) between the state and the citizenry, can religious actors gradually assume a substantial mediating role in the current transition? Does increasing governmental and societal dependence on religious actors, national and international, provide a real opportunity for religions to influence the direction of society in a major fashion? The indications to date are that the government would resist such a possibility unless it was to its clear advantage, but there is no guarantee that it will continue to be able to do so. To what degree, then, will religious actors be able to take advantage of the situation? Furthermore, given the broad spectrum of opinions within the religious sector over the nature of the transition and the extent of the restructuring to be undertaken, would there be a consensus that goes much beyond the need for change? Such was the case in the 1950s when the vast majority of Cubans supported an end to the Batista regime, but there was no overall agreement on what precisely would replace it, thereby providing Fidel Castro with a considerable opportunity to introduce his own ideas. And to what degree will a civil society with strong strains of secularism be willing to accept a substantial leadership role by religions even if the latter have the most extensive institutional presence and networks? In short, what is the disposition of Cuban citizens to accept the leadership of religions in building the Cuban society of the future? This answer to that is unclear.

It is also possible that if there were more secular associational alternatives the current role of religions might diminish. On the other hand, it is a misperception to assume that the current attraction of religion in Cuba is solely for the material resources provided. High levels of anomie and alienation in Cuba, as well as loss of faith in the revolution by a good number of Cubans, especially young people,

have fueled a fairly generalized search for spiritual and psychological surcease through religion.

At present there is no acknowledged leadership representing a broad cross-section of Cubans, rather there is sectoral representation. The emergence of consensual leadership requires increased construction of horizontal links and interaction among proactive citizens and associations. Can religious groups facilitate the development of such leadership? This is one of the principal aims of the religious media on the island, particularly via their efforts to mold and train community leaders, professionals, youths, and others to take a more active role in civil society, but there has not been an island wide coalescing of such individuals around a consensual agenda. To date there is no leadership, religious or secular, in Cuba with a mass basis that might define what forms the society and polity might take in the future.

While there has been some discussion of goals and agendas within a revitalizing civil society, the proposals circulated to date tend to be quite schematic. The topic has been explored in various sectors and, to a degree, in secular and religious publications, conferences, and within informal networks, but again without any strong indication that there is a citizen wide consensus about what form the Cuban polity, economy, and society might take in the future. This reflects the degree to which Cuban civil society is somewhat adrift conceptually. The state continues to maintain considerable political hegemony, in part, because of historical cleavages and sectoralism that have been exacerbated by tensions among Cubans within and without the island. As a result, the impact of the religious media in Cuba in the future is not yet clear.

9 Indirect Confrontation: The Evolution of the Political Strategy of the Cuban Catholic Church

Dr. Robert A. Portada III¹

Abstract: In 2010, leaders of the Cuban Catholic Church engaged in negotiations with key figures in the revolutionary government to secure the release of dozens of political prisoners. This new, more prominent role for church leaders in contentious political issues is the result not only of the historical evolution of church-state relations during the revolutionary era but of a deliberate set of decisions on the part of the church hierarchy to formulate a strategy that I call indirect confrontation, to maintain an independent voice for the church on political issues without engaging in direct or overtly caustic confrontational rhetoric or organized activities. In essence, the success of the Cuban Catholic Church's recent efforts to intervene on behalf of dissidents and political prisoners has been part of an almost 25-year strategy to carve out for itself the role of political mediator in Cuban society through indirect confrontation with the Cuban government.

Introduction

In the spring and summer of 2010, after the Cuban government seemed poised to reinstitute a series of repressive crackdowns on dissident activists (most conspicuously targeting and arresting some par-

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ticipants in the peaceful protest marches of the Ladies in White), the Cuban Catholic Church emerged as the independent, mediating institution that was able to negotiate with key figures in the revolutionary government, including President Raul Castro, for the movement of many political prisoners to locations closer to their families and in some cases to secure the outright release of sick or elderly prisoners. These efforts culminated in mid-July when the Cuban government announced that the final 52 (out of 75) dissidents still imprisoned from the March 2003 crackdown on dissidence (known as the 'Black Spring') would be released, an action that prompted Cuban dissident Guillermo Farinas to end his well-publicized 134-day hunger strike.

This new, more prominent role for Catholic church leaders in contentious political issues should not surprise close observers of Cuban politics and society. The Cuban Catholic Church's role as a mediating institution between the Cuban government and the community of dissident activists on the island is the result not only of the historical evolution of church-state relations during the revolutionary era but of a deliberate set of decisions on the part of the church hierarchy to formulate a strategy that I call indirect confrontation, to maintain an independent voice for the church on political issues without engaging in direct or overtly caustic confrontational rhetoric or organized activities. In essence, the success of the Cuban Catholic Church's recent efforts to intervene on behalf of dissidents and political prisoners has been part of an almost 25-year strategy to carve out for itself the role of political mediator in Cuban society through indirect confrontation with the Cuban government.

During the last quarter of the 20th century, a great deal of scholarly attention was focused on the role of the Catholic Church in leading the fight against authoritarianism in many parts of Latin America and Eastern Europe (Smith 1982; Mainwaring 1986; Mainwaring and Wilde 1989; Smith 1991; Gill 1998). The Cuban Catholic Church has been conspicuously absent from this literature, for many years considered by observers to be a stagnant church far removed from the front-lines of political confrontation. However, leaders of the Cuban

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Catholic Church have formulated new strategies to confront the revolutionary government as they have worked to preserve their institutional independence and carve out a role for the church as an autonomous, national institution within a society dominated by the state. As a result, the Cuban Catholic Church has become an innovator of contentious strategies in a region where the once hegemonic social influence of the Catholic Church has eroded considerably. Taking into account both past strategies and the present political posturing of the Cuban Catholic Church, the arguments and evidence presented here demonstrate not only the importance of the institutional independence of the church and its innovative strategy toward confronting the Cuban government, but how vital the church and its laity will be in the building of democratic institutions and a democratic political culture should Cuba begin a transition toward democracy in the near future.

The Cuban Catholic Church: From Direct to Indirect Confrontation

Historically a privileged institution, the Cuban Catholic Church was perceived by many as a foreign, elitist church up to the start of the revolutionary era. Before 1959, Cuban church leaders remained closely tied to Spain (the church itself was for the most part made up of clergy born in Spain rather than in Cuba), focused more on elite education than extensive grassroots pastoral initiatives, and concentrated their personnel in urban rather than rural areas. In the months and years following the triumph of the revolutionary forces on New Year's Day 1959, it became apparent that the new political system was moving closer to adopting an ideology based on atheistic communism. Catholic leaders soon found themselves both the patrons of churches experiencing rising attendance and the leaders of the country's most prominent nongovernmental institution when religion was becoming the logical motivator for opposition to the new revolution.

The issues that created the divisions between the church and the new revolutionary regime were basic: the most important position for the Catholic Church during the Cold War was its fundamental stance against communism. Tensions mounted over the rapid pace of social reform and the deepening of relations between the new regime and the Soviet Union. The church hierarchy began linking these and any proposed reforms too radical for its liking to what it described as a systemic move toward Soviet-style communism. To the Cuban Catholic Church and most worldwide Catholic institutions before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), acceptance of Marxist ideology entailed embracing atheism, a nonnegotiable position for the church. Before Vatican II the international church had envisioned no theology or practical doctrine for cooperation with a communist regime. Accordingly, the Cuban Catholic Church upheld a position that it would have no contact, much less cooperation, with a communist government so as not to lend legitimacy to the new Marxist regime. The government in turn employed a propaganda campaign to delegitimize the church as foreign, elitist, and a supporter of counterrevolutionaries. Consequently, the new regime's nationalization of industry and social services included Catholic schools and hospitals.

In August 1960, the Conference of Cuban Catholic Bishops (COCC) collectively issued a pastoral letter that condemned both communism and the relationship between Cuba and the USSR, and called on the Cuban government to repudiate both its new ideology and its new benefactor. The letter stated outright, "We condemn communism," and excoriated the dictatorial regime for turning the Cuban population into veritable slaves.² By this time the United States had already recalled its ambassadors and imposed economic sanctions on Cuba. In April 1961, the failure of the Bay of Pigs Invasion cemented the fault-lines between the Cuban Catholic Church and the Cuban regime. Catholic priests that had already left Cuba served as chaplains for the exiled invasion forces and signed letters calling on all Catholics

2. John M. Kirk, *Between God and the Party: Religion and Politics in Revolutionary Cuba* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1989).

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to rise up against the government. The invaders also proclaimed the Catholic nature of their expedition and placed a crucifix on the shoulder patches of all the uniforms of the invading forces.

A dispute over permission for a religious procession in August 1961, during which participants (including church officials) shouted antirevolutionary slogans, erupted in a melee that resulted in the death of a passing teenager and led to the expulsion of 130 priests and religious to Spain in 1962. The government concluded that year by expelling all foreign clergy from the country and prohibiting the public expression of religion. The Cuban Catholic Church had thus earned its reputation as a vocal, confrontational, oppositional actor in the first three years of the revolutionary regime. With the nationalization of education and social services complete and the church stripped of virtually all its social influence, as well as most of its institutional resources and human capital, the government settled on an official policy that Catholics could participate in the building of revolutionary society as citizens but could not exhibit or proclaim their Catholic identity.

The Cuban Revolution, rather than transforming the Cuban Catholic Church, reinforced traditional religious policies and behavior, making the church less open and innovative than most other Latin American churches. After asserting itself confrontationally during the first three years of revolutionary rule, the church turned inward and ceased its confrontational activities. A period characterized by 'silence,' tension, and at times ambiguously accommodative relations ensued between church and state for the first time in Cuban history.

Clergy in Cuba that have remained on the island throughout the entire span of the revolutionary period remember the 1960s and 1970s as a dark age. Current Auxiliary Bishop of Havana (and member of the COCC) Mons. Alfredo Petit Vergel was among a group of Catholic priests that were taken to military detention camps in the mid-1960s, along with individuals from other groups deemed socially

undesirable and untrustworthy for incorporation into the revolutionary armed forces:

“In 1966 I was personally taken in the middle of the night to a labor camp in Camaguey. There were about 50,000 people there, Catholics (priests and laity), homosexuals, thieves, and Jehovah’s Witnesses, who were treated worst of all. These experiences, one never forgets.”³

By 1968, all of Cuba’s remaining bishops were born in Cuba. But its ranks were still depleted and internal conflicts between conservatives and reform-minded church leaders persisted. Cuban clergy found no resonance in the growing strength of Liberation Theology in Latin America. Seen through the lens of their own experiences with repression, they were unable to envision any symbiosis between Christianity and Marxism. Moreover, the passive laity of the church did not feel comfortable openly professing their faith, either socially or in civil activities. Heading into the 1980s, the general aura of the Catholic Church in Cuba was that of a marginalized, quiescent institution, a relic of a pre-revolutionary society.

However, international events and a change in leadership precipitated a renovation. Drawing inspiration from the meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) in Puebla in 1979, the Cuban Catholic Church embarked on a 5-year period of reflection resulting in the 1986 *Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano* (ENEC conference), an event designed to be the start of a new direction for the church in Cuba now seeking to proceed with evangelization *within* a revolutionary context. The younger church leaders that organized the conference (including Jaime Ortega, made Archbishop of Havana in 1981 at the age of 39) initially established closer ties with the Cuban government and offered a more conciliatory message than the Cuban Catholic Church had ever done during the revolutionary years.

During the conference, church leaders admitted their own errors and shortcomings of the past and expressed their determination to update their approach to evangelization and for the church to become

3. Mons. Alfredo Petit Vergel, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

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an active socio-religious force in Cuban society. The church affirmed that its leaders in Cuba were staying, and they implored their faithful to stay as well. This also signaled the extent to which Cuban church leaders distanced themselves from the church in exile (centered in Miami), a church they believed was far removed from Cuba's social reality. Part of the goal of the ENEC conference was for church leaders to proclaim their independence and autonomy as Cuba's national church. The Cuban Catholic Church came into its own not only by drawing contrasts with the revolutionary government but with the extreme confrontational views of the United States and the Cuban community in exile. According to Fr. Fernando De la Vega of the Montserrat Church of Havana, the priority of the ENEC conference was not only to recognize that the Cuban Revolution had produced a new fundamental social reality, but to convince Cuban Catholics that it was worth the trouble to stay in Cuba. Just as the church was using the occasion to fix itself, Cuban Catholics should try to fix Cuba from within: "In 1986, the principal objective was to formulate a plan that addressed the national reality...The goal of ENEC was to say, 'Don't leave. Let's see what we have to offer here.'"⁴ The Cuban Catholic Church would become a missionary church and begin planting roots amongst the destitute of Cuban society as they had never done before.

In 1991, the situation changed dramatically. The collapse of the Soviet Union sparked a profound change of thinking amongst the church hierarchy, especially in its strategy for dealing with the government. It now looked as though the Cuban government, like the many satellite communist states of Eastern Europe, was destined for a similar demise. The loss of Soviet subsidies led to an economic crisis unprecedented in Cuban history. The Cuban Catholic Church may not have been prepared for the sweeping social changes of the Cuban Revolution, but it now sought to prepare itself to assume a larger role in a post-revolutionary Cuba. Church leaders had never changed their harsh views of the revolutionary government, but they had come to recognize the importance of strategizing how they would interact with

4. Fr. Fernando De la Vega, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

it. Now, the moment appeared opportune to initiate a return to contentious politics. Two years after the Soviet collapse, the 11 bishops that made up the COCC issued a harsh critique of the Cuban Revolution—harsh in the context of Cuba’s national political discourse, that is. Rather than return to the scathing condemnations of the early 1960s, the bishops framed the contentious message of the pastoral letter *El amor todo lo espera* (Love Endures All Things) with words like dialogue, reconciliation, and respect.

Reflecting the dire economic situation spurred by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bishops placed the blame on poor economic and political governance. They made a litany of suggestions for political reform, opening doors for opposition groups to seek support in the church. *El amor todo lo espera* in many ways could be viewed as a political manifesto, signaling to existing and prospective dissident activists where the Cuban Catholic Church’s true political sympathies lied. Amidst the invocation of the search for unity and reconciliation, the bishops identified a series of political “irritants” that must be eradicated along with necessary economic changes. These “irritants” included the “omnipresent and exclusionary” character of the national ideology, the lack of an independent judiciary, the “excessive control” of the Organs of State Security, and the high number of political prisoners in Cuban jails.⁵

However, unlike in similar letters written in the 1960s, the COCC did not make direct denunciations of the state, government officials, or even of Marxist ideology. Rather, the bishops focused their attention on critiquing the national ideology’s omnipresence rather than its content. The Organs of State Security, argued the bishops, at times intrude on the strictly private lives of citizens and produce a social fear that is “hard to define but palpable to feel.” In relation to the problem of political prisoners, the bishops reasoned that under a conciliatory political climate men could be freed who have been imprisoned

5. Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, *La Voz de la Iglesia en Cuba: 100 Documentos Episcopales* (D.F., México: Obra Nacional de la Buen Prensa, A.C., 1995), pgs. 410-411.

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for crimes motivated by politics or economics. This list of targets was perhaps most revealing in what is not mentioned: at no point did the bishops denounce or critique the nature of Cuba's one-party political system, or the leadership of Fidel Castro.

Still, *El amor todo lo espera* was received by the Cuban government as a contemptible, blatant attack on the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban Catholic Church was soon denounced in state-run media as a counter-revolutionary institution with a history of conspiring with foreign enemies. But, the weakened position of the government resulting from the economic crisis made its counter-attack on the Cuban Catholic Church less virulent than it could have been. No churches were intruded upon, nor did any arrests or overt harassment of church officials occur.

Cuban church leaders knew that their letter, though couched in conciliatory rhetoric, would not be well-received by the government. It was intended to be the lightning rod that symbolized yet another new role for the Cuban Catholic Church. Fr. De la Vega sums up the process that led to the writing of *El amor todo lo espera* and its reception by the Cuban government in this way: "It was a great pastoral letter, but the government didn't understand it. It was written in a tone of confrontation. The position of the church was no longer so defensive. Many of the fears were eliminated, due to the fall of the socialist camp."⁶ Even more direct is Mons. Petit, responding to the charge that government officials felt the letter was too tough a critique: "*El amor todo lo espera* was just, not tough. It speaks of the reality here, and it continues to represent the truth. I was one of the writers. We said what we said because nobody had said anything like that in a long time."⁷

Despite the increased tension in church-state relations, the Cuban Catholic Church was reaping real benefits. Church attendance was on the rise. In 1994, the Vatican named Jaime Ortega only the second

6. Fr. Fernando De la Vega, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

7. Mons. Alfredo Petit Vergel, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

Cardinal in the history of the Cuban Catholic Church. Shortly thereafter, Pope John Paul II agreed to accept an invitation to visit Cuba that had been extended by then President Fidel Castro a decade earlier. During his 1998 visit the Pope gave Cubans the same message he had delivered to his Polish brethren confronting communism in 1979: “Do not be afraid!” It was becoming apparent to many Cubans that there was an independent institution on the island that would welcome those who were ‘unsympathetic’ to the Revolution. The stage was set for a new period of church-state relations: a relationship characterized by a new church strategy of indirect confrontation.

Indirect Confrontation: Dealing with Dissidents and the Government

Since the writing of *El amor todo lo espera*, the church hierarchy has not directly confronted the government in its actions or rhetoric. Even during the 1998 papal visit the church seemed to win a certain degree of social legitimacy, gaining greater visibility and access to the state-run media. The Cuban government, for the first time, allowed church leaders to promote their social message over state-run airwaves. Thousands of Cubans, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, gathered to hear the Pope’s homilies. This was a low-risk moment for the church, and in the presence of the Pope and with the international media closely watching, church leaders took the opportunity to make some indirectly confrontational statements. Transcendent moments, such as Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba Mons. Pedro Meurice Estiú claiming that the Revolution has “confused the fatherland with a political party,” were heard by all. A veneer of cordiality concealed underlying tensions, but the long-term gains were difficult to gauge.

Church leaders privately express great pride for composing the letter and have deemed it unnecessary to write another similar pastoral letter because Cuba’s social, political, and economic conditions have not profoundly changed. The singularity of *El amor todo lo espera* has given it iconic status in church discourse. What church leaders con-

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tinue to call into question is the lack of political pluralism in Cuba, though without characterizing the regime as totalitarian and in only scattered instances criticizing the domination of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC).

A 2003 theological-pastoral instructional of the COCC, entitled "The Social Presence of the Church" (written to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of *El amor todo lo espera*), explicitly addressed the Cuban Catholic Church's perspective on political involvement:

"The mission of the Church is not political; its mission is not to intervene directly in the exercise of civil power, nor in the oppositional structures of power, nor support one or another party, nor recommend a candidate party up for vote in an election. In the political debate amongst parties that confront one another or join in ideological or strategic alliances the Church must be neutral, although it is a part of its ethic that the rights of everyone be respected in this debate."⁸

Church leaders do not endorse specific political parties or movements but they decry the fact that a variety of political options are not offered by the Cuban political system. Catholic laypeople need only be loyal to the Catholic Church, and must necessarily base their political choices on Christian ethics. The church, then, would be against any system that did not provide for political choices among which Christians could choose. This is the indirect way in which democratization is advocated—avoiding mention of specific leaders, parties, institutions, and political options that should be ousted, formed, erected, or exercised (respectively), but acknowledging that a plurality of potential leaders, parties, institutions, options should exist and should be respected. While the Cuban Catholic Church does not denounce the revolutionary system per se, it does affirm the existence of a plurality of political options that would benefit Cuba should some social force work toward the realization of those options.

There are very few physical spaces beyond the parish itself in which church leaders can work to move forward with their mission of

8. Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba, "La Presencia Social de la Iglesia" (Instrucción Teológico-Pastoral, 2003).

evangelization. Each Catholic diocese in Cuba has a Center of Formation in the Faith for religious workshops and bible study. In the 1990s, Cuban church members created *Casas de Misión* in private homes as a way to evangelize and provide houses of worship, especially in areas with no Catholic churches or where existing churches were in disrepair. The *Casas* are meant to facilitate a sense of community amongst Catholics on the island and serve as informal religious gatherings for prayer and bible discussion. In 1991 the church also began providing charity services through *Caritas Cuba*, which is affiliated with the Rome-based Catholic relief agency *Caritas Internationalis*. *Caritas Cuba* assists the needy and elderly through the distribution of food, clothing, medicine, and various personal items.

The only form of media available to the Cuban Catholic Church to communicate with their faithful is through the rudimentary publication of Catholic magazines. In the 1990s church leaders gained permission from the government to publish their own magazines with the stipulation that they only be distributed within the churches themselves and that they don't directly criticize or condemn the state. In certain instances, some magazines have gone too far and they have been subjected not only to complaints from regime officials but certain forms of self-censorship. However, these publications routinely contain articles by Catholic priests and scholars that not only promote the social doctrine of the church but discuss a very wide range of issues, including politics, society, culture, economics, and science. Magazines such as *Espacio Laical* and *Palabra Nueva* (advertised as "the voice of the church") are described by church leaders as 'formative-informative' magazines, in that they are meant to serve as comprehensive alternative sources of information in Cuba. They constitute an important part of the Cuban Catholic Church's project to promote an alternative cultural meaning-system, aiming both to form Cuban Catholics in the faith and inform them from a different socio-political perspective than that offered by the official ideology.

Still, prudence dominates the Catholic Church's agenda in Cuba. Church officials are often pressured by extreme political opponents in

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exile and dissident activists on the island to assume a more direct confrontational approach with the government. Though many dissident movements in Cuba have tied their activities to Catholic symbols—including Oswaldo Payá's Christian Liberation Movement (CLM) and the wives of those dissidents imprisoned during the 2003 'Black Spring' who for 7 years have marched from the Santa Rita Church in Miramar through Havana as the Ladies in White—the relationship between the dissident community and the Cuban Catholic Church has been far from amiable. Despite the perception on the part of government officials that the church has provided institutional space, financial resources, and moral support to the dissidents, many Catholic activists have called out the leaders of the Cuban Catholic Church for not being vocal enough, a frustration born of the church's adherence to a strategy of indirect confrontation.

A 2002 article in *Palabra Nueva* by the magazine's director Orlando Márquez clearly outlined the church's relationship to Cuba's dissident community. Entitled "The Project of the Church," Márquez responded to criticism the Catholic Church received for not endorsing Oswaldo Payá's Varela Project, a petition of 11,020 signatures of Cuban citizens organized by the CLM and presented to the Cuban National Assembly in 2002 proposing laws that would entail comprehensive political reforms, including the establishment of freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, free elections, and amnesty for political prisoners. In the article, Márquez proclaims the church's neutrality in questions of political disputes: the church does not and will not endorse or adhere to any partisan political programmes. Making clear that he speaks for the hierarchy in the pages of *Palabra Nueva*, Márquez goes on to outline the project of the Cuban Catholic Church:

"Should the church define itself—and this magazine is an instrument of the church—according to the criteria of political actors, or should it strive to maintain its independence in such subjects, immersing itself in a pastoral of reconciliation and preserving its obligation with the people to fulfill the mission received from Jesus Christ? That is the project of the church."⁹

The goal of church's confrontational strategy has been to symbolically align itself with the social opposition while maintaining its independence—thus, retaining its status as the only private, independent, yet politically contentious institution on the island. This, according to Márquez, means refusing to respond to the pressures of those very social actors the church has worked to cultivate—at times, in fact, publicly distancing itself from these social actors when they become excessively belligerent. Yet, the Varela Project was not in and of itself a partisan political manifesto but a petition proposing the kind of political opening that church leaders have expressed hope for and that could lead to the development of political pluralism and civil society. Nevertheless, Oswaldo Payá, a Catholic layman, was forced (according to church policy) to abandon any pastoral duties done for the church when he established a political organization, in order to relieve the church of direct association with the Varela Project or the CLM.

In full knowledge that the church is often charged with not going far enough into the arena of contentious politics by more extreme and partisan political dissidents (both in Cuba and in exile) Márquez further elaborates the outlook of church leaders: “In other words, prudence is not synonymous with silence and complicity.”¹⁰ Church officials do not often address politically contentious issues in public, not because they are complicit with the government but because they are prudent in their behavior.

Church leaders are willing to encourage their laity to engage in dissident activities, but they have also publicly distanced themselves from Catholic dissidents who draw the attention of the government. The closing of the Catholic magazine *Vitral* in 2007 was a key example of the kind of self-censorship that has been employed by the church hierarchy. Dagoberto Valdés, a Catholic dissident, was director of the Center of Civic and Religious Formation in the Archdiocese of Pinar del Río and served as the director of *Vitral*, considered the most politically contentious of the Catholic publications. Valdés used the Center

9. Orlando Márquez, “El Proyecto de la Iglesia,” *Palabra Nueva*, April 2002.

10. *ibid.*

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to organize lectures on democracy, human rights, and civic responsibility. While he was director, *Vitral* often made a habit of publishing direct denunciations of the Cuban government and many of its policies.

The church resigned to cut its ties with the increasingly contentious and directly confrontational tone of *Vitral*. Valdés' close associate and ally, former Archbishop of Pinar del Río, Mons. José Siro González, retired in early 2007 and was replaced by Mons. Jorge Enrique Serpa. Among the first decisions made by the new bishop was to redirect the resources reserved for the publication of *Vitral* and running the Center of Civic and Religious Formation to other projects. The publication of *Vitral* would no longer be guaranteed.

For a church that consistently bemoans its lack of access to media outlets, closing one of its own publications (and the most critical of the Cuban government at that) was interpreted internationally as a concession to the Cuban government. Dagoberto Valdés lamented the fact that the church itself had shut the magazine down, rather than repressive government tactics: "What I could not believe was that the decision to close the magazine came from within the church."¹¹ Dissident actors were shocked to learn that the same church that produced *El amor todo lo espera* was willing to engage in self-censure. A month later, a new edition of *Vitral* (with Dagoberto Valdés and his group of editors no longer involved) was published that assumed the indirectly confrontational and more conciliatory tone of the Cuban Catholic Church's official line.

A marked shift can be viewed between the behavior of church officials in the 1959-1962 period of direct confrontation and their indirectly confrontational strategy since 1993: in 1961, church leaders participated in an anti-government procession through Havana that played a large role in getting 130 priests expelled from Cuba. In late 2004, wives of imprisoned dissidents began gathering at the Santa Rita

11. qtd. in Fernando Ravsberg, "Cuba: Cierra Revista Católica," bbcmundo.com, 13 April 2007.

Church in Miramar in a weekly demonstration of public opposition. Their routine has been to dress in white for mass and then walk the avenues outside, eventually gathering in a nearby park while they pray for the release of their husbands. Yet, no church officials have ever participated in the processions of the Ladies in White. Fr. De la Vega states what has become an oft repeated phrase by church officials to those who would beckon the Cuban Catholic Church to use its institutional autonomy to help organize dissident activities against the Cuban government: “The church cannot be an alternative political party in Cuba. The church is positioned between two camps—those that live here and don’t accept the official ideology and the church in exile, which says that we don’t come out strongly enough against the state. But they are there and we are here.”¹² The Cuban Catholic Church has not worked to build any political organizations itself, and it does not endorse the organizations that may be built by its faithful. The association of the church with opposition groups remains symbolic, even though these groups may be predominantly populated with individuals bred from within the church’s temples. However, as adamant as church leaders are about refusing to become political figures, they forcefully argue that the Catholic laity must themselves be politically active. Church leaders feel they are endowed with a special responsibility to help develop a politically conscious citizenry, a responsibility that was neglected prior to the 1986 ENEC conference. The Cuban Catholic Church does not aim to be the voice of the opposition—but it does want to form and inform those who would become that voice.

Formally and publicly, the Cuban Catholic Church strives to maintain a cordial relationship with the Cuban government. Describing the nature of church-state relations, Mons. José Félix Pérez Riera, former Adjunct Secretary of the COCC, used very dry, stark terms, never flowering over the coldness that exists between the two entities:

“Relations are formal, in order, and they are functioning. They cover administrative aspects, which may have to do with the restoration of

12. Fr. Fernando De la Vega, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

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churches or priests that want to do a religious procession. Between the government and the COCC, we cover basic principles: there is a dialogue about human and social issues. But our focus is different - we're always thinking about the loss of values.”¹³

Here, Mons. Pérez Riera seeks to acknowledge certain issues around which the church and the government have found common ground, yet, he distinguishes the church's emphasis on the loss of values in Cuban society. Rolando Suárez, a Catholic layman and the lawyer of the COCC, points to certain social issues that have been on the table in discussions between church and government officials: “The government made abortion legal, and employs the death penalty. On these issues we are not in agreement. But, for example, the government has said that euthanasia will be illegal. On this issue we have agreement.”¹⁴ The government does not in practice consult the church on how to approach social issues. Cuban church leaders have made clear their desire to find solutions to issues of common interest, but they consistently criticize the official channels set up by the government to purportedly achieve a constructive dialogue.

The Office of Religious Subjects of the PCC is the official channel through which all communications between church and state take place. The mere existence of such an office is a source of consternation for the church hierarchy. Mons. Pérez Riera notes that when the Office of Religious Subjects contacts the church, it is usually to protest church actions that overstep boundaries instituted by the government: “It doesn't occur with much frequency. It could be that a priest in a town organized a procession without permission, as they say, disturbing the social order; it could be about certain articles published in church magazines, or that someone visited without official documentation.”¹⁵ In discussing the process of dealing with the Office of Religious Subjects, Mons. Ramón Suárez Polcari (the Chancellor of the

13. Mons. José Félix Pérez Riera, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

14. Rolando Suárez, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

15. Mons. José Félix Pérez Riera, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

Cuban Catholic Church) expressed dismay at the Catholic Church's loss of status:

“All of us communicate with the state through the official office. There are signs of improvement but there is always tension because they have their own style of working. The Catholic Church never had to incorporate itself into any special Council, like the *Concilio Evangélico*. The Catholic Church maintains a unique posture because we have a historical tradition; but after the Revolution, we ceased being the official church.”¹⁶

The *Concilio Evangélico* (Evangelical Council) is a Christian church council that encompasses all the Protestant denominations in Cuba. All the churches that belong to the *Concilio* cooperate with and are supportive of the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban Catholic Church remains the only Christian church in Cuba that has not been incorporated into the *Concilio Evangélico*. Yet, the COCC keeps its reference point in the church's efforts to work with the government, not against it. But the important thing for church leaders is to stress that they function independent of the government, something that would be compromised by joining a council that, in the eyes of the church hierarchy, restricts their institutional autonomy.

2010: Coming to the Table

In early 2010, a confluence of factors brought the Cuban government to a bargaining table with members of the COCC functioning as the intermediaries negotiating on behalf of political prisoners. Quite suddenly, the Cuban government had come under harsh international scrutiny for several incidents involving the dissident community. On February 23rd, Cuban dissident Orlando Zapata Tamayo died after an 85-day hunger strike protesting the lack of liberty and status of political prisoners on the island. Dissident journalist Guillermo Farinas began his own hunger strike the day after Zapata Tamayo passed away, denying himself both food and water and demanding that 26 political

16. Mons. Ramón Suárez Polcarí, interview by author, Havana, Cuba, 2006.

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prisoners be freed before he would consider ending the strike. Additionally, in March, scuffles broke out when a procession of the Ladies in White was confronted by a series of pro-government rallies that led state security, for the first time, to arrest and detain several of the wives, roughly forcing them onto buses amidst crowds of screaming government supporters and creating a shocking scene of outright state repression. Holding the Ladies in White responsible for disturbing public order, the Cuban government subsequently banned them from holding their protest marches.

These events occurred in a context of heightened international attention on Cuban government policies: government officials were preparing to receive a visit in June from the Vatican's top official in charge of foreign relations, Monsignor Dominique Mamberti. The meeting was scheduled to commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Cuba, and for Msgr. Mamberti to lead a Catholic social week organized by Cuban church leaders. Having such high-profile conflicts with dissidents was putting government officials on the defensive, an uncommon position for a leadership that does not often make apologies for their political system. Added to this, the prospects for improved US-Cuban relations were starting to dwindle. The election of US President Barack Obama in 2008 spurred anticipation on the part of scholars and international observers that a thaw in US-Cuban relations was foreseeable, perhaps even including changes to the US trade embargo on Cuba. But, the issue of political prisoners would first have to be dealt with. Modifications to the US trade embargo would greatly help a faltering Cuban economy, harshly affected by the 2008 global financial crisis. The Obama administration made clear that any broad changes in US policy would be conditioned on political reforms being made on the island.

So when the Cuban government decided it would begin the process of releasing some political prisoners, they called on leaders of the one institution on the island that had the independence that could allow it to serve as an intermediary: the Cuban Catholic Church. Following some preliminary meetings, in May Cardinal Jaime Ortega

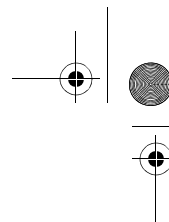
negotiated an end to the government's ban on the protest marches organized by the Ladies in White and gained a pledge from President Raul Castro to improve conditions for political prisoners, including the movement of some prisoners to locations closer to their families. In early July, with the added help of Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos, government officials agreed to release 5 of the 52 political prisoners still imprisoned from the March 2003 crackdown. The freed dissidents would be flown into exile in Spain and the remaining 47 would be released under the same conditions over the following months. Upon hearing the news, Guillermo Farinas agreed to end his hunger strike at 134 days.

Not everyone was pleased with the efforts of the church leaders. Oswaldo Payá denounced the dialogue and complained that church leaders were excluding dissidents from the negotiations. Payá accused the church and government representatives of treating the dissidents as “spectators” by not bringing them to the negotiating table.¹⁷ Consistent with its strategy of not endorsing any specific dissident activities or organizations, the Cuban Catholic Church were not negotiating for the benefit of the CLM or any other group of dissidents, but out of concern for the situation of the political prisoners on the island. The Cuban Catholic Church emerged from the negotiations with a heightened stature and a more vibrant image as the one independent, national institution active in Cuban society.

Conclusion

In 1993, the moment when the Cuban Revolution seemed on the precipice of collapse and some kind of transition was perceived to be forthcoming, Cuban church leaders leveled a strong critique on the policies and character of the Cuban government in the form of the pastoral letter *El amor todo lo espera*. But they joined this critique with a forceful call for dialogue, a dialogue that would bring dissident activ-

17. qtd. in Juan O. Tamayo, “Hope—and controversy—after dialogue with the Church,” *The Miami Herald*, 29 June 2010.



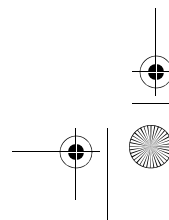
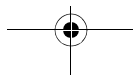
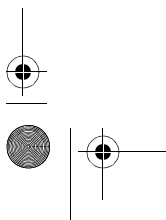
Indirect Confrontation: The Evolution of the Political Strategy of the Cuban Catholic

ists to the same table with government officials. In calling for these oppositional actors to come together in dialogue, Cuban church leaders were positioning themselves as the kind of neutral leaders that could mediate such a dialogue. The church hierarchy acted and continues to act strategically; in the pages of *Palabra Nueva*, Orlando Márquez refers to the strategic element of church behavior as “prudence”—the prudence not to tread into the realm of direct confrontation and risk the church’s institutional integrity.

The adherence of church leaders to a strategy that is prudent has also revealed the extent to which church leaders are rational actors with their own interests that supersede moral or political principles. This strategy has finally elevated the status of the Cuban Catholic Church but has also earned the church a deserved reputation for putting interests above principles, especially in the eyes of those dissidents that have accrued the most risk for engaging in directly confrontational activities. The primary concern for the Cuban Catholic Church has been to preserve its independence, a feat it has achieved and that is starting to reap real benefits, but that has also drawn a significant degree of criticism on the church.

Since 1986, the Cuban Catholic Church has also sought to become a missionary church, one that finds its spiritual calling and social foundation in the grassroots, in a laity that has held on to its faith in the context of a broader society that regards the institutional independence of the church as cause for suspicion. It has become a church with no official status or privileges, with no elite schools to educate the rich and with no prominent moral voice in the national media. It is, however, completely dedicated to providing moral and spiritual nourishment to its growing laity and to reestablishing its role as a leading public voice in Cuban society. And it is the one national institution in Cuba that has been, for almost 25 years, sowing the seeds of democracy.

Cuban church leaders will attempt to play a significant social role in the event of a regime transition in Cuba. Their positions as opposi-



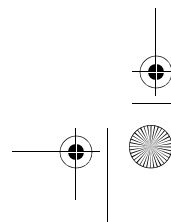
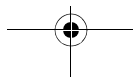
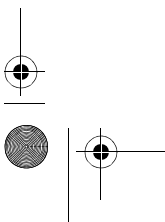
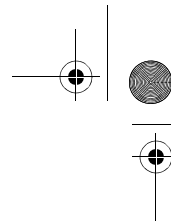
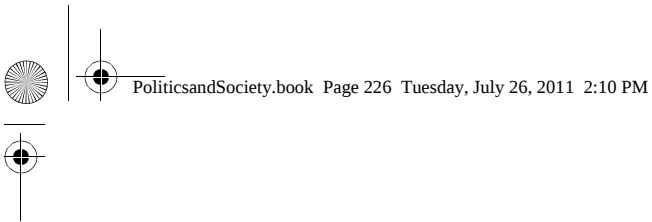
tional actors that have remained in Cuba have afforded Cuban church leaders a sophistication in dealing with the system—they have become adept at validating the Cuban reality while promoting both their theological vision and democratic principles. They have been seeking new media outlets and access to existing outlets in the hopes of reestablishing a public moral voice. The Catholic Church occupies a unique space in Cuba as the one national institution independent of state control. This status has given Catholic leaders the opportunity to take on the roles of mediators during regime transitions in other cases in Latin America and Eastern Europe. The Polish church nurtured and aided the Solidarity movement in the 1980s and was able to play the role of mediator between the old communist guard and the ascendant democratic parties during that country's transition years. The Brazilian and Salvadoran churches abandoned radical postures to return to a church-state model of power-brokering with the political elite following turbulent transitions from militaristic authoritarian regimes. This is a role that Cuban church leaders could assume without changing political positions, rather, they could legitimate such a process in a new democratic environment by pointing to their previous stances against the Cuban government and their calls for political pluralism during the revolutionary years. The Cuban Catholic Church does not have the numbers of faithful nor the institutional reach of the other cases mentioned here. But, the résumé of the Cuban Catholic Church could be boosted by its efforts to keep its relationship cordial with the Cuban government, even as tensions have simmered and occasionally rose to the surface. In a situation where public protest against the regime was more widespread and volatile, an institution that supported dissident movements with material or logistical support would be favored as a mediator (as in Poland). But the Cuban Catholic Church has been careful to endorse ideas—political pluralism, autonomous civil society—rather than actual groups and organizations. This catalogue of indirectly confrontational statements could be the church's most valuable resource in a transition setting, along with the moral weight it carries as a spiritual organization promoting distinct moral values. Additionally, its faithful are being encouraged to be

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actively engaged in Cuba's political processes in the event of a regime transition. In a transitional environment, the faithful of the Cuban Catholic Church are the citizens who will most likely become advocates for democratization and the spreading of a democratic political culture beyond Cuba's Catholic parishes.

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10 Cuba: analizando el presente y construyendo en futuro

Roberto Veiga González¹

Introducción

Mi país, Cuba, desde hace tiempo vive un proceso progresivo de inflexión. Según algunos, dicho camino resulta tímido y carece de los canales necesarios para desatarlo debidamente. Esto puede ser cierto, pero la escasez de legitimidad de estos déficits es sólo parcial. Los temores y las insuficiencias que marcan este andar, en mi opinión, responden en alguna medida a nuestras circunstancias históricas y políticas, y por ello pueden corresponder al ritmo natural de un cambio que podríamos denominar: a lo cubano.

Ello no implica que dejemos de trabajar para facilitar las mejores condiciones con el propósito de acelerar y completar este camino

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nacional. Todo lo contrario, hemos de empeñarnos en hacerlo, pero oteando intensamente los signos de los tiempos, o sea, discerniendo la realidad concreta de la nación, así como sus necesidades y posibilidades reales. De lo contrario podríamos engendrar nuevos males, nuevas injusticias, nuevos desequilibrios, que tal vez dañarían la vida del país durante unas cuantas décadas más. Este es uno de los mayores desafíos que hoy enfrentamos los cubanos. Y la Iglesia Católica en Cuba está comprometida a acompañar a la nación en la búsqueda de la mejor solución y de los mejores métodos para conseguirla.

Camino hacia la inflexión

Los antecedentes más remotos de este camino de inflexión quizá puedan encontrarse muy lejanos en el tiempo. Sin embargo, los más sustanciales y explícitos datan de la década del 80 del pasado siglo. En aquella época la generalidad de la sociedad cubana ya se hacía muy consciente de las deficiencias del modelo instaurado en el país, que imponía una excesiva modestia económica, así como cierta fractura del quehacer político nacional y hasta de la unidad de la vida familiar. Dicho sentir emergía, por ejemplo, de las consecuencias negativas del establecimiento de estructuras y conceptos soviéticos-estalinistas, de la nueva experiencia que aportaba a la sociedad de la Isla el contacto con la parte cubana de la diáspora iniciado durante la administración del presidente Carter, de la sangría migratoria que había tenido un clímax en el llamado éxodo del Mariel, y de los ecos del descontento y de la fisura en el entonces campo socialista de Europa del este.

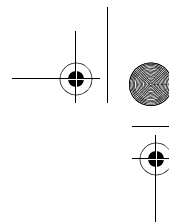
Finalmente, el desmerengamiento de este bloque ideológico-político dejó a Cuba en una crisis mayor, que implicó un traumático deterioro de la endeble economía del país. Sin embargo, debo precisar, la crisis mayor fue de paradigmas. A partir de ese momento se acentuó, en unos casos, la duda y, en otros, el rechazo en relación con todas las certezas que se habían ido haciendo hegemónicas acerca de cómo organizar y desarrollar la vida personal, familiar y social. Esto demandaba un replanteamiento de todos los conceptos y estructuras

con el propósito de facilitar que se cincelara un nuevo modelo socio-político, capaz de no renunciar a los fundamentos del imaginario social que habían hecho posible la Revolución y lo aspectos que para muchos constituían sus conquistas, pero también apto para alejarnos de todas aquellas teorías y prácticas que la experiencia mostraba como erróneas o dañinas.

Pero esto no ocurrió de una manera suficiente. Hubo un ajuste—económico, político y simbólico—, pero excesivamente limitado, que no desató todas las potencialidades humanas y por tanto frenó la actualización del modelo social, económico y político. El equilibrio y desarrollo de la nación demandaban de una reforma profunda que debió iniciarse a más tardar en la segunda mitad de la década del 80 del siglo XX. Ello hubiera asegurado mejores condiciones, tanto subjetivas como materiales, para erigir una economía estable y próspera, consolidar un proyecto social inclusivo capaz de atenuar errores y aliviar heridas, así como desarrollar una democracia sustentada por amplísimas cuotas de libertad y fraternidad. Conseguir esto hoy es mucho más difícil.

La no implementación de la reforma debida generó un estado social calamitoso que desató, por ejemplo, el sufrimiento de muchos, cierto egoísmo en las relaciones interpersonales, determinada apatía social, y un intenso éxodo—sobre todo de los más aptos y más jóvenes. Esto, junto a otras consecuencias, ha empobrecido al país y afecta la concreción de las mejores condiciones para asumir una reestructuración que encamine a la nación hacia un presente y un futuro más armónico y próspero.

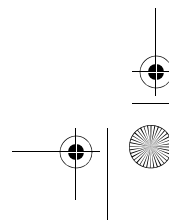
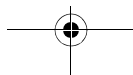
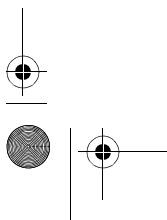
En este contexto surgieron voces contestatarias que han tenido cierto impacto en el extranjero. No obstante, las mismas no han sido aceptadas por las autoridades cubanas y se ha establecido una especie de guerra entre ambas partes. Es posible que esto responda, como aseguran algunos, a una postura de intransigencia política por parte del gobierno cubano. Sin embargo, habría que ver cómo sería si esta oposición no hubiera incurrido en una serie de graves errores políti-



cos. Entre éstos se encuentran: que pudiera ser lícito tener relaciones intensas con cualquiera, pero—en nuestro caso—no es correcto ser opositor y mantener estrechos vínculos con sectores de poder en Estados Unidos; carecer de un programa universal que ofrezca perspectivas y certidumbres; no considerarse como un complemento político de quienes ejercen el poder, sino como quienes deben destruirlos, estimulando así una dinámica de guerra que dificulta el establecimiento de una metodología democrática de relación-tensión; así como desplegar su quehacer a partir de una relación más intensa con los actores sociales del país y no tanto con determinados círculos en el extranjero.

En medio de esta particularidad política la generalidad del pueblo añora una mejoría, mayores espacios para desarrollar la subjetividad, pero sin nuevos vencidos. El anhelo general legitima un cambio que promueva mayores libertades y mecanismos inclusivos, pero teniendo en cuenta al actual gobierno del país, al cual le asigna el deber de facilitar dicho proceso.

Acerca de cómo hacer dicha reforma y hacia dónde encaminarla existen muchísimos criterios. Hasta tal punto concurre esa diversidad, y tanta ha sido la elaboración que alcanza en determinados casos, que ya se puede hablar de la existencia de varias Cubas. Esto se expresa por medio de la opinión que con suficiente libertad se manifiesta en la Isla; ya sea en los hogares, en los barrios, en los centros de trabajos y estudios, etcétera. No obstante, debo precisar, aún falta mucho para que estas opiniones puedan canalizarse debidamente a través de los medios de comunicación, de las instituciones estatales y de las organizaciones sociales. Existen escasos medios de comunicación y muy débiles proyectos sociales que emergen como expresión e institucionalización de todas estas opiniones, de todos estos anhelos. En tal sentido, se hace imprescindible que el Estado, con toda su fuerza, facilite el desarrollo de todo esto con el objetivo de fortalecer la sociedad civil cubana y conseguir así una posibilidad mayor para trabajar por un modelo socio-político más justo.

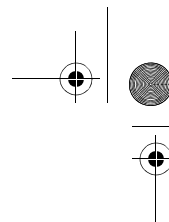


Postura del gobierno ante las exigencias de la realidad

El actual presidente de la República de Cuba, el general Raúl Castro, ha expresado su disposición de cambio y es evidente que trabaja para lograrlo. Lo hace con suma cautela, a partir de mucho análisis y paso a paso (o más bien: pasito a pasito, como él mismo ha dicho). Parece que desea evitar errores e imprevistos que desestabilicen al país y al gobierno. Esto desespera a muchos porque sienten que la crisis en la cual viven le hace malgastar sus vidas. No obstante, es necesario aceptar cierta gradualidad, siempre que la misma no resulte en una lentitud estéril.

El nuevo primer mandatario ha inaugurado un estilo novedoso y plantea objetivos renovados. Se ha declarado, por ejemplo, que se expresen y escuchen todas las opiniones, se ofrezca mayor libertad a las relaciones interpersonales, se logre una relación más armónica entre la Isla y su emigración, se reforme el sistema penal, se gobierne de manera colegiada, se fortalezca el desempeño de las instituciones, se descentralice la gestión de gobierno, se vigorice la labor del legislativo, el trabajo del empresariado estatal goce de autonomía, más o menos el cincuenta por ciento de la economía sea privada, así como un partido único que no gobierne y sea abierto—o sea, que sustente una base política capaz de estimular a muchos para integrar sus filas y permita dentro del mismo el criterio libre, la posibilidad de hacer propuestas y el debate responsable; en fin: un desempeño político partidista mucho más plural y adecuado a su naturaleza.

Este pequeño e incompleto esbozo de las aspiraciones socio-políticas de la dirección del país muestra la existencia de un programa de gobierno que pretende renovar conceptos y estructuras del Estado y de la sociedad. Es cierto que puede partir de una visión parcial, y no asimila criterios importantes de personas y sectores, pero es innegable que—de lograrse concretar, lo cual parece una tarea difícil—pudiera constituir un paso de avance y crear condiciones en el país, en la nación, para más adelante conseguir la realización de aspiraciones más diversas y profundas.



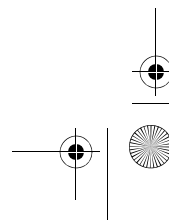
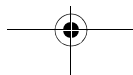
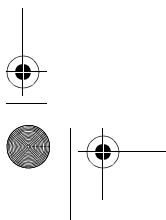
Preferiría una reforma más audaz. Por ejemplo: permitiría la existencia de varios partidos políticos, si bien les exigiera a todos una obediencia total a los fundamentos de un Estado diseñado por el pueblo y renovado sistemáticamente por el mismo. También promovería un empresariado privado más robusto y dedicado también al quehacer productivo, así como liberaría mucho más el mercado. No obstante, reitero, aunque pueda tener discrepancias con determinados aspectos de las propuestas oficiales hasta ahora hechas públicas de alguna manera y tenga otras aspiraciones aún no canalizadas, siento la responsabilidad de ayudar—aunque no acriticamente—al éxito de esas ambiciones del gobierno de mi país, pues ello redundaría en un ensanchamiento del bien común y de las posibilidades futuras.

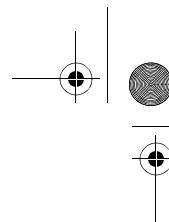
Necesidad de rearticular el consenso

Al respaldo que podamos darnos mutuamente a los criterios responsables y propuestas sensatas capaces de contribuir, al menos parcialmente, al bienestar general, le otorgo una gran importancia. Sólo apoyando lo positivo de los otros será posible que éstos nos apoyen también a nosotros. Únicamente desde una dinámica de esta naturaleza será posible acercarse a la confianza política requerida para que todas las opiniones puedan participar y seamos capaces de llegar a los consensos necesarios.

La existencia de varias Cubas en la comunidad nacional demanda la posibilidad de convivencia, incluso fraternal, de todos esos imaginarios. Por tanto, la estabilidad y el desarrollo del país pasan por la rearticulación del consenso entre los ciudadanos de una nación posiblemente hoy más plural que nunca. Para ello será necesario que todos pongamos el bien común por encima de prejuicios, pasiones e interpretaciones parciales y lo constituyamos en el referente que debe guiar el quehacer diverso de la sociedad.

Algunos sostienen el principio de que será difícil alcanzar la debida disposición al diálogo, a la comprensión, al respeto y al consenso, si antes no logramos ejercer los derechos que poseemos formalmente,



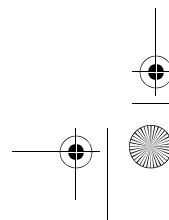
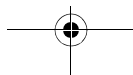
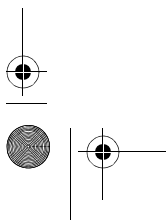


así como alcanzar una mejor formulación de algunos e incluso incluir otros que pueden faltar en nuestro universo de garantías para realizar el bien común. Afirman esto a partir del criterio de que todo el universo de derechos es constitutivo de la naturaleza humana y por tanto nadie tiene que concederlo.

Es cierto que los derechos son inalienables a cada individuo, pero resulta que por naturaleza también somos seres sociales y por ende estos derechos no consiguen realizarse si no se reconocen recíprocamente entre todos los miembros de la sociedad. De ahí que el equipo de la revista católica habanera Espacio Laical intenta hacer notar que es imprescindible comenzar por un camino de acercamiento, de encuentro y de confianza entre los que pensamos de manera diferente, pues sólo entonces seremos capaces de reconocernos mutuamente todos los derechos.

El Estado puede contribuir mucho a ello en la medida que se logre mover de una posición de parte a una de moderador y garante de toda la diversidad. Es importante ayudar al gobierno para que pueda colocar en este status a todas las instituciones del poder público. Igualmente se hace imprescindible apoyar todas las reformas positivas que procuren las actuales autoridades, aún antes de conseguirse el consenso nacional adecuado, pues vivimos un desafío crucial y muy grave: resulta que el tiempo que demanda la construcción de ese consenso es mucho mayor que el tiempo que reclama la solución de muchísimos de nuestros problemas sustanciales. Esto exige de mucha valentía y altura de espíritu en torno al gobierno del país; tanto por la audacia y seriedad que reclama de las autoridades como por la postura que exige a toda la ciudadanía, incluso a la porción que ha discrepado de las mismas.

Existen cubanos dispuestos a desplegar dicho propósito, ya sea en la oficialidad, en el emergente entramado de nuevas iniciativas sociales de la Isla y en grupos y personas de la diáspora, así como en numerosísimos cubanos que no procuran hacer público sus deseos. Es cierto que también contamos con otros, de una y otra parte, que hacen todo



lo posible para que el odio y el resentimiento impidan el diálogo y la concertación. Sin embargo, es posible asegurar que éstos no han construido ni podrán construir nada. Entonces será necesario buscar la comunión entre toda esa diversidad dispuesta al encuentro para hacer de la Isla la mejor casa de todos, donde incluso se beneficien esos retrógrados; pero no permitamos que sean ellos quienes prefiguren nuestro presente y nuestro futuro.

Facilitadores internos del proceso

El logro de la comunión entre toda esa diversidad dispuesta al encuentro demandará el despliegue de una labor facilitadora por parte de sectores llamados a garantizar que esto ocurra. Esta labor, según ha propuesto el equipo de la revista *Espacio Laical*, quizá deban imponérsela: los intelectuales que deben ayudar al pueblo en esa obligatoria responsabilidad de soñar un país mejor; las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias en tanto deben ser garantes del orden; el Estado en la medida que—como ya señalé—logre moverse desde una posición de parte hacia una de moderador y garante de toda la diversidad; así como la Iglesia Católica porque a ella le compete la misión de procurar el sentido de responsabilidad de cada persona y la concordia entre todos.

Algunos han cuestionado nuestra propuesta en relación con las Fuerzas Armadas, por la implicación que han tenido con el sistema imperante en la Isla. No obstante, le guste o no a éstos críticos, las Fuerzas Armadas tienen que jugar un papel significativo, como pudiera ocurrir en cualquier sociedad que se proponga el delicado desempeño de refundarse. Las fuerzas armadas, en cada país, aseguran la estabilidad de los cimientos del conjunto de las relaciones sociales, que suelen estar formulados en la constitución política de toda nación. Dicha responsabilidad, casi nunca implica acciones sistemáticas, concretas y directas; sino únicamente el conocimiento general de que el Ejército—con la fuerza de las armas—no se parcializa con ninguna persona o grupo, se dispone a reconocer todos los principios políticos

y sociales que por voluntad general se vayan asumiendo en la ley fundamental, y está dispuesto—en caso de que falle el resto de las instituciones dedicadas a preservar el orden—a garantizar la armonía necesaria para que no colapse la vida civil de la sociedad y se restablezcan cuanto antes las mencionadas entidades.

Es imposible desconocer este rol, que constituye un desafío para las Fuerzas Armadas cubanas. Resulta insostenible preferir que dicha institución no juegue, o no pueda jugar, ese papel. Ello debilitaría la armonía de cualquier proceso gradual y efectivo de ajuste nacional—que es, según parece, la metodología de cambios anhelada por la inmensa mayoría de la población residente en la Isla. Por otra parte, estoy convencido de que el Ejército puede llegar a asumir ese quehacer. El mismo constituye la institución más fuerte, cohesionada y profesional del actual sistema, no está directamente comprometida con vejaciones, es nacionalista y se siente—según tengo entendido—muy comprometida con el desarrollo armónico de la nación.

Algunos pocos también han cuestionado el quehacer facilitador de la intelectualidad cubana. En este caso, las consideraciones han llegado hasta la injusticia. Acusan a este gremio de instrumento que ha tergiversado su papel. Es innegable que nuestro sector intelectual posee límites y que puede haber cometido errores, pero no es posible desconocer el aporte que han hecho y hacen muchísimos de sus miembros, tanto a la cultura como al diálogo que hoy se realiza en la sociedad cubana. Es importante, además, destacar la cantidad creciente de jóvenes con un pensamiento profundo, articulado y muy comprometido con la vida nacional.

Es cierto que las estructuras que pretenden ordenar el quehacer de éstos—en especial el Ministerio de Cultura, la Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, la Unión de Juristas y la Asociación de Economistas, etcétera—, pueden llegar a limitar dicho desempeño, pero ellos y sus obras son mucho más que esas entidades. La gestión creativa y orientadora de este gremio trasciende estos marcos, y aún dentro de los mismos suelen hacer aportes muy valiosos, como muestran muchas de

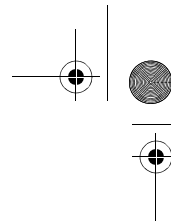
las recientes investigaciones históricas y sociales que se publican. Es verdad que esta labor no tiene la magnitud ni la publicidad requeridas, pero existe. Sólo se hace necesario trabajar para ampliarla y ponerla mucho más en contacto con el público.

La Iglesia Católica, facilitadora del encuentro nacional y del ajuste socio-político

Fundamentación

Por su parte, la Iglesia Católica, a la cual también reconocemos como facilitadora, ha de tener una manera muy particular de contribuir a la solución de todo el universo de desafíos nacionales. Su modo propio de hacerlo es trabajar para que los cubanos se traten como hermanos, eleven el sentido de responsabilidad y de fraternidad, procuren comprenderse y lleguen a consensos, y esto sólo se alcanza por medio de la promoción del encuentro y del diálogo entre todos, desde una metodología que el equipo de la revista *Espacio Laical* llama católica.

Dicha metodología se fundamenta en un diálogo que sea honesto, pero respetuoso, prudente y bondadoso, que cuando cuestione siempre lo haga de forma que el cuestionado pueda responder de manera positiva. Sólo así es posible tender puentes y no crear trincheras de combate. En tal sentido puede promover diálogos en torno a temas espirituales, morales, familiares, culturales, científicos, educacionales, jurídicos, económicos, y hasta de política—pero en este caso de una manera muy general, no particular, partidista. Y para hacerlo, la Iglesia Católica en Cuba cuenta con potencialidades que la avalan, mucho más que a cualquier otra institución de la sociedad civil. Por ejemplo: posee una presencia institucional de más de cinco siglos a todo lo largo y ancho de nuestra Isla; cierto peso en la configuración de la cultura cubana; determinada neutralidad que le impone la naturaleza de su misión; redes asociativas que abarcan todo el país; un discurso articulado sobre la persona humana, la nación y el cosmos; una libertad que jamás había disfrutado en toda su historia, porque no posee

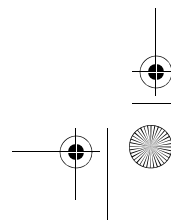
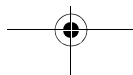
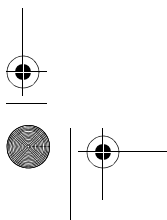


vínculos estructurales con ningún centro de poder, ya sea dentro o fuera de Cuba; un mensaje de amor inclusivo y una antropología que coloca al ser humano en el centro mismo del cosmos; así como un compromiso probado con los destinos de la nación.

Antecedentes

Todo este camino tuvo un momento importantísimo de cimentación en el Encuentro Nacional Eclesial Cubano (ENEC), celebrado en 1986, donde toda la Iglesia de la nación perfiló sus fundamentos y sintetizó su quehacer en nuestro contexto. El proceso que culminó en dicho evento tiene una enorme trascendencia y, por ende, durante muchísimo tiempo deberá ser bien estudiado por quienes se empeñen en conocer y/o asumir la fe católica en Cuba. De aquel momento trascendió una Iglesia muy, pero muy, evangélica y muy, pero muy, cubana; presente en Cuba, por Cuba y para Cuba; al servicio de todos, sin distinción. Ello determinó, en gran medida, que aumentara la relación de la Iglesia con la sociedad y su influjo en la misma. Considero tan importante el ENEC, que algunas veces me descubro sospechando que no es sólo un momento de síntesis de la historia vivida durante los años de la Revolución, sino de todos los siglos de su presencia en la Isla.

Esta realidad, como es de esperar, comenzó a modificar las relaciones de la Iglesia con la sociedad y el Estado, aunque durante mucho tiempo esto fuera casi imperceptible y por medio de un proceso difícil —pues no podía ser de otra manera. La Iglesia empezó a encarnarse cada vez más en la realidad social y cultural cubanas, con las implicaciones políticas que esto conlleva. Por esa razón, en algunos—o en muchos—momentos se generaron tensiones. Pero como siempre ocurre cuando las cosas son hechas desde un compromiso verdadero y noble, en medio de dichas crispaciones se iba tejiendo un entramado mutuo de reconocimiento, legitimación, comprensión y respeto. Es cierto que aún falta mucho por avanzar en este sentido, pero se ha llegado a un punto importante.



También podemos encontrar algunos actos significativos por parte del Estado encaminados a revertir la conflictividad de la relación Iglesia-Estado-Sociedad. Por ejemplo, en la publicación del libro *Fidel y la religión*, del año 1985; con el tratamiento que se dio a la cuestión religiosa en el IV congreso del PCC, en 1991; con la sustitución del Estado confesional ateo por uno laico, al ser modificada la Constitución de la República en 1992; así como con la respetuosa acogida de las autoridades al Santo Padre Juan Pablo II durante su visita a la Isla, en 1998.

Pueden continuar existiendo tensiones y puntos de vistas diversos, pero se ha ido consolidando un clima de confianza política, y esto es muy importante para poder marchar juntos en la solución de los múltiples problemas que aquejan a nuestra nación. En la concreción de este clima pudiera ayudar mucho la Iglesia a diferentes sectores de la nación cubana—por supuesto, si ellos estuvieran de acuerdo. Esto, en mi opinión, es un desafío mayor en el camino para sanear la relación entre actores nacionales con criterios diferentes.

Ejemplos de este desempeño

A continuación pongo algunos ejemplos de este quehacer, que busca el diálogo y el encuentro entre cubanos, en la Arquidiócesis de La Habana.

I. El Aula Fr. Bartolomé de las Casas, de los padres dominicos. Es una verdadera institución, con 16 años de servicio a Cuba y a la Iglesia, donde se han impartido más de 130 conferencias, de numerosos ponentes de gran calibre intelectual, cubanos y extranjeros, católicos, cristianos de otras confesiones, marxistas y profesores universitarios, entre otros, siempre con temas actuales y sugerentes, así como con la intención de suscitar el debate entre distintas visiones de una misma realidad. Posee una biblioteca ejemplarmente concebida, con un fondo de excepcional calidad y presta servicios a más de quince mil usuarios al año—en su mayoría estudiantes universitarios.

II. La revista *Espacio Laical*. Esta publicación tiene como perfil editorial la presentación de una visión católica de la realidad, así como la promoción de ese diálogo entre cubanos (honesto, pero respetuoso,

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prudente y bondadoso, que cuando cuestione siempre lo haga de forma que el cuestionado pueda responder de manera positiva); un diálogo entre cubanos residentes en la Isla o en el extranjero, con el propósito de contribuir a la edificación de la Casa Cuba—esa bella metáfora de monseñor Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, vicario en la Arquidiócesis de La Habana e importante intelectual.

Cuando la revista habla de la Casa Cuba evoca la posibilidad de abrir el país a toda la experiencia universal y procurar que esto tribute en beneficio de la nación cubana, así como promover toda la diversidad de la nación e intentar que exista una relación positiva y fraterna entre toda esa pluralidad.

III. Hablo de ciertos detalles de la revista *Espacio Laical* porque me resulta muy cercana, pues soy su editor, pero en La Habana existen otras que de alguna manera también se dedican a esta gestión. Tenemos las revistas *Palabra Nueva*, dedicada a los temas religiosos, sociales y culturales; *Bioética*, encargada de presentar análisis y diálogos sobre esta materia; *Vivarium*, una publicación literaria y de pensamiento; Amor y Vida, revista del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano; ECOS, dedicada a las cuestiones del ámbito audiovisual; y *Spes Habana*, una prometedora publicación de teología y filosofía, del Centro Félix Varela.

IV. La Escuela para educadores. Una iniciativa de la Comisión de Educación Católica, que ya cumplió su primera década de vida, dedicada a formar a los profesores y maestros tanto metodológicamente como en valores. Goza de un prestigio creciente, ganado sobre todo entre muchos participantes no católicos.

V. El Centro de Bioética Juan Pablo II. Institución reconocida como referente nacional en esa especialidad. Se dedica a enseñar bioética, a debatir en torno a esos temas, tutorea las tesis que sobre esta materia se presentan en los centros académicos del país e imparte una Maestría avalada internacionalmente.

VI. Signis-Cuba (Organización Católica para el Audiovisual). Tiene una profunda presencia en el ámbito audiovisual, dialogando—desde

una óptica cristiana—con todos los criterios que existen en el medio. Posee una amplia incidencia en los Festivales de Cine, Radio y TV que se realizan en el país.

VII. Equipo para promover el diálogo entre la Fe y la razón. Entidad de la Iglesia habanera que se relaciona con el mundo científico, para dialogar sobre cuestiones de las ciencias, así como para presentar la visión católica sobre esos temas. Se reúne sistemáticamente con grupos de científicos y ha realizado eventos importantes. Entre estos últimos se encuentran: el Simposio Internacional “Ciencia, Religión y Fe: ¿Un diálogo posible?”, en el año 2006, con sendas conferencias inaugurales del Canciller de la Pontificia Academia de Ciencias y del Presidente de la Academia de Ciencias de Cuba y con más de cien participantes de la Academia de Ciencias, las universidades y todas las diócesis; así como el Simposio Internacional “Creación y Evolución”, realizado en octubre de 2009.

Otras entidades de similar índole pueden consolidarse en el futuro inmediato, entre las cuales se proyectan: un Centro Cultural Católico, una Cátedra de Cultura Cubana, un espacio para el análisis de una adecuada antropología, así como el necesario diálogo del Derecho natural con la realidad jurídica del país.

Mediación actual

Estos antecedentes propiciaron que el presidente Raúl Castro acogiera la propuesta del cardenal Jaime Ortega, arzobispo de La Habana—quien siempre ha defendido con valentía y estoicismo el camino del diálogo—, de mediar en la búsqueda de una solución para ciertos problemas candentes en la vida nacional. De esta manera se llegó a un acuerdo para reducir la hostilidad en relación con las Damas de Blanco y liberar a los presos por motivos políticos. En tal sentido, el Cardenal también ha gestionado una normalidad—que aún está por alcanzarse de manera suficiente—en las relaciones entre Cuba y otros países importantes, como son: Estados Unidos y las naciones miembros de la Unión Europea.

Esta mediación de la Iglesia ha constituido un acto evangélico—muy pastoral—que busca, en la medida de lo posible, atenuar el sufrimiento de un grupo de cubanos que se encontraban en prisión, y de sus familiares. No intenta legitimar ni al Gobierno ni a la oposición. Es un desempeño que pretende aumentar la armonía, por medio del cual se benefician muchos: los afectados que ya mencioné, el Estado que muestra la fortaleza de solucionar los conflictos con la altura humana necesaria y hasta la Iglesia por demostrar su capacidad como facilitadora de paz.

Ha sido un hecho muy importante que expone una realidad novedosa, donde las autoridades cubanas aceptan la metodología del diálogo y de la comprensión e incluyen a otros actores nacionales en la búsqueda de soluciones a problemas del país. Esto puede ser un signo altamente positivo y alentador. No obstante, existe determinado cuestionamiento a este proceso por parte de ciertos sectores.

Algunos cuestionan la salida del país de quienes están siendo liberados y alegan que, dada esta realidad, podría ser un proceso de deportación. Es verdad que el traslado hacia el exterior puede ser beneficioso para el Gobierno, porque aleja de su entrono a activos opositores, pero también puede ser ventajoso para quienes están muy dañados por largos años de encierro y, como algo excepcional, conservarán sus propiedades en Cuba. Pero además, es necesario tener en cuenta la libertad personal de quienes, sin coacción—y eso lo puede garantizar la Iglesia—, han decidido aceptar la salida hacia el extranjero y que además esta posibilidad surgió como una propuesta de los familiares de los mismos presos.

Ciertos opositores también se quejan de que la Iglesia no haya incluido en su agenda una conciliación con el Gobierno cubano de los intereses de la disidencia pacífica y de sus compatriotas del exilio, como la única solución para resolver los asuntos nacionales. Esa fórmula política de arreglo entre estas únicas partes es una simplificación de la solución a los problemas que demanda la realidad cubana. Nuestra sociedad es mucho más rica en matices, actores sociales y propues-

tas. Pero además, para que cobre vida un proceso de "conciliación" entre cubanos se hace imprescindible que los actores políticos implicados se impongan el diálogo y renuncien a pretender aniquilar al otro. Y, desgraciadamente, estas no son las posturas que prevalecen en el sector de la oposición que hace tal reclamo a la Iglesia.

Asimismo se han empeñado en inclinar el triunfo de estas liberaciones a favor de la metodología política de la presión y aclarar que no es producto de una posible dinámica de apertura y comprensión. En mi opinión, este gesto del Gobierno cubano es el resultado de un proceso complejo que desde hace tiempo se viene gestado, gracias a varios actores que decidieron conducirse con limpieza. Por supuesto que, teniendo en cuenta la complejidad del proceso, no descarto alguna influencia por parte de quienes presionan, pero estoy seguro que sin la incorporación de cierta apertura y comprensión no hubiera sido posible encaminarse hacia una solución del problema. La presión ha estado presente por más de 50 años, sin lograr cambiar nada.

Sin embargo, ahora se ha incorporado un nuevo elemento al desempeño político de la nación: la altura de espíritu. Este se ha venido encarnando poco a poco en muchos cubanos que de alguna manera influyen en la creación de la opinión y de la voluntad social, en ciertos actores del Estado, en algún que otro opositor, y en la Iglesia Católica, por sólo citar a sujetos nacionales. Es de suponer entonces que este elemento nuevo, o sea, la altura de espíritu, puede ser lo que realmente modifique el panorama nacional y abra las puertas a una verdadera transformación.

No falta quienes sostengan la posibilidad de prescindir de una conducta fundamentada en la altura de espíritu que conduzca hacia un diálogo entre todos, porque para ellos lo lícito sería derrocar al Gobierno. Si por lícito entendemos lo que sostienen las mejores filosofías jurídica y política, o sea, que lícito es aquello consensuado y/o aceptado por la comunidad, entonces tal tesis no podría disfrutar de dicho calificativo. La Revolución continua gozando de cuotas de legitimidad y por ende del respaldo de sectores sociales, aunque en muchos casos

ellos mismos la critiquen. El pueblo real, ese que trabaja y sufre, al cual debemos tener en cuenta a toda costa porque constituye la verdadera Cuba, prefiere cambios, mejoras, pero sin que hayan nuevos derrotados. En tal sentido, para ser consecuentes con el bien del país, hemos de despojarnos de nuestras percepciones y prejuicios particulares, y valorar al máximo los verdaderos anhelos de aquellos a los cuales decimos estar dispuestos a servir.

Compromisos futuros

Muchos se preguntan acerca de cómo podría la Iglesia continuar este desempeño que procura el bienestar y la comunión nacional. La revista Espacio Laical convocó a un pequeño grupo de estudiosos del tema y a continuación ofrezco una síntesis de sus valoraciones acerca de este reto.

Los convocados consideran, entre otras propuestas, que la Iglesia debe ofrecer a la nación una espiritualidad profunda y una antropología siempre nueva; enseñar su doctrina social; promover una reflexión nacional sobre cuáles obligaciones morales tenemos los cubanos de hoy hacia aquellos a los cuales legaremos el país; anunciar estructuras de solidaridad; continuar contribuyendo a la unidad nacional; crear un clima nacional de entendimiento y de aceptación del "otro", que busque revertir la lógica del aniquilamiento del adversario; cooperar en la solución de conflictos y en la construcción conjunta de espacios compartidos; legitimar discursos y políticas acerca de los derechos de la persona humana; establecer programas de ayuda a la familia cubana; atender las necesidades de los grupos más vulnerables de la población; así como facilitar las relaciones internacionales del país. En resumen, proponen la promoción de una espiritualidad, una ética y una práctica de la comunión que se fundamente en una adecuada antropología.

Apoyo internacional

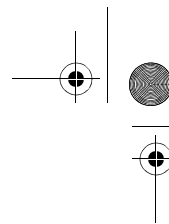
La posición de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba acerca de las relaciones internacionales del país se sustenta en aquel llamado del papa Juan

Pablo II en su visita a la Isla en 1998: “Que Cuba se abra con todas sus magníficas posibilidades al mundo y que el mundo se abra a Cuba”. La gestión del episcopado cubano, en este ámbito, se ha empeñado en hacer esto realidad.

El equipo de la revista *Espacio Laical*, al servicio de la gestión de nuestros obispos, ha enfatizado en la necesidad de conseguir la mayor normalidad posible en las relaciones de Cuba con el resto del mundo, pero de manera muy especial con Estados Unidos, con quien mantiene una lamentable tensión. Hemos declarado que una relación internacional estable siempre aportará grandemente al desarrollo de una vida normal dentro de la Isla. Mientras más armónicas sean las relaciones internacionales, más normal será la vida de cada ciudadano cubano. Mientras mayor sea la estabilidad en las relaciones con el mundo, más capacidad tendrá nuestra ciudadanía para proyectar y conseguir una sociedad mejor.

Con respecto a lo anterior ha crecido el consenso, tanto en Cuba como en los estados federales norteamericanos y en el resto del mundo. Y para lograr esa normalidad no existe un contexto totalmente negativo. El actual gobierno de la Isla, encabezado por el general Raúl Castro, está abierto al entendimiento con su vecino del norte; el presidente Barack Obama posee el suficiente pragmatismo y la necesaria lucidez para intentar deshacerse de una herencia de la Guerra Fría, con la cual no tiene identidad alguna; y el resto de los actores internacionales más importantes están decididos a contribuir a que dicho ajuste se efectúe de manera exitosa.

Sin embargo, existen aspectos decisivos acerca del cual no hay aún el debido consenso. Por una parte, algunos desean que el arreglo por parte de Estados Unidos sea un hecho rápido y definitivo, sin comprender que sólo será el resultado de un proceso de acercamiento, diálogo y consenso. Por otra parte, muchos anhelan que dicho proceso esté mediado por una negociación acerca del orden interno del Estado y de la sociedad en Cuba.

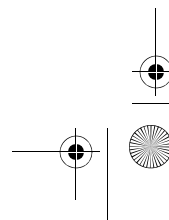
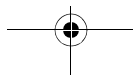
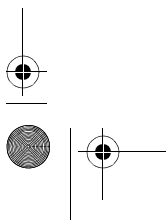


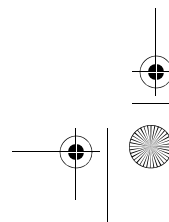
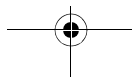
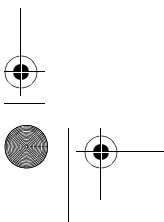
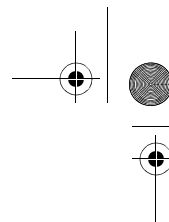
Al respecto, es posible admitir que Estados Unidos puede mostrar simpatía para con el deseo de cambios en la sociedad cubana, lo cual nadie puede negar que son necesarios y urgentes. No obstante, no debe hacer de esos cambios una condición para normalizar las relaciones entre los dos países. Únicamente serán lícitas, por ambas partes, las condiciones que se encaminen a promover una relación fructífera desde el respeto a la soberanía de las dos naciones. Y esto último invalida cualquier empeño de negociación acerca del orden interno del Estado y de la sociedad en Cuba, como requisito para el restablecimiento de relaciones.

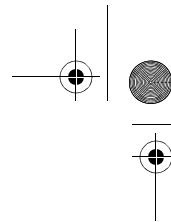
El cambio interno dentro de la Isla debe ser considerado como un asunto que compete exclusivamente a los cubanos. A cada país le corresponde hacer normal sus relaciones con Cuba y a cada cubano le incumbe hacer normal las relaciones internas. Mientras más normal sean las relaciones con el mundo, en especial con Estados Unidos, más capacidad tendrá el cubano de mejorar la vida interna del país, pero esto último ha de ser una responsabilidad únicamente nuestra. Sólo así se lograría una óptima relación entre la Isla y sus hermanos del mundo, y el cambio en Cuba sería auténtico, soberano. Sólo así podrían Estados Unidos, y el mundo, contribuir lícitamente a que nuestro país labre un futuro de prosperidad y equilibrio.

Final

La nación cubana vive un momento difícil de su historia. Sólo el encuentro, el diálogo y la comprensión podrían colocar a los cubanos en el sendero del equilibrio y de la prosperidad. Pido a todos que mediten y encuentren la mejor manera de ayudarnos en este empeño.







11 Presente y futuro del pensamiento cubano

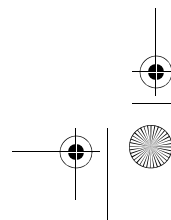
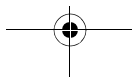
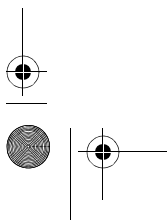
Primera parte: Transparencia y sociedad civil en Cuba

Alexis Jardines¹

En el Editorial del último número de la revista *Espacio Laical* puede leerse: «Se están vaciando las cárceles de presos por motivos políticos. El Estado procura lograr con la Iglesia una relación cada vez más normal y beneficiosa para el bien de la nación. Se implementa una novedosa reforma económica. Y todo esto con el propósito expreso de comenzar a *desestatizar* la sociedad cubana».² La desestatización de la sociedad cubana, nótese, es una decisión de la alta dirección del propio Estado y Gobierno, de la cual saldría esta, con toda seguridad, más fortalecida. Y es que en lugar de pensarse los cambios en términos de fortalecimiento de la esfera no estatal (sociedad civil, espacio público, etc.), lo que se busca es aliviarle una carga inútil al Estado, liberarlo de cierto lastre que lo debilita. Si la experiencia marxista muestra que el socialismo de Estado es algo negativo, la experiencia liberal revela, por su parte, que el fortalecimiento de la sociedad civil es la única garantía

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2. «El desafío de acompañar los cambios», en: *Espacio Laical*, nº 4, 2010, p. 5.



contra la amenaza de estatización de la sociedad. Si bien Mussolini gobernaba a través del Estado, Hitler lo hacía mediante el Partido. Stalin, por su parte, sometió tanto al Estado como al Partido. Este último parece ser nuestro caso, de modo que, en condiciones de totalitarismo, desestatizar no significa gran cosa. Lo que le confiere a un Estado el carácter totalitario es, en mi opinión, la omnipresencia del líder.

Pero, *Espacio Laical* no solo constata los cambios que se vienen realizando en Cuba bajo la presidencia de Raúl Castro, sino que nos dice cuál es la vía expedita para su implementación:

La mejor manera de ayudar a que los cambios sean posibles ha de ser por medio de una actitud positiva encaminada a presentar propuestas capaces de crear confianza política, así como a ensanchar y profundizar los proyectos oficiales: para lo cual será necesario desechar esa actitud habitual en muchos que se fundamenta en la mera crítica estéril.³

Estas palabras, no por optimistas son menos autoritarias. La esterilidad—y, más aun, la necesidad—de determinada crítica solo puede derivarse del debate libre y plural mismo entre posturas diferentes. Esto es algo que no debe regularse de un plumazo por decisión o decreto, pero tampoco por llamados a la conciencia de la gente.

La libertad de expresión y, con ella, la libertad de crítica es consustancial a la democracia de orientación liberal. Parece más sensato preocuparse primero porque estas libertades sean respetadas y sólo después por el modo de ejercerlas. Condicionar la crítica es una de las tantas formas de practicar la censura. Ya es suficiente con que—en ese mismo socialismo en proceso de supuesta actualización—existan comités censores en las editoriales del MINCULT⁴ o se vigile continuamente por la policía informática el uso de la Internet. También se habla de una cultura del debate en Cuba, pero, en rigor, el debate se restringe a lo relacionado con la tendencia futura del socialismo

3. Idem.

4. Aunque el Ministro de Cultura lo ha negado públicamente en más de una ocasión, es un hecho que en la Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, por ejemplo, uno de estos equipos, encabezados por la estalinista Isabel Monal, decide qué se publica y qué no se publica en materia de ciencias sociales y humanísticas, dominio que, en honor a la verdad, excede ampliamente sus posibilidades teóricas.

cubano, no hay otro tema que alcance una dimensión “pública”. Sin embargo, es preciso aclarar que no se trata en propiedad de una confrontación de ideas o posiciones, sino de reflexiones catárticas y diálogos sosos entre gente que comparte la misma postura ideológica, los mismos principios, el mismo partido político, las mismas aspiraciones. Tampoco se puede estar seguro de su carácter público si se tiene en cuenta que se concentra en el restringido espacio que ofrece la sola revista *Temas*, la cual, dicho sea de paso, no publica todo lo que allí se expresa. Una excepción pudiera ser la revista *Espacio Laical*, pero es notable el compromiso con la política oficial en su último número y el llamado, como ya mostré, a contener la crítica.

La situación cubana actual recuerda a aquella segunda mitad de los 80, en la Unión Soviética, cuando un singular proceso denominado *Perestroika* fracasó en el intento de renovar el socialismo. En 1989, justo 100 años después de la Revolución Francesa, se derrumbó—como es de todos conocido—el sistema socialista de la Europa del Este. Aquella reestructuración o reconstrucción del socialismo traía aparejada la *glasnost*, término de difícil traducción que alude a apertura, a carácter público y que se llevó al castellano como «transparencia informativa». Sin embargo, la *glasnost* no se reduce al tema de la información, sino que alude más bien a una salida, a una apertura de la esfera pública. «*Glasnost*» significa, de un solo golpe, libertad de expresión y espacio público, es decir, libertad de expresión pública.

En Cuba se esperan nuevos “debates” masivos—lógicamente, orientados desde arriba—no ya sobre economía, sino sobre política. Con seguridad serán mucho más complejos, porque la falta de libertad nos daña más que la carencia de alimentos. Hasta hoy el proyecto de actualización del socialismo, como se le ha llamado a esa suerte de *perestroika* tropical, solo ha presentado el tema. En el año 2007, el presidente Raúl Castro abrió el juego: «Todos serán escuchados con atención, coincidan o no con la opinión de la mayoría... No aspiramos a la unanimidad, que suele resultar ficticia, en este (anteproyecto de Ley sobre Seguridad Social—A.J.) o en cualquier otro tema».⁵ Al cabo de medio año volvió sobre el asunto en la Asamblea Nacional del

Poder Popular: «No vamos a dejar de escuchar la opinión honesta de cada cual, que tan útil y necesaria resulta, por la algarabía que se arma, a veces bastante ridícula, cada vez que un ciudadano de nuestro país dice algo a lo que esos mismos promotores del espectáculo no harían el menor caso, si lo escucharan en otro lugar del planeta».⁶ A los dirigentes—no a los altos dirigentes, obviamente—el presidente les orientó estimular al máximo la libre expresión de sus subordinados: «...quien ocupa un cargo de dirección debe saber escuchar y crear el ambiente propicio para que los demás se expresen con absoluta libertad».⁷ También el General de Ejército incitó a pensar no solo a los diputados, sino a todo el país sobre nuevas fórmulas capaces de sacar adelante a la Revolución y al socialismo.⁸ Dos meses después, ante la misma Asamblea, fue más preciso y categórico: «No hay por qué temer a las discrepancias en una sociedad como la nuestra... Del intercambio profundo de opiniones divergentes salen las mejores soluciones, si es encauzado por propósitos sanos y el criterio se ejerce con responsabilidad».⁹ Ya en esta intervención, como en la anteriormente citada, el presidente le pone condiciones al debate y, en consecuencia, a la propia libertad de expresión al introducir la coletilla: «...si es encauzado por propósitos sanos y el criterio se ejerce con responsabilidad». En cualquier caso, lo más importante es que hasta ahora no se han establecido y/o permitido espacios libres para ejercer la crítica y el debate espontáneos. En el único caso, por ejemplo, de los anteriormente señalados—en que el presidente incita al debate público abierto—pone también las condiciones, pues las nuevas fórmulas sobre las cuales se debe reflexionar tienen el propósito exclusivo de «sacar adelante la revolución y el socialismo». ¿Cuáles son las razones que explican la ausencia en Cuba de mecanismos, medios, espacios para la

5. Raúl Castro Ruz: «Trabajar con sentido crítico, creador, sin anquilosamientos ni esquematismos», Discurso en el Acto Central por el 54 Aniversario del asalto al Cuartel Moncada, Camagüey, 26 de julio de 2007, en: *Granma*, 27 de Julio de 2007.

6. Raúl Castro Ruz: «Y a trabajar duro», Intervención ante la Asamblea Nacional del Poder popular el 28 de diciembre de 2007, en: *Granma*, 29 de diciembre de 2007.

7. Idem.

8. Idem.

9. Raúl Castro: «Discurso en la sesión constitutiva de la VII Legislatura de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular», la Habana, 24 de Febrero de 2008.

opinión pública no condicionada ni dirigida? ¿Por qué un derecho inalienable del individuo tiene que esperar un decreto presidencial para ser ejercido? Si hurgamos en la historia revolucionaria nos remontaremos al año 1961 y, concretamente, a aquellas reuniones del entonces presidente Osvaldo Dorticós y del entonces Primer Ministro Fidel Castro con los intelectuales cubanos, en el teatro de la Biblioteca Nacional. Vale la pena detenerse a examinar el discurso de clausura, pronunciado por el Comandante en Jefe, porque considero que encierra el criterio general de legitimación doctrinal y la patente de corso sin la cual la vida en Cuba es, simplemente, un calvario. *Palabras a los intelectuales* (1961) promovió la categoría de *revolucionario* por encima de cualquier cualidad y valor humanos, y la Revolución la concibió como la más grandiosa obra y la más alta forma de expresión posible. Luego, reconoció al propio Fidel Castro como su artífice. Ese fue el propósito expreso de aquél discurso y hay que decir que ante la “monumentalidad” de semejante empresa los intelectuales se derrumbaron. Jamás se han vuelto a erguir: al cabo de 50 años se encuentran exactamente frente al mismo problema en que se centraron aquellas históricas reuniones—a saber, la forma que el socialismo tomaría en Cuba¹⁰—y tan doblegados como antes.¹¹

En manos de Raúl Castro está hoy esa segunda revolución que han bautizado como «actualización de nuestro modelo socialista». Para que pueda haber algún progreso en este sentido dicho modelo tendría que ser inclusivo y garante de la libertad de expresión, pues la esencia del llamado «socialismo cubano» descansa toda en la legitimación jurídica e institucional de la fórmula—cuyo origen totalitario más adelante mostraré—: «Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada». A continuación, algunos comentarios críticos sobre *Palabras a los intelectuales* (1961) y su inquietante nódulo totalitario y exclusionista.

10. Otros tópicos abordados en la Biblioteca Nacional son también recurrentes en todas y cada una de las asambleas de los intelectuales revolucionarios.

11. Exceptúo aquí a las generaciones que surgieron a partir de 80.

Los motivos que llevaron a que se celebraran aquellas reuniones en la Biblioteca Nacional fueron: el enfrentamiento ideológico entre dos instituciones creadas por la Revolución (el ICAIC y el semanario *Lunes de Revolución*) y la filtración de cierta información clasificada, relacionada con un Congreso que se preparaba y que pretendía establecer una cultura dirigida. En particular esta segunda situación irritó al Primer Ministro que, obviamente, planeaba tomar por sorpresa a los intelectuales. Las reuniones, signadas por aquél acontecimiento reciente del mes de abril, cuando se declaró el carácter socialista de la Revolución cubana, fueron derivando hacia el tema de la naturaleza del socialismo. Las alternativas eran: socialismo nacionalista o socialismo soviético. Fidel priorizó la Revolución, a la que consideraba capaz de asimilar ambas tendencias. En consecuencia, del teatro de la Biblioteca Nacional también salió el mandamiento que regiría en lo adelante—entre otras—la política cultural: «Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada».

Transcurrido medio siglo, una política cultural exclusionista—como cabía esperar del precepto anterior—y varias generaciones de intelectuales comprometidos se encuentran, como ya expresé, varados en el mismo punto: especulando *dentro* de la Revolución y conminados por el propio presidente Raúl Castro, a “debatir” sobre la forma y el rumbo que tomará el socialismo en Cuba. *Palabras a los intelectuales* pesa sobre nuestras cabezas como una maldición.¹²

Tanto *Palabras a los intelectuales* (1961) como la Declaración del Secretariado de la UNEAC (2007) a propósito de la protesta electrónica de los intelectuales (llamada «polémica electrónica» para disimular la irritación del sector intelectual, o «guerrita de los e-mails» cuando la intención es descalificar) son intrínseca y esencialmente exclusionistas. El pensamiento oficial, contra toda evidencia, ha tratado de sem-

12. Entre los intelectuales cubanos (generaciones de los 60 y de los 70) el tiempo parece haberse detenido. Así lo ve el escritor—expulsado de la UNEAC—Antonio José Ponte: «Habiendo asistido a algunas reuniones semejantes, las intervenciones de esta tarde de 1961 me hacen creer en la detención del tiempo. Porque lo que vi discutir (y discutí yo mismo) en aquellas asambleas, son los mismos asuntos de 40 años atrás». (Véase, «Una reunión de miedo. Biblioteca Nacional, La Habana, junio de 1961», en: *Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana*, n.º 43, 2007/2007, p. 190).

brar la idea del carácter inclusivo de *Palabras a los intelectuales*¹³, pero, como apuntó en aquella protesta electrónica un miembro de UNEAC de la provincia de Ciego de Ávila, refiriéndose a la Declaración del Secretariado: «Eso del debate “entre revolucionarios” y que la política cultural “ha garantizado y garantiza nuestra unidad” tiene un color gris. ¿Qué hemos avanzado? ¿Quién ha dicho que el debate tiene que ser entre revolucionarios? Los que no lo son, y que necesariamente no tienen que ser “contrarrevolucionarios encarcelables” ¿están excluidos? ¿Qué documento legal autoriza esa discriminación “ideológica”, esa privación de un derecho ciudadano de polemizar sobre lo que ocurre en su país?»¹⁴

La médula del socialismo cubano que hoy se pretende *actualizar* (palabra bastante vaga, pues no queda claro el carácter de los tiempos que corren y qué constituiría la referencia de tal actualización) es bien simple: descansa toda en el célebre mandamiento de *Palabras...* jurídica e institucionalmente legitimado. El artículo 52 de la Constitución de 1976, que es el 53 de la Constitución de 1992, dice:

«Se reconoce a los ciudadanos libertad de palabra y prensa conforme a los fines de la sociedad socialista. Las condiciones materiales para su ejercicio están dadas por el hecho de que la prensa, la radio, la televisión, el cine y otros medios de difusión masiva son de propiedad estatal o social y no pueden ser objeto, en ningún caso, de propiedad privada, lo que asegura su uso al servicio exclusivo del pueblo trabajador y del interés de la sociedad».

Es decir, que la libertad de expresión es solo para—y—entre los revolucionarios. El inciso «Ch» de la Constitución de 1992 revela que todo el artículo 53 es un reciclaje del mandamiento contenido en aquel discurso del Primer Ministro, en 1961: «es libre la creación artística

13. Véase, a modo de ejemplos, Annerys Ivette Leyva García y Abel Somohano Fernández, «Los intelectuales y la esfera pública en Cuba: el debate sobre políticas culturales», en: *Temas*, nº 56, octubre-diciembre, 2008. Véase también la intervención de Abel Prieto en el debate de la revista *Temas* «El socialismo hoy: cultura y política», en: *Ultimo Jueves. Los debates de Temas*, vol. 2, Instituto Cubano de Investigación Cultural Juan Marinello-Revista *Temas*, La Habana, 2008, p. 324.

14. En Cuba no se ha publicado esta protesta electrónica, pero se ha recogido en discos compactos que circularon en el propio año 2007 de un modo semi clandestino.

siempre que su contenido no sea contrario a la Revolución». La libertad de expresión podría ser perfectamente el alma de cualquier Constitución democrática, en cambio, en la nuestra el juego está cerrado de antemano al permitirse dicha libertad solo entre revolucionarios. Cultura dirigida y libertad restringida, ese fue el legado de la ciudad letrada en cubana a los intelectuales que debutaron en los 80. No veo, francamente, de qué tengan que enorgullecerse todos aquellos que participaron, en 1961, de esa suerte de crimen de lesa cultura. Tal vez una comparación con la Cuba de finales de la década del 30, que se venía abriendo democráticamente y fertilizando el suelo para la Constitución del 40, sea la mejor manera de poner de manifiesto la radical amputación que sufrió la libertad de expresión en manos de la Revolución:

En esa apertura democrática se tocan los puntos más álgidos de las aspiraciones políticas. Pueden regresar todos los exiliados políticos, se aprueba la constitución de cuanto partido y asociación política se quiera crear, se legalizan los partidos políticos, se aprueba la ley docente para la Universidad de La Habana, que era tan importante porque contenía la autonomía universitaria. Todas esas medidas de apertura, de legalidad, se dan a finales de 1937. En la práctica, comienza el proceso de legalización del partido comunista.¹⁵

La pregunta que cabe—de origen sartreano—es esta: ¿puede un revolucionario expresarse libremente? Y la respuesta no se hace esperar: no sin dejar de serlo. Un planteo semejante explicaría en parte las periódicas purgas, así como el meollo de aquellas reuniones de 1961 en la Biblioteca Nacional. Sin embargo, ello solo es un corolario del siguiente axioma: sea cual fuere el tipo o la forma novedosa con que se pretenda revestir, el socialismo—por definición—es refractario a la libertad, la cual, o es completa o no es. Pero de aquí se sigue también que el llamado «socialismo libertario» es una *contradictio in adjecto*. La propiedad, le gusta decir al Premio Nobel de Literatura (2010) Mario Vargas Llosa, o es individual o no es ninguna. Parece pertinente

15. «Una mirada desde la historia». Entrevista a la profesora Berta Álvarez por Roberto Veiga, en: *Espacio Laical*, n.º 4, 2010, p.100.

parafrasearlo en este punto: la libertad, o es individual o no es ninguna.

Del discurso en sí del entonces Primer Ministro del Gobierno Revolucionario hay que decir que se trata de un material didáctico, con razonamientos pueriles que siguen una elemental lógica silogística de tipo aristotélico. Asombra constatar cómo semejante trivialidad desarmó y derrumbó a buena parte del auditorio. La intención del texto salta a la vista: someter a los no conversos sobre la base de un juego de sustitución y desplazamiento de sentidos. *Palabras a los intelectuales* fue un humillante ejercicio de lobotomía practicado *in situ*. Si se aceptan los supuestos establecidos por el Primer Ministro—a saber: la Revolución es más importante que la creación, que la cultura toda y constituye en sí misma la obra de arte total (para usar un concepto del crítico de arte Boris Groys)—entonces no hay nada que discutir, solo cabe, como artista e intelectual, bajar la cabeza. Es obvio que tal circunstancia sitúa al propio Primer Ministro en condiciones muy ventajosas, pues él mismo sería—en tanto figura central de la Revolución—el auténtico artista y el verdadero intelectual, el artífice par excellence: «Si los hombres se juzgan por sus obras tal vez nosotros tendríamos derecho a considerarnos con el mérito de la obra que la Revolución en sí misma significa». Con esta jugada, pues, ganó la partida, «porque lo primero es eso: lo primero es la Revolución misma y después, entonces, preocuparnos por las demás cuestiones». En esta escala de prioridades, obviamente, Fidel Castro es el *Number One Assoluto*.

Desde esta distancia preocuparse por la libertad de expresión podría resultar ridículo, cuando no, sumamente egoísta y hasta peligroso. Los intelectuales y la cultura toda sufrieron un despojo traumático al verse convertidos en—y valorados sin más como—soldados de la Revolución. A partir de aquí el punto de comparación entre los intelectuales o, al menos, el punto decisivo de cualquier comparación, sería la lealtad y los servicios prestados a la Revolución y al líder, que se fue identificando con ella¹⁶. Casi 50 años más tarde Jorge (Papito) Cerguera, en una de esas apariciones televisivas que desataron la protesta electrónica, repetiría paso a paso el razonamiento de Fidel

«si vamos a hablar de cultura estoy por encima de Silvio¹⁷ (uno más entre mil muchachos buenos—aclara), porque participé del hecho cultural más importante del siglo XX».

De lo que se trata entonces es de ser revolucionario y es esta condición la que definirá a cada cubano y la que servirá para uniformar la vida y el pensamiento de la gente (intelectuales, por sobre todo, incluidos). Se oye decir entre las generaciones anteriores a la de los 80—repetiendo el pensamiento del Comandante—que ser revolucionario es más que una condición; es una profesión e, incluso, un modo de vida. En efecto, el adjetivo «revolucionario» se sustantivó—en la intervención del Primer Ministro—de tal modo, que una simple cualidad resultó aislada del todo y cobró vida propia. Sobre esta figura del revolucionario girará en sentido general el discurso, que se torna a ratos amenazante: «quien se considere más artista que revolucionario no puede pensar exactamente igual que nosotros». Y esto es solo una premisa que se va sentando hasta llegar a la demoledora conclusión, pero antes va a ser preciso distinguir cierto orden jerárquico—entre los propios intelectuales—que apunte a un *telos* dador de sentido. Fidel los divide en honestos, deshonestos y revolucionarios. La lógica silogística es la siguiente: ser honesto no significa todavía ser revolucionario. Los «no-revolucionarios» son los que se adaptan a la realidad; los revolucionarios son los que transforman la realidad. Ahora bien, los «norevolucionarios» pueden llegar, según establece el Primer Ministro, a ser honestos. Y son, precisamente, estos últimos los que constituyen la porción del pastel que se disputa, pues de lo que se ha tratado todo el tiempo es de hacer ver la necesidad de una conversión

16. El primer paso notorio en esta dirección lo da el Primer Ministro en su discurso al identificar la minoría revolucionaria con el pueblo todo, sobre la invención de que aquella es la vanguardia de este: «Es posible que los hombres y las mujeres que tengan una actitud realmente revolucionaria ante la realidad, no constituyan el sector mayoritario de la población: los revolucionarios son la vanguardia del pueblo.» Y unos renglones más abajo: «por cuanto la Revolución comprende los intereses del pueblo [...] la Revolución significa los intereses de la nación entera». El otro paso puede incluso adivinarse: identificar la Revolución con la Patria: «¡Patria o Muerte!, es decir, la Revolución o la muerte». De todo ello se sigue, en estricto acuerdo con una lógica pre estoica, que Pueblo, Patria y Revolución es lo mismo, lo que garantiza, *de jure*, un lugar sempiterno al cabecilla de la Revolución triunfante.

17. Se refiere al conocido cantautor (trovador) Silvio Rodríguez.

ideológica. Llegamos así al punto crucial, por cuanto los intelectuales honestos «no-revolucionarios»—según reconoce Fidel en su discurso—constituyen un problema para la Revolución del mismo modo que la Revolución constituye un problema para ellos, debido al tema de la libertad de expresión. A continuación, la estocada mortal: la Revolución proporciona libertad de expresión a los «no-revolucionarios» que, para ejercerla, tienen que situarse dentro de ella. Es una situación bastante contradictoria como la propia conclusión del silogismo: «Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada». En lo adelante, el derecho de los intelectuales a la libertad de expresión y al disenso (problema medular en aquellas reuniones) será sustituido, en el discurso del Comandante, por el derecho de la Revolución a existir. Y esto, a título de derecho supremo y absoluto. Es decir, el tema de la libertad de expresión quedará sepultado por el principio sagrado, impuesto no solo a los intelectuales, sino—desde aquella tribuna—a todos y cada uno de los ciudadanos de la nación.

Creo que esto es bien claro ¿Cuáles son los derechos de los escritores y de los artistas revolucionarios o no revolucionarios?—Pregunta el Primer Ministro con tono de maestro de escuela y él mismo se responde—Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, ningún derecho¹⁸. Y esto no sería ninguna ley de excepción para los artistas y para los escritores. Este es un principio general para todos los ciudadanos.

Así, pues, arriesgo la hipótesis que la Cuba revolucionaria (en el orden político, económico, histórico, cultural, deportivo, educacional y, particularmente, ideológico) se puede y se deben entender a partir de *Palabras a los intelectuales*. Entender el carácter del proceso revolucionario cubano es entender, básicamente, que el pensamiento de Fidel Castro gira estacionaria y obsesivamente en torno a ese precepto, cuyo origen se remonta a la Italia fascista. La Declaración del Secretariado de la UNEAC—transcurrido medio siglo de aquél fundacional discurso—no expresa una política cultural acorde con los tiempos que

18. Compárese esta enrevesada posición con el martiano «con todos y para el bien de todos», tan transparentemente inclusivo.

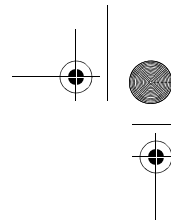
corren en la arena nacional e internacional, tampoco los intereses de los intelectuales (de dentro y de fuera de la Isla), sino que se limita a ratificar el sagrado mandamiento como si la vida intelectual se hubiera detenido en 1961: «Quedarán definitivamente frustrados, una vez más, aquellos que pretenden ver en el debate entre revolucionarios posiciones ambiguas, fisuras u oportunidades para su agenda anexionista» Y, como colofón: «No nos dividirán ni las torpezas ni los que quieren aprovecharse de ellas para dañar a la Revolución. La política cultural martiana, antidogmática, creadora y participativa¹⁹, de Fidel y Raúl, fundada con *Palabras a los intelectuales*, es irreversible». Es una tremenda paradoja (¿lo es, realmente?) que «el precepto que presidió y rige hasta hoy la política cultural revolucionaria» (E. Colina) no sea, en sí mismo, cultural.

Comprender dicha paradoja es hurgar en las raíces del marxismo nacionalista revolucionario. La proposición «dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada», al contraponer forzosamente el «dentro» al «contra»—y no al «fuera», como sería lícito y lógico—convierte, automáticamente, a todo no-revolucionario en contrarrevolucionario. Simplemente, se atrofia aquí el sentido común, pues, quien está fuera de la Revolución—como lo puede estar un belga o un rinoceronte—no necesariamente está contra ella. Y si así fuera, es su derecho. Sin embargo, a esta extraña construcción se llegó mediante una cuidadosa intervención quirúrgica que cercenó y modificó la frase original de Benito Mussolini: «Todo dentro del Estado, [nada fuera del Estado], nada contra el Estado»²⁰. Como puede verse, lo que queda tras la amputación de la oración del centro es la fórmula de Fidel Castro.

Y ya que me he referido a esa didáctica humillante de maestro de escuela (¡ante la vanguardia de la intelectualidad cubana!) a silogismos

19. En otro lugar me he referido ya a la demagogia de la participación política, especialmente, en condiciones de socialismo de Estado. Véase, en You Tube: Alexis Jardines. Estado de Sats 26 3 2011. Debate.

20. «La nostra fórmula é questa: tutto nello Stato, niente al di fuori dello Stato, nulla contro lo Stato»—dijo el caudillo en La Escala de Milán, curiosamente, en otro teatro, como advirtiera uno de los participantes en la protesta electrónica.



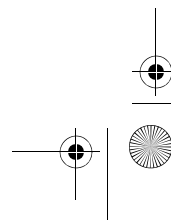
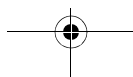
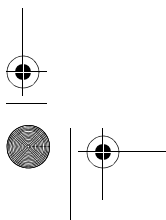
triviales y a contradicciones lógicas, la que cierra aquél histórico discurso no tiene desperdicio. Permítaseme contrapuntear pasajes localizados hacia la primera mitad del texto con otros que vienen articulando la coronación o despedida. A esas alturas el auditorio—!compuesto por gente pensante y reflexiva!—había olvidado, probablemente, la columna izquierda. (Para más claridad, léase cuadro de modo horizontal).

TABLE 1.

Que no se diga que hay artistas que viven pensando en la posteridad.	Señores ¿no sería mejor pensar en el futuro?
Nosotros no estamos haciendo una Revolución para las generaciones venideras, nosotros estamos haciendo una Revolución con esta generación y por esta generación.	Nosotros seremos los forjadores de esa generación futura. Nosotros seremos los que habremos hecho posible esa generación.
Trabajamos y creamos para nuestros contemporáneos.	Estamos creando para el futuro.
Nosotros no estamos haciendo una Revolución para la posteridad.	[Y concluye así su discurso]: A lo que hay que temerle no es a ese supuesto juez autoritario, verdugo de la cultura, imaginario, que hemos elaborado aquí [...] ¡teman a las generaciones futuras que serán, al fin y al cabo, las encargadas de decir la última palabra.

Para concluir este punto, solo cabe agregar que—como lo explicitó el presidente Raúl Castro en su intervención en el análisis del Proyecto de Lineamientos de la Política Económica y Social ante la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular (diciembre de 2010)—la Cuba revolucionaria sigue siendo tan exclusionista como lo fue y lo es Palabras a los intelectuales y su devastadora zaga, toda vez que—y estas fueron sus palabras—su único compromiso como presidente, es con los que cayeron y lucharon por la Revolución.

Hasta ahora, las causas y consecuencias de la aniquilación del espacio público en cuba no han sido lo suficientemente estudiadas. Los trabajos pioneros del investigador y profesor Hugo Azcuy, relacionados con la sociedad civil y que podrían haber abierto el camino fueron olvidados durante décadas y solo se abordó el tema de manera aislada y esporádica. En ningún caso, que yo conozca, hubo un enfoque de la esfera pública en términos de pérdida o destrucción por parte de la Revolución. Me atreveré, pues, a adelantar cuatro motivos, en mi opin-



ión fundamentales, que han propiciado la depresión—para una usar una expresión suave—del espacio público en la Isla.

En nombre de la Revolución se llevó a cabo una política de “gratuidad” en los servicios de la salud y la educación, pero, también—entre otras irracionales cosas—: 1) la eliminación de la propiedad privada, de los derechos humanos universales y de las libertades individuales; 2) la implantación forzosa del régimen de partido único, cuya principal fuente de legitimación es una Constitución que, en términos de democracia, ha retrocedido con respecto a la Constitución del 40²¹, así como un Parlamento—paradójicamente—revolucionario²²; 3) las no menos paradójicas elecciones sin posibilidad de elegir²³ y; 4) la construcción del «hombre nuevo» (el revolucionario) o, si se prefiere, del *hombre unidimensional* (Marcuse). Esta última empresa condiciona a las tres restantes porque está en la raíz de la inhabilitación del espacio público.

Lo que no aciertan a ver nuestros intelectuales y científicos sociales—convencidos de la existencia del espacio público y de una cultura del debate²⁴ en la Cuba revolucionaria—es que en la Isla se polemiza entre revolucionarios, se vota entre y por los revolucionarios, hay espacio público solo para los revolucionarios. Y debo aclarar que se

21. Se trata de un tema en discusión, concretamente en lo que toca al artículo primero de la Constitución del 40: «Cuba es un Estado independiente y soberano organizado como república unitaria y democrática, para el disfrute de la libertad política, la justicia social, el bienestar individual y colectivo y la solidaridad humana». Véase, al respecto, el debate entre Julio César Guanche y Roberto Veiga en la revista *Espacio Laical* (Año 6, nº 2, 2010).

22. La Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular (Parlamento Cubano) admite negros, mujeres, homosexuales y religiosos solo bajo la ineludible condición de ser revolucionarios.

23. La estrategia fidelista del voto unido, que regula el proceso de elección, establece una imposibilidad práctica de votar en contra, es decir, de ejercer el voto negativo. Debido a que cualquier tipo de marca o mensaje en la boleta que no sea el voto positivo la anula, la única manera de votar en contra es no efectuar el voto unido, es decir, votar por algún candidato de la nómina (todos del mismo y único partido). Justo a ensombrecer esta posibilidad se destina una feroz campaña mediática en favor del voto unido. Y como, en definitiva, ningún elector conoce a los candidatos que figuran en la boleta, siempre se termina por tomar la vía más fácil: una sola marca en el lugar más visible de la boleta. En suma, que si cada elector votara por un solo candidato de la nómina las elecciones, desde el punto de vista del Partido, fracasarían rotundamente.

observan hoy discretos movimientos estratégicos, por el camino de la articulación de una sociedad civil (grupos comunitarios, proyectos relacionados con la municipalidad, organizaciones supuestamente no gubernamentales, políticas de desarrollo «desde abajo») que podríamos caracterizar de revolucionaria, por cuanto se trata de un diseño todavía orientado y supervisado por el Partido. En mi opinión, solo se trata de maniobras para desviar la atención de la profunda e irreversible crisis que sufre el país. Ya no hay consenso—si es que alguna vez lo hubo, realmente—en torno a la Revolución, pero sus dirigentes siguen empeñados en desconocer o, en el mejor de los casos, descalificar la disidencia.

El fenómeno del poder político es algo que se realiza mediante una peculiar dialéctica que tiene como polos el gobierno (élites) y la oposición. Del mismo modo que no es concebible oposición sin gobierno, así tampoco es posible en modo alguno que se pueda gobernar sin oposición. Quien—desde uno u otro polo—ignora este elemental fenómeno no hace política, hace su voluntad. Durante más de 50 años se ha intentado en Cuba no reconocer a la oposición y el resultado ha sido una continua producción de “enemigos” que se intenta contener o contrarrestar con el reclutamiento periódico de nuevas almas. Estos conversos vienen a completar el mecanismo de input/output del que se vale el sistema autorreferencial (gobierno sin oposición oficialmente reconocida) para reproducirse.

Como es sabido, a diferencia del capitalismo—que llegó por vía natural y no violenta—el socialismo es un experimento de ingeniería social que, en el caso del proyecto nacionalista cubano, tuvo como meta la producción del Hombre Nuevo. Este último viene siendo algo así como conciencia pura. En el caso del proyecto internacionalista

24. Vease, Ernesto Altshuler; Reinerio Arce; Mayra Espina; Pedro Pablo Rodríguez; Rafael Hernández. 2005. “El debate de ideas en la cultura y el pensamiento en Cuba”. *Temas* (nº 41-42, enero-junio). Las propias intervenciones en este “debate” sobre el debate de ideas en Cuba mostraron que no se trató de un debate, sino de gente opinando, pues nunca hubo interacción con otro punto de vista, sino con versiones de lo mismo. Dicho de otro modo, el supuesto debate nunca es una interacción con la otredad, sino con la mismidad revolucionaria. Y así sucede generalmente: lo totalmente otro (*totaliter aliter*) nunca está incluido en los cálculos de la democracia socialista.

soviético la meta era la creación de la base tecnológica del paraíso comunista. Teóricamente, son posibles otras formas de socialismo, pero el problema para Cuba—como para todo país que se ha empeñado en llevar a la práctica este ideal—reside en que se ha pretendido conservar el fundamento marxista. En un caso como ese, el verdadero obstáculo es la sociedad civil. A su vez, la falacia de una sociedad civil socialista choca con dos dificultades insalvables. Primero, esta no se compondría más que de las rancias organizaciones de masas, de los depauperados proyectos comunitarios y de algunas que otras organizaciones profesionales. Hay que tener en cuenta que, además de las asociaciones voluntarias, en el contenido de la sociedad civil entra el mercado y la esfera pública (Adela Cortina). Verdad es que no hay consenso al respecto. Otra dirección bien estructurada (Cohen, Arato, Habermas) excluye de la sociedad civil la trama de relaciones estatal y la económica. Con ninguna de las dos variantes la idea de una sociedad civil socialista—que el marxismo revolucionario rescata de A. Gramsci—es compatible. En la idea de Gramsci se observa interferencia entre política, sociedad civil y Estado, además de responder a un mundo pre globalizado y no complejo. Los casos ya de socialismo de Estado son los menos favorables para el desarrollo de la sociedad civil. Al respecto, escribe Habermas:

La estrecha conexión entre la autonomía de la sociedad civil y la integridad de la esfera de la vida privada muéstrase con toda claridad al contraluz que representan las sociedades totalitarias del socialismo de Estado. Aquí, un Estado panóptico no solo controla directamente un espacio de la opinión pública desecado en términos burocráticos, sino que también entierra las bases que esa esfera de la opinión pública tiene en el ámbito de la vida privada. Las interferencias administrativas y la supervisión constante desintegran la estructura comunicativa del trato cotidiano en la familia y en la escuela, en el municipio y en el vecindario. La destrucción de los modos de vida solidarios y el entumecimiento y paralización de la iniciativa y la actividad autónomas en ámbitos que quedan inundados por una superregulación a la vez que a la vez que caracterizados por su inseguridad jurídica, se dan la mano con la destrucción de grupos sociales, de asociaciones y de redes de comunicación, con la imposición doctrinaria (y con la disolución) de

identidades sociales, con la estrangulación de la comunicación pública espontánea²⁵.

El análisis de Habermas—aunque yerra al identificar socialismo de Estado y totalitarismo sí parece sugerir correctamente que ninguna variante de socialismo marxista sería compatible con la democracia ni tendría condiciones para el florecimiento de la sociedad civil. Estas son sus palabras: «...los movimientos democráticos que surgen en la sociedad civil han de renunciar a aquellas aspiraciones de una sociedad que se organice a sí misma en conjunto, aspiraciones que, por ejemplo, estuvieron en la base de las representaciones marxistas de la revolución social²⁶.

Como ya expresé anteriormente, las incursiones en el tema de la esfera pública, tan estrechamente vinculada a la sociedad civil, son escasísimas y esporádicas en la academia cubana. Entre lo mejor, podría citarse el artículo de A. Chaguaceda «Intelectuales públicos y política en Cuba: continuidades y emergencias», aparecido en el n 0 6 de 2010 de la revista *Espacio Laical*. Hay que decir, en cambio, que dicho autor ahora reside fuera del país. Trabajos ya de tipo teórico conceptual son inexistentes. Al no haber en Cuba una esfera pública espontánea y libremente conformada y al carecer también las ciencias sociales de desarrollos y aportaciones sobre el tema, la cuestión de la esfera pública se transforma en la cuestión de cómo, cuándo y dónde algunos intelectuales debaten sobre la naturaleza y posibilidades de lo que se viene llamando «nuestro proyecto social», esto es: el socialismo revolucionario *actualizado*. En rigor, lo que se maneja como esfera pública en Cuba es una prolongación del Estado socialista en descomposición. La auténtica esfera pública, por el contrario, es la calle. Y lo que hacemos hoy muchos cubanos de la Isla es llevar la opinión de la calle a las plazas sitiadas por el Estado. No hay científicos sociales detrás de esto, sino, más bien, en contra de lo que pudiera pensarse, ellos actúan desde sus instituciones como elementos de contención. \

25. Jürgen Habermas: *Facticidad y validez*, Madrid, Trotta, 1998, p. 449.

26. Ibídem, p. 453.

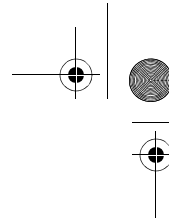
Es claro que, de existir algo así en la Isla, la esfera pública política viene—al menos desde 1961—revolucionaria, con lo cual se dicen inmediatamente tres cosas: 1) es exclusionista (pues solo se permite el debate entre revolucionarios) en consecuencia; 2) no admite el debate real y la confrontación (sino el diálogo y la crítica constructiva) y; 3) solo se hacen públicos los contenidos certificados por el Partido (léase, la dirección de la Revolución). En cualquier caso, lo que parece ser inobjetable es que la sociedad civil, si en realidad es tal, no se ve sometida a la coacción del Estado y que la libertad (las libertades individuales) y el pluralismo son sus pilares. La desestatización de la sociedad cubana no puede correr a cuenta del Estado, sino del fortalecimiento de la sociedad civil. El Estado debe, a su vez, adaptarse a una situación postnacional. La contradictoria vía de la desestatización estatal conduce al capitalismo tercermundista de Estado; la vía del fortalecimiento de la sociedad civil y de la opinión pública, a un Estado de derecho y a una democracia neoliberal.

Me atrevería a asegurar que no es el futuro del socialismo lo que le preocupa a la dirección de la Revolución cubana (Fidel y Raúl) sino el futuro de la dinastía Castro. El proceso de «actualización del socialismo» es solo una maniobra que persigue el objetivo de ganar el tiempo necesario para ir echando las bases de la dominación nepotista en condiciones postcomunistas e, incluso, capitalistas. Los descendientes de Fidel y Raúl, probablemente con la anuencia del propio presidente, se preparan para “salir de la clandestinidad” y ser abierta y “legalmente” los millonarios del mañana. ¿Será humillante ver a hombres y mujeres que no comulgaron con la Revolución cubana y sus líderes trabajar para—y, hasta cierto punto, defender los intereses de—las grandes empresas de la familia Castro en condiciones de plena libertad económica? Esa es la sorpresa que preparan Fidel y Raúl: extender la dominación de su dinastía, con el apoyo inicial decisivo de las Fuerzas Armadas, que ya se han convertido en una fuerza económica considerable, a la Cuba revolucionaria postcomunista.

Y no se tome esto como un pronóstico más, al lado de los tantos existentes. Se trata, antes bien, de una constatación de lo que ya viene

ocurriendo en la Isla por detrás de la retórica aun marxista-leninista. Hay quienes en la Internet se refieren a una «tecnocracia familiar hereditaria» que dominaría en época de «neocastrismo». El neocastrismo, en mi opinión, comienza ya con la actual era postcomunista, caracterizada—no tanto por un paquete de licencias insustanciales, que no viene a ser sino la legalización del mercado negro—como por el desplazamiento hacia la concentración del poder económico y el despidio nada nostálgico de la ideología marxistaleninista. En cualquier caso, la particularidad del punto de vista sobre el futuro inmediato de Cuba que asumo aquí es que, al tiempo que incluye la variable del cambio—en términos económicos e ideológicos—ni desestima ni excluye a la descendencia de los hermanos Castro junto al círculo de sus más allegados colaboradores y amigos que, con un sólido capital acumulado durante medio siglo y reciclado a la manera de empresas capitalistas de inspiración nacionalista, seguirán siendo los dueños de la Isla y los que quiten y pongan a ministros y presidentes a menos que, como la canción, «un milagro pase».

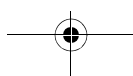
Para finalizar, quiero dejar bien claro—más allá de los medios, de la filosofía política y de las ciencias sociales—cómo veo a la Cuba de hoy. El socialismo cubano ya se vino abajo. Los revolucionarios se baten en retirada y evitan blandir sus ilegítimas razones y sus estúpidos argumentos apologéticos delante de los ciudadanos. Hoy son aquellos los que temen y los que callan, al menos delante de la gente y de sus propios vecinos. La Seguridad del Estado, desacreditada, con ruinosos resultados—además de escasos recursos—y una membrecía cada vez más torpe, lejos de intimidar es motivo de burla entre los capitalinos, si bien la situación hacia el interior del país sigue siendo lamentable. Miami—lo que representa—tiene más influencia en La Habana que el Partido Comunista. Tras el marxismo soviético el mito del socialismo revolucionario ha muerto, solo lo alimenta su propia inercia, los barriles de petróleo que llegan de Venezuela y la paranoia que logró sembrar durante 50 años entre los cubanos del exilio. Tal vez fuera de Cuba se tenga una impresión diferente y hasta pesimista, condicionada por cientos de pronósticos fallidos. Hoy se puede decir



sin temor a errar—y lo digo desde dentro—que a la Revolución no se le quiere, no se le respeta y no se le necesita. Es por eso que sus dirigentes han asumido el reto de crear las bases para perdurar en condiciones postcomunistas. Los castristas más leales y sus descendientes amaestrados tendrán cada vez más acceso a las grandes y medianas empresas y al capital extranjero, mientras el antes venerado y compacto *Volk*²⁷ se va escindiendo mayormente en una bolsa de mano de obra barata y bien calificada, por una parte, y en una economía de kiosko (“nano” empresas), por la otra.

Se dirá, con razón, que Fidel y Raúl siempre han detentado el poder político y económico desde el mismo triunfo de la Revolución. Pero la diferencia estriba en que se trata ahora de un *lavado de patrimonio*, para lo cual será preciso desmontar paulatinamente el socialismo de Estado e ir creando las bases de un empresariado revolucionario abierto al mercado internacional y a la inversión extranjera. El control interno de tales operaciones de fomento—y, sobre todo, de blanqueo y legitimación—de la herencia Raúl lo seguirá llamando, eufemísticamente, «planificación».

27. «El pueblo es la meta principal. En el pueblo hay que pensar primero que en nosotros mismos. Y esa es la única actitud que puede definirse como una actitud verdaderamente revolucionaria [...] Al menos ese es el cristal a través del cual nosotros analizamos lo bueno y lo útil y lo bello de cada acción.» (Fidel Castro, en: *Palabras a los intelectuales*).



12 Funerals in Socialist Cuba

Heidi Härkönen¹

Introduction

My Cuban informants frequently maintained close loving bonds with their mother throughout their lives, while contact with their father was often highly sporadic. However, towards the end of a man's life, the relationship with his children may re-emerge, sometimes after years or even decades of limited or no contact.

My ethnographic material on Cuba suggests that different points of life cycle make distinct social relations emerge as important in varying ways. Those relations that are marginal in day-to-day contexts may become more significant in other types of contexts. Life cycle rituals can be seen to connect to such special moments, since in them the social divisions that relevantly define kinship and other social existence often become especially visible (Barraud et al., 1994: 26, see also

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Huntington and Metcalf, 1979: 2; van Gennep, [1909] 1960). However, at the same time, life cycle rituals may represent a moment of change, being an event that carries the potential to transform and redefine social relations. In Cuba, it seems that death has the potential to downplay some of the divisions that are central in day-to-day social relations.

In this paper I will explore how a man/father may become integrated into the kinship structure at this life stage, whereas women's relations proceed as usual. Funerals differ from other Cuban life cycle rituals in regard to the types of kinship and gender distinctions observable in the ritual for instance in the sense that in funerals, men tend to take on a more prominent role than in other life cycle rituals.

Moreover, on the institutional level, funerals differ from other Cuban life cycle rituals in the sense that they are the only ritual where both socialist and Catholic practices are combined. The 24-hour wake takes place in a state funeral home, but after the wake, at the Havana main cemetery of Cristobal Colon, the great majority of bodies are blessed by a Catholic deacon before being laid to the ground.²

A Brief Look at the Historical Context of Cuban Funerals

A central aim of the 1959 Cuban revolution was to radically transform Cuban society and create a new socialist state based on egalitarian principles (see e.g. Ramonet & Castro, 2007: 7, 16, 21, 41). In order to make a radical break from the pre-revolutionary past, the field of life cycle rituals was also to be transformed (see also Roth, 1990). Since the objective was to build a society without differences in terms of equality of wealth, race, gender, age or place of residence, funerals were not supposed to reflect any of these distinctions. Moreover, the new socialist funerals were to be atheist and devoid of any type of bourgeois symbolism—for instance, the socialist newspapers were to be free of the pre-revolutionary 'society' announcements informing

2. The material for this paper was collected via ethnographic fieldwork in Havana in 2007-2008. The names of the informants have been changed throughout the text.

readers about funerals.³ In particular the revolution brought changes to the religious aspects of Cuban funerals.

Before the revolution, funeral homes in Havana used to be privately owned.⁴ With the revolution, funeral homes became state owned and were stripped of the Catholic religious symbols prevalent in pre-revolutionary times. Cemeteries had been owned by the Catholic Church prior to the revolution, but also they were annexed to the state in the 1960s. To my knowledge, a little chapel in Havana's main cemetery, *Cristobal Colon*, is the only exception and remains the property of the Catholic Church. The blessing of bodies in this chapel has continued throughout the revolution.

Although Cuba was never a particular stronghold of the Catholic Church, after the revolution the Catholic Church was left in a very weak standing within the country. After some decades of rather strict state atheism, distinct religious and ritual practices experienced a general revival in the country in the early 1990s, when the fall of the Soviet Union led to a general relaxation in Cuban state policy (see e.g. Azicri, 2000; Eckstein, 1994: 122; Holbraad, 2004). The popularity of Catholic rituals also ascended during this period. Currently the dominant religion in Cuba is likely to be Afro-Cuban Santería, but the majority of Cubans would probably still label themselves as Catholic simultaneously. In addition, other Afro-Cuban religions (e.g. *Palo*, *Aba-kuá*), spiritism and general *brujeria* ('sorcery') are widely practiced in the country.

3. With society-news I refer to announcements and articles concerning births, baptisms, birthdays, weddings, funerals etc., which appeared in the pre-revolutionary newspapers (see also El Diablo Ilustrado, 2006: 198, 204 on the "vain," "ridiculous" character of such news). It is possible that the current lack of a dress code in Cuban funerals has to do with similar ideological notions, since I was told by my informants that before the revolution Cubans used to wear black clothes in funerals, but currently they wear clothes of any colour and type. However, I have not managed to locate the exact information on when and why the habit of wearing black in funerals disappeared.

4. After the revolution many of these funeral home companies moved over to the other side of the Bay to Miami, where they continued operating with the same names as in pre-revolutionary Cuba, such as *Caballero Rivera* or *Maspons*.

The Wake

After a doctor has declared a person dead in Cuba, one of the family members of the deceased contacts the funeral home of their choice (normally the closest, local establishment). A car is then sent to pick up the body and a representative from the funeral home then books a time for the wake. Funeral homes are numerous in Havana, and in keeping with the equality-ideal of the socialist government, the services offered by them are entirely free or very low-cost. Wakes take place very soon after death since (with one exception) there is no refrigeration in Cuban funeral homes.

Prior to the wake, the body is prepared for display at the funeral home. Preparation takes place to aid in the conservation of the body as well as out of consideration for the attendants at the funeral home. The body is dressed in clothes chosen by the closest family members of the deceased. Employees of the funeral home apply make-up to the face and block all of the body's orifices. All bodies typically receive a coating of foundation on their face, some blush on their cheeks and some color on their lips—regardless of the gender of the deceased. While more make-up is usually put on women's faces, men may receive a wig and fake eyebrows. In other Cuban life cycle rituals the modifying or decorating of the body centers almost solely on the woman. In this sense, funerals downplay the gender difference, which is so central in day-to-day life.

The preparation of the body is completed to ensure the body takes on a more lively, healthy, and pleasant to view appearance for mourners attending the wake. An employee of a funeral home explained this: "Sometimes a man had a cause of death that left him very pale, too pale, so he is given color on the face, sometimes his lips are very white, they are given a natural color, so that he looks like a person who is alive, the color of a person who is alive. And [the body] is given a form that is like slightly smiling on the lips so that family members do not see that he had a cause of death as if very traumatic." The funeral home employees' task is to try to relieve the suffering of the

deceased's family members by creating the impression that the deceased died happily. This can be seen as care directed towards the living; helping them to cope with their loss and sadness. After being prepared, the body is set on display in the coffin on a central table in a room in the funeral home for mourners to come and pay their respects.

Wakes are most often quiet, simple occasions where no religious symbolism is in evidence. There is no serving of food or drink, and the only decorations in the room are a solitary flower arrangement and the wreaths brought by mourners.⁵ These wreaths are often uniform in kind, and only the ribbon displaying the giver's name separates them from each other. Kin members and friends and colleagues of the deceased tend to bring wreaths. They are placed surrounding the coffin at the wake, and they follow the coffin to the cemetery after the wake.

Coffins are primarily plain and simple wooden boxes lacking any decoration or ornamentation.⁶ There are usually no other objects except flowers placed around the coffin or on it at the wake (nor inside it at the cemetery at the burial). However, in the funeral of a significant state personality that I attended, poetry written by him was placed around the coffin at the wake—a practice reflecting his life work as a writer and as the head editor of the second newspaper in the country. These were objects that epitomized his achievements as a prominent socialist. Particularly significant state personalities receive a Cuban flag on top of their coffin to display their special status as a “Heroes of the Republic” (*Heroes de la República*) due to their notable socialist achievements. The objects that are used at the wake are primarily socialist in character and tend to emphasize the deceased's position as a representative of the official state virtues.

5. However, in wakes for important state personalities, coffee and cheap, low-alcohol Cuban beer may be served.

6. However, at the funeral of a significant state personality, the coffin was more elaborate, featuring a glass top through which mourners could view the deceased. I have also heard that children are buried in white coffins, but have not managed to verify this information at the time of writing.

However, while the symbolism in the wake tends to stress socialist notions, the purpose of the wake is to keep company both to the person who has passed away, as well as to their grieving family. An employee of a funeral home described the meaning of the wake as such: "They are like keeping company to the closest family, showing solidarity with them. In general we Cubans are fairly united, fairly solidary; the same with the neighbors, friends, companions [i.e. work colleagues]." The wake is about sharing the grief of those close to the deceased. This stress on the sheer *compartir* ('sharing') is possibly further emphasized by the fact that nothing much happens during the wake; there are usually no speeches, music or other type of ceremony.⁷

Usually anyone close to the deceased or to their family comes to make an appearance at the wake as a sign of caring and participating in the family's loss. The attendants include kin members of all types (matrilateral, patrilineal, affinal and ritual), as well as friends, neighbors and work colleagues of the deceased.⁸ It is likely that a man's children will attend his funeral even if he has had little or no contact with them for years, even decades. (Since women tend to maintain continuous close contact with their children, their participation at the funeral of their mother is much more evident). There is a notable difference between the participation of men and women at the funeral of their father. Sons tend to remain in closer contact with their father than daughters throughout their lives. A daughter's participation in her father's funeral may depend on his participation in covering some of the expense of her quince party years earlier.⁹ If he did not give her money for her *quince*, it is possible that she will refuse to perform her part of the exchange by attending his funeral. However, for both men and women, failing to establish contact with the father at this life stage

7. However, some people tell jokes at wakes, and I once heard a woman give a very short speech at a wake. In funerals of initiated practitioners of Santería an *Ituto* ceremony is performed during the wake (see Alcaraz, 2003: 65-66).

8. Matrilateral refers to the mother's kin side, patrilineal to the father's kin side. Affines are kin via marriage and ritual kin includes for instance god-parent-relationships.

9. A girl's 15th-year birthday party is a very important ritual occasion in Cuba.

may result in the father coming to haunt them in their dreams later as a spirit.

Despite the fact that everyone who knows the deceased is expected to participate, wakes do not tend to be very large-scale events in Cuba (with the exception of significant state funerals). The closest family members and friends usually attend both the wake and the actual burial, but most people come to pay their respects in one or the other. Normally more people come to the wake than to the burial at the cemetery, and more people usually participate in the funerals of children and young people than to those of the elderly.

Since funerals take place on such a short notice in Cuba, all those who would want to participate do not always make it in time. Two male informants stated that they had missed a wake since they had been notified too late. In the first case the deceased was the informant's father's brother, and he managed to arrive at the cemetery in time for the burial. In the second case the deceased was the informant's sister's daughter's husband's sister, and he made it to the funeral home when the coffin was about to be transported to another province for the burial. These are both kinship connections that are in normal contexts fairly marginal in Caribbean matrifocal kinship systems (patrilateral and affinal bonds), and the fact that both these informants missed the wake possibly reflects this.¹⁰ However, at the same time, given that both of these informants wanted to participate in the funeral, were greatly affected by it, and at the end *had* been notified of it, shows that in funerals, all types of kinship connections become significant. All those who played a part in the life of the deceased are expected to participate regardless of whether they are

10. I follow Raymond T. Smith's definition of Caribbean matrifocality as "a form of family life" (1988: 7) and "a social process in which there is a salience of women—in their role as mothers—within the domestic domain" (ibid: 8). According to Smith, matrifocality is a structural principle that has to do with the weakness of the conjugal relationship and with the dual marriage system whereby legal marriage tends to be a middle and higher income union type while the lower income groups prefer consensual unions. A prominent feature of Caribbean matrifocality is the strong relationship between a mother and her children, whilst men tend to be relatively marginal as fathers. (Smith, 1996a, 1996b).

kin, neighbors or friends. In this sense, death downplays the divisions that are central in day-to-day social relations.

In addition to keeping company to the living, a wake is also a way to keep company to the deceased. While my informants generally feared and disliked funeral homes and cemeteries—even non-religious persons considered that such places associated with death may have contagious properties and pass bad ‘energy’ on to those going within their vicinity—at the wake people stay close to the body. Usually the children and/or the grandchildren of the deceased stay close to the body for the wake’s duration. In a wake for a significant state personality, his children and grandchildren remained next to his body, crying throughout the wake. This emphasized the deceased’s position as a loved father and grandfather as opposed to that of a prominent socialist, a role that was stressed in the symbolism of the wake. One of my informants referred to the wake as “taking care” of the body, and this is what in particular the children and the grandchildren of the deceased are doing by remaining constantly close to the body throughout the wake.

Normally after 24 hours the wake ends. The guests file outside to wait for the coffin to be brought out and placed in the hearse that takes it to the cemetery. The body is taken either to the cemetery, to the crematorium or to another province to be buried depending on the wishes of the deceased and the family members. Many of the persons who attended the wake go home to rest at this point but the closest family members follow the body to the cemetery.

The Burial

At the cemetery, the funerary ritual tends to take on a more religious feel in comparison with the wake. In *Colon*, Havana’s main cemetery, the body is customarily taken via a Catholic chapel to receive the last sacraments. This Catholic observance of the last rites is a favored practice in Cuba, and represents one of the two most popular Catholic life cycle rituals in the country—the other being, Catholic baptism.

This underlies the fact that in addition to the socialist state, the Catholic Church is an important provider of ritual services at the time of death in Cuba.

This second part of Cuban funerals is normally attended by less people than the wake. The matrilateral, patrilateral, affinal and sometimes ritual kin come, as well as the closest friends and colleagues of the deceased.

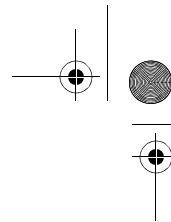
The Catholic blessing of the body is performed by a deacon and it is a very rapid and a rather improvised event. Advance bookings are not required and the deacon typically has no prior knowledge as to whether a body is going to be brought in for a blessing or not. Rather, he just waits at the chapel and blesses bodies as they are presented. The blessing does not cost anything to the participants and there are no specific records kept concerning it. With only two permanent deacons working at the chapel on alternate days at the time of my fieldwork, the deacons are highly overworked; sometimes there was a queue of bodies waiting for a blessing outside the chapel.

The family members of the deceased decide either beforehand or on the spot whether the body will be taken to the Catholic chapel for a blessing. Sometimes the blessing evoked heated arguments amongst the funeral escorts, when a part of the family wanted to have the body blessed while others refused. Sometimes the situation was resolved in such a way that a part of the funeral company went inside to the chapel with the body and stood next to it while the deacon performed the rites. Those who labeled themselves as non-religious stayed outside of the chapel. Others remained somewhere in-between, standing in the doorway of the chapel half way between the religious and non-religious space, or moving between the two during the rapid five to ten minute Catholic rites. For some people, such as my informant Norma, this was the only occasion ever for visiting a church: "The only time I have been to a church was when my mother-in-law died, the mother of Juan (her husband) was passed by the church".

The deacon asks no questions on the religiosity of the deceased when a body is brought in. It does not matter whether the person would really be labeled as Catholic by the church or not, and Cubans themselves do not see a problem in combining distinct religious practices. An informant conceptualized her reasons for the performance of Catholic funerary rituals as: "There in the church of the cemetery they do a mass, a mass to let God know that you're going there." Another informant did not divorce Catholic funerary practices from Afro-Cuban and Spiritist religious practices, which are also frequently performed to the deceased and his or her family members at death: "There is something that is done so that the spirit rises [to heaven]. You have to do certain prayers so that the spirit does not latch on to the body, to the material, and when a person dies, the spirit stays like fragmented, and it is as if it doesn't know whether it's alive or dead."¹¹

My informants had several distinct notions on what happens to a person after death. My informants believed in the possibility of reincarnation and saw that it is possible to obtain information on a person's past lives via mediums and cartomancists (see also Espirito Santo, 2009). *Muertos* (dead people) are seen as residing in the cemetery. On specific dates people go to the cemetery to chat with their dead relatives (their *muertos*), as well as to ask for distinct favors from those *muertos* that are specifically capable of performing miracles (such as *Amelia la Milagrosa*, see Martiatu, 2006: 143-146). However, without going into a more detailed examination of these distinct religious aspects relating to Cuban notions of death here, I believe that the great popularity of Catholic funerary rites in Cuba has to do with the general high religiosity in the country, as well as with the fact that many Cubans perceive almost any type of religious ritual bearing a general blessing and protection upon the person to whom they are performed.

11. The most usual ones are the Ituto ceremony performed by santería priests (babalawos) at the death of initiated practitioners, as well as the special funerary rituals performed in Ifá when a babalawo dies. An informant described the latter ceremony: "15 babalawos get together and there can be no one else except the babalawos. And they have to decide to whom they will give all the religious things [of the deceased]." See also Alcaraz, 2003: 65-66.



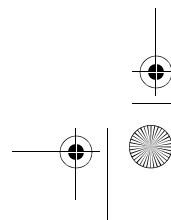
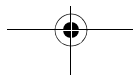
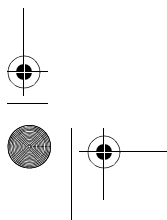
After the performance of the Catholic blessing (or in the absence of religious rituals, straight after entering the cemetery), the body is taken to the burial spot in a funerary car. The family and friends attending the burial slowly walk behind the car. I attended a funeral for a musician at which the grandson—who had been raised by the deceased after his parents had migrated to the US—held his hand on the coffin during the entire walk to the grave. The extreme silence of the procession forms a marked contrast with the everyday loudness, chatter and vivacity: not a word is said, no music or singing performed. The procession is quiet, sad and heavy.

At the arrival to the burial site, the employees of the cemetery open the vault and, aided by the chauffer of the hearse, lift the coffin from the car and lower it to the grave.¹² After this, the cemetery employees close the grave. Men form a chain from the hearse to the grave along which flowers are passed hand-to-hand before being scattered atop the plot. The attendees watch this ceremony silently, but when the grave is closed, everybody departs.

However, in the funeral of the musician, his work colleagues were the ones to lift the coffin to the grave, and instead of lowering it straight down, it was left on top of the grave. Before being lowered down into the ground, the coffin was opened so that the grandson of the deceased could fulfill his last wish. The grandson went to stand right next to the grave and started to pour a bottle of rum into the coffin. He cried all the time and said: “This is the last drink that you and I will take together.” He then took a drink from the bottle and poured the rest of the rum into the coffin. After that he placed the bottle and a small bucket of white flowers inside the coffin, after which the deceased’s work colleagues lowered the coffin to the grave.

It is not usual to place objects into the coffin in Cuba. None of my informants had heard of a bottle of rum being placed into the coffin in any other funeral, and they interpreted this as a specific request on

12. In Cuba, graves are vaults, not dug. The family members of the deceased have to go and collect the remains of the deceased, usually three years after death.



the part of the deceased. At the musician's funeral, the pouring of rum onto the grave represented a particularly emotional practice which emphasized the musician's position as a beloved member of a kin group; a loved grandfather with a special connection to his grandson.

Usually Cuban funerals end after the coffin has been lowered into the grave. The funeral attendees may stay by the grave for a short moment, standing in silence. After that, an employee of the cemetery arrives to close the grave and to pile the flower wreaths on top of the grave. The mourners slowly walk away. Often there are no speeches or any type of further ceremonies at the burial.

However, in Vilma Espin's burial in June 2007 a tape featuring three songs sung by the deceased was played when her ashes were laid to the ground. A female informant commented: "That was what she wanted. People ask in life what they want after their death." Her son said: "The first two songs were lullabies for the children and the grandchildren." Her husband continued: "This [the third song] is the song she sings for Raúl. It is a bolero." At Vilma Espin's funeral, music was her way to comfort the loved ones she had left behind—a way to continue caring for them after her death. Death could not put an end to her position as a mother, grandmother and a spouse.

I witnessed also on another occasion a state representation on funerals stressing an individual's kinship position over that of a distinguished socialist. During the evening news, the funeral of a significant state personality was described this way: "People did not say to him that he was an excellent journalist—which he was. People said to him: You are my brother, my son, you are a great friend." Here kinship idiom is employed to display the extraordinary personal worth of the deceased, but not in a manner that would emphasize the value of the deceased as a father, grandfather, uncle, brother, or son in his personal kin relations. Instead, kinship terminology is used to represent the value of the deceased as a *compañero* to those working with him, as a family member in a 'socialist kinship group,' here the revolutionary Cuba as a whole ("people") is made to represent the kin group into

which the deceased is closely integrated. At the same time, the use of kinship idiom in this way stresses the value such roles maintain in Cuba.

There are rarely speeches in Cuban funerals, but I attended a funeral where the deceased man's son-in-law spoke briefly at the end of the burial. In my opinion, this had to do with his position as someone at the same time 'far enough' and 'close enough' to the deceased. This is a practice that does away with the normal kinship divisions—the son-in-law ceases to be an affine, and becomes "family" instead. This same tendency to turn 'affines' into 'family' in funerals can be observed in the statement of the informant whose only visit to a church had been when her mother-in-law passed away. Death seems to merge together those kinship bonds that are conceived as distinct in day-to-day life.

Conclusion

Cuban matrifocal gender and kinship relations are transformed at the moment of death, and funerals need to be explored in the context of the whole life stage, when more stress is on the usually marginal patrilineal relations.

Cuban funerals are to a large degree composed of socialist ritual practices, making them simple and in a way 'scarce' in symbolic content—the Catholic blessing is the only exception to this 'ritual austerity', and even that is completed in ten minutes. At the same time, the Catholic performance of the last rites is deeply meaningful to Cubans as a way to ensure the deceased with a safe passage to the afterworld.

The dead form part of the lives of the living a long time after death. Via mediums, spirits of the dead come to visit their living relatives and via dreams they offer the living their insight and advice on life. On Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, on the anniversary of death and on the anniversary of the deceased's birthday, the living visit the dead in the cemetery bringing flowers, food, drink, tobacco, performing

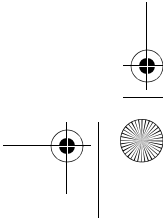
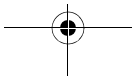
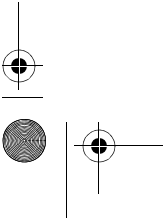
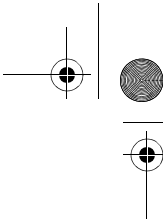
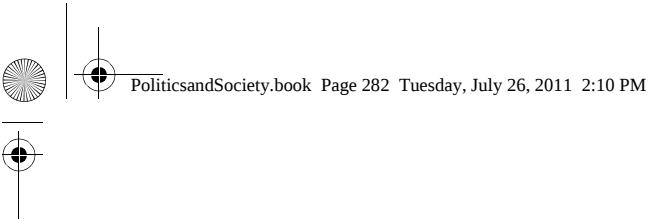
Afro-Cuban religious rituals and ensuring the tomb is clean and the grave-site is in good condition. Catholic masses of the deceased (*misa de difuntos*) enjoy a very high degree of popularity in Cuba and are performed at least once a week to full audiences. Moreover, usually three years after the death, the family members of the deceased are required to remove the remains of the deceased from the grave and take them to the ossuary—an event that often results in a painful re-visiting of grief and sorrow. All these practices continue the relationship between the living and dead and are considered by Cubans as attending to the deceased; taking care of a lost loved one.

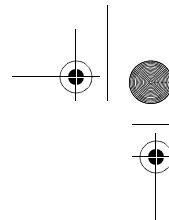
Cuban funerals are best understood when examined in the context of a longer ritual cycle that covers the whole of a person's life. When compared with other life cycle rituals, there are certain differences in how funerals emphasize the matrifocal gender and kinship relations. While other Cuban life cycle rituals tend to stress women's ritual agency, in funerals, men take on a more central position. Funerals also blur the gender difference that forms a central social distinction in everyday Cuban life and plays a key role in other life cycle rituals. In funerals, gender is not highlighted in such a way—both men and women become just a *ser querido*; a lost loved one.

Moreover, funerals merge other distinctions that are significant in day-to-day social relations. Funerals blur the distinctions between the matrilineal, patrilineal and affinal kinship relations that bear significance in day-to-day interaction. When exploring on how the emphasis of the Cuban matrifocal gender and kinship system in funerals differs from that in other life stages, it becomes clear that in funerals, unity is stressed rather than division. In funerals, being together, the importance of sharing painful moments, and the central significance of family relations and sociability to Cubans in general, take precedence over any other types of sentiments. Both the Catholic Church as well as the socialist state participate in this process via providing important funerary services to the mourning kin. In funerals, caring and sharing become the central focus (see Stasch, 2009: 4) of Cuban social relations—the worst that can happen to a person is to die alone.

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13 Ifá transnacional: tradicionalistas y criollos

Adrián de Souza Hernández

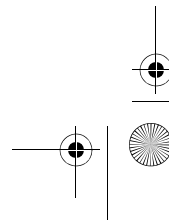
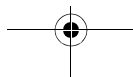
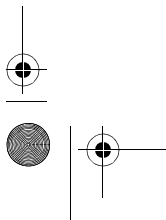
*Ifá dice que en el momento en el que despertemos,
la sabiduría es lo que debemos enseñarnos unos a otros.
No debemos despertarnos, acostarnos
y descansar sobre la ignorancia.
Lo que deliberemos al respecto
que no pueda ser resuelto
lo consultamos al ikín.*

DE VARIOS MODOS DE VER CIENTOS DE PROCEDER¹

Los caracoles de la discordia

Después de varios siglos de práctica en relativa calma, empañada por controversias menores entre los practicantes—y otras no tan leves por parte de una sociedad renuente a aceptar que África es una de las madres patrias que gestó a las Américas—, la Regla Ifá/Ocha está inmersa en una discordia sin precedentes que en dos décadas ha

1. Del refranero español.



tomado connotaciones radicales: afrocubanismo *vs.* tradicionalismo. En el cuerpo literario de los odus de Ifá de los tradicionalistas yorubás abundan los mitos que destacan situaciones por las cuales transitó Orúnmila,² tanto en el Cielo como en la Tierra. Estas lo hicieron merecedor del reconocimiento divino como la deidad de la Sabiduría; pero quizás el más difundido es el del odu de Ifá³ Ogbe Idí:⁴ narra el momento en que Oloddumare puso a prueba a todas las divinidades para terminar con el recalentamiento de la Divinosfera—un grave problema producido por Echu⁵ cuando concluyó el proceso de la Creación—y cómo Orúnmila fue la única deidad en encontrar los caracoles terrestres necesarios para refrescar los suelos.

Oloddumare había entregado a cada deidad cinco obsequios divinos: la tiza blanca, la nuez de cola,⁶ el polvo del árbol osun,⁷ la tela

2. Dentro de la cosmología yorubá, Orúnmila es conocido como la deidad de la Sabiduría. Esta representa la compilación de la conciencia colectiva y funciona como el portavoz e intérprete de Ifá, aquel que hace posible, en el Cielo y en la Tierra, la relación entre Ifá, el hombre y el resto de las deidades, ya que es el Testigo de la Creación y de los destinos de todos los hombres. Se le conoce también con infinidad de apelativos referentes a sus habilidades, por ejemplo: “el señor de la palabra”. Según Fa’lokun Fatunmbi, en su libro *Iwa-pele: Ifa Quest the Search for the Source of Santeria and Lucumi*: “Las oraciones para Orúnmila están dirigidas a que nuestra percepción de las deidades y nuestra manifestación de las deidades sean una”.

3. Ifá es la palabra asignada por los yorubás para nombrar su filosofía y las manifestaciones histórico-sociales de su pueblo; su modo de ver la vida; el sistema adivinatorio del oráculo, las profecías, las predicciones; las deidades; la concepción de su mundo, ese mundo cíclico que comienza en el Cielo donde Oloddumare (Dios), el Ser Supremo de la Creación, rige la vida del Universo. Está formado por un cuerpo literario dividido en doscientos cincuenta y seis signos (odus), un simbólico sistema litúrgico y una gran parafernalia que compilan en forma de códigos las respuestas a las inquietudes de los hombres y dan la posibilidad de conocer y reparar los destinos. A través de los rituales de Ifá el hombre logra acentuar aspectos perdidos por la influencia del medio que lo ha vuelto más vulnerable. Como el más acabado y refinado producto de la cultura yorubá, Ifá perpetúa en la tradición el respeto a la ancianidad, la lealtad, la honestidad, la devoción por el cumplimiento del deber y el empeño de formar a un hombre útil y solidario.

4. Las doscientas cincuenta y seis figuras—signos o letras—que constituyen el sistema filosófico-literario de Ifá. Los odus tienen un orden jerárquico y un nombre. Existen dos categorías de odus: la primera comprende a los dieciséis odus principales o pareados (oyú odu), conocidos como dobles (Meji o Eji; Meyi en Cuba, porque en el yorubá hablado en la Isla se sustituye la j por la y), considerados los reyes de Ifá. Los nombres de estas dieciséis figuras pareadas son: Eji Ogbe, Eji Oyekú, Eji Iwori, Eji Idí, Eji Obara, Eji Okonrón, Eji Irosun, Eji Owanrin, Eji Ogundá, Eji Osá, Eji Eturá, Eji Irete, Eji Eká, Eji Eturukpón, Eji Oché y Eji Ofún. Cada uno de estos signos está compuesto por un número indeterminado de versos que contienen el mensaje específico que el consultado necesita para resolver el problema que lo llevó ante el oráculo.

blanca y la pimienta de Guinea⁸ antes de salir en busca de los caracoles, pero sin revelar cómo usarlos. Sólo Orúnmila preguntó al oráculo qué hacer para cumplir con esa tarea.

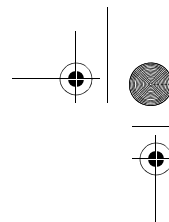
Tan pronto como Orúnmila se puso en camino, Echu, tal y como había actuado con los otros, le siguió la pista. Se transfiguró en cinco criaturas diferentes para suplicarle a Orúnmila que se deshiciera de sus cinco obsequios divinos. De acuerdo con el consejo que obtuvo por medio de la adivinación antes de dejar su hogar, Orúnmila partió con cada uno de sus cinco materiales.

5. Echu, divinidad que funge como equilibrio dinámico de la existencia. Actúa sobre los parámetros del caos cuando ofrece diferentes opciones en el destino de cada hombre, poniendo o quitando obstáculos de su camino, en función de que este sacrifique para pagar su deuda con la humanidad y reconozca la posibilidad de transformación. Echu es una deidad que puede multiplicarse y transfigurarse en la forma que desee, humana o no. Es reconocido como el controlador del sacrificio, el punto de escucha del sistema de adivinación de Ifá para hacer cumplir la profecía del oráculo y el controlador de la autoridad (aché). [El aché es poder vital, autoridad, energía suprema, principio de realización sobre la base de los cuatro elementos naturales primarios; la quintaesencia. El mito yorubá explica que al Universo lo generan dos fuerzas: una de expansión, identificada con la luz, de carácter masculino, cuyo trazo se simboliza con una línea recta que representa los pares; y la otra de contracción, identificada con la oscuridad, de carácter femenino, cuyo trazo es de dos líneas rectas que representan los nones. Estas fuerzas provienen de un lugar mítico conocido por los yorubás como “la casa de la luz”, donde habita una sustancia invisible que transforma la potencia espiritual en una realidad física. Estas fuerzas no pueden anularse entre sí, sino establecen un equilibrio cuya manifestación perfecta se alcanza en el amanecer y en el atardecer mientras se mueven entre la luz y la oscuridad con su doble naturaleza, positiva y negativa. Cuando estas dos fuerzas se unen, originan una tercera, perfecta en sí misma, denominada aché, donde se funden los cuatro elementos primordiales que forman el agente mágico universal: el aire, el agua, la tierra y el fuego. Esta fusión es capaz de generar una nueva vida].

6. *Cola acuminata*; arbusto nativo de África, forma parte de gran la familia Esterculiáceas que pertenece al orden Malvales. Es una nuez muy usada en el culto de Ifá—sagrado por sus orígenes y por el fin con que fue creado. Según expresa la tradición yorubá, la nuez de cola fue creada por Oloddumare no sólo para servir como alimento principal en el Cielo, sino también para ser usada en las oraciones, por lo cual siempre que se vaya a realizar un sacrificio a cualquiera de las deidades, la nuez de cola será la señal de llamada para rogar a la deidad aceptar la ofrenda. Ordinariamente, se emplea como medio de fácil acceso para hacerle preguntas de sí o no a las deidades y como material en rogaciones de cabeza y para ofrecer a las deidades. Sus semillas son medicinales: actúan como tónicos y se utilizan en la medicina universal en forma de tintura y extracto como reconstituyente. También se pueden comer. Cuando están verdes son amargas y se aromatizan al envejecer.

7. *Baphia nitida*, leguminosa de la familia Papilionáceas.

8. *Aframomum melegueta*, de la familia Zingiberáceas, especie africana conocida también como pimienta malagueta y pimienta caimán. Nombre yorubá: odidi ataaré.

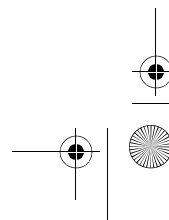
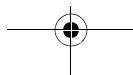
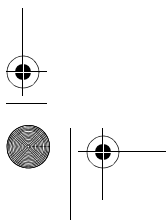


En el momento que se desprendió de su quinto obsequio, Echu apareció y le preguntó qué buscaba. Orúnmila le reveló que Oloddumare le había enviado en busca de caracoles para refrescar los recalentados suelos de la Divinosfera.

Echu percibió que Oloddumare había descubierto sus maquinaciones, y como había recibido lo que quería, le dijo a Orúnmila que mirara a la esquina del bosque, donde él había visto una amplia colección de caracoles. Este tomó dieciséis y regresó a su casa para informar del cumplimiento de la misión. Después de recibir los cinco regalos de Oloddumare y los caracoles ofrecidos en sacrificio, instantáneamente. Echu cortó la onda calorífica que había provocado para recalentar los suelos de la Divinosfera y todo volvió a hacerse fresco de nuevo.

Cuando Oloddumare le pidió a Orúnmila revelar cómo había podido conseguir los caracoles mientras los otros habían fallado, él contó cómo en cinco ocasiones diferentes se le habían acercado cinco criaturas por separado (en las cuales Echu se había transformado) para convencerlo de desprenderse de los cinco obsequios, que él no vaciló en entregar. Orúnmila añadió que después de haberse desprendido del último de los cinco regalos, una extraña criatura le había preguntado qué buscaba y ayudado a obtener los caracoles, los otros recordaron rápidamente que ellos también fueron abordados por criaturas parecidas, pero no creyeron prudente deshacerse de los obsequios divinos.

En ese instante, Oloddumare le dijo a todas las deidades que Él, deliberadamente, se abstuvo de decirles qué debían hacer con los obsequios para comprobar cómo utilizarían su propia iniciativa. Añadió que nadie lograba satisfacer un deseo sin no cedía algo por él, y que a quien le es dado mucho, también se le pide mucho. Si uno necesita tener éxito en un empeño debe estar preparado para deshacerse de una inversión equivalente en materiales, tiempo o paciencia. Así fue como Oloddumare les enseñó a las divinidades la importancia del sacrificio. La expiación hecha para atemperar los calientes suelos



de la Divinosfera fue el primer sacrificio de la historia (Osamaro Ibie, 1996.)

Después el líquido de los caracoles fue utilizado para múltiples propósitos benéficos entre los que se destacan la preparación de medicinas; como ablandador del carácter, en ofrendas a Orichanlá⁹ y a Orí;¹⁰ para rogaciones de cabeza; rituales secretos del culto que van en busca de la sabiduría, la comprensión y el conocimiento y en todo lo que se relaciona con el restablecimiento de la justicia donde esta haya sido olvidada o violada.

Sin embargo, parece que el hombre no ha sido capaz de extraer el simbolismo del mito—fundamentalmente el uso de la sabiduría y la comprensión—, porque aún los suelos están calientes.

Firmado por Daniel Shoer Roth, apareció un artículo en *El Nuevo Herald* cuyo titular reza: “Uso de caracoles en ceremonias de santería genera controversia”:

Importantes representantes de la religión yorubá procedentes de varios países se reunirán el sábado en Miami tras una polémica suscitada por el uso de un determinado género de caracoles africanos en ceremonias de santería.

9. Divinidad representante de Oloddumare en la Tierra, quien la creó para que actuara como si fuera la encarnación de sus propios deseos en términos de bondad al tratar con las demás divinidades. Está dotado de firmeza y determinación y preside el Consejo Divino, que se reúne cada cuatro días. Se le trata como a una archidivinidad con autoridad y poder, capaz no sólo de hacer prósperas a las personas, sino también de multiplicarlas, fomentar y dar la bendición de la procreación. Es popular por dar hijos a mujeres infértiles y por moldear la forma del niño en el útero de la madre; por eso se le llama la divinidad escultora. Es de sexo masculino. Con él se relacionan la luz, la verdad, la pureza, la razón y la justicia. El color que lo distingue es el blanco. Su culto es muy popular incluso fuera de tierras yorubás. En Cuba se le llama Obatalá.

10. Etimológicamente Orí significa cabeza, pero desde el punto de vista filosófico tiene una mayor connotación. Orí es la deidad personal, la esencia, el núcleo del alma, la conciencia pura como energía viviente e inteligente. Rige el destino porque no se desconecta de la verdad trascendente, en tanto el hombre, limitado tridimensionalmente en su experiencia terrenal, funciona en un nivel de conciencia básica, cerebral y lógico-racional; el hombre es conciencia manifestada, lo que cree ser y a lo que se apegas. Los yorubás representan la espiritualidad en Orí como la manifestación divina y eterna de cada entidad. Contiene la información ancestral hereditaria de quién es, qué desea y necesita esa entidad; es su herencia y su futuro. Funciona como conciliadora y soporte directo entre el hombre con sus deseos y las demás divinidades e Ifá. Cuando una persona consulta a Ifá, está indagando los deseos de su Orí, y materialmente se confirma porque el sacerdote de Ifá toca la cabeza del consultante con los instrumentos de adivinación.

La polémica surgió en abril—del año en curso—, cuando se conoció una investigación federal y estatal de un babalao¹¹ norteamericano de Hialeah, Charles Stewart, por el presunto contrabando de estos caracoles, que solamente pueden importarse a Estados Unidos con permisos especiales para investigaciones científicas.

Stewart, de 48 años y de origen inglés y dominicano, afirmó que el jugo de los caracoles se emplea en un ritual de curación de la religión Ifá/Oricha. No obstante, otro sector de practicantes argumentó que ese procedimiento no forma parte de la liturgia.

José Montoya, presidente del Ministerio Shangó Eyeífe en Miami, explicó que la división interna ha fomentado una mala imagen de la santería a escala internacional.

“Varios sacerdotes se han manifestado públicamente contra la práctica tradicional de donde descende precisamente nuestra religión”, afirmó Montoya, organizador del encuentro que sesionará en el recinto norte del Miami Dade College, 11380 Northwest 27th Avenue.

Enfatizó que este es un clásico ejemplo de las divergencias entre quienes siguen la religión de manera ancestral y los que la practican en la forma actual. Para ello, han traído a un alto sacerdote en Ifá de Nigeria, Jokotoye Awolade Bankole-Adifala.

“La mayoría de nuestra gente está olvidando nuestra tradición original y cultura”, dijo en yorubá Bankole-Adifala, que asegura poder trazar su linaje familiar hasta Oduduwa,¹² el patriarca de la religión Ifá.

No obstante, el santero Ernesto Pichardo afirmó que el consumo de estos caracoles como parte de un ritual es “inaudito” en la santería.

“Nunca había visto ese tipo de caracol en mi vida en ningún lugar donde he practicado la religión”, dijo Pichardo en abril. “Nunca he oído hablar de un ritual donde se beba agua del caracol”.

En Cuba, cuando aparece el odu Irete Ogbe los babalawos cogen una jícara con agua, sal y un caracol al que le marcan dicho odu y colocan la jícara detrás de la puerta de la casa; además, cuando se hace una consagración de Ocha se hace este ritual para ahuyentar a la policía

11. Esta es la referencia más usada en Cuba para nombrar al sacerdote de Ifá como “padre que guarda secretos”: Baba li awo: (baba) padre, (awo) misterio (babalawo).

12. Esta deidad está recogida en el mito como el primer rey de la sociedad yorubá (Olofin Akokó) y es reconocido como el ascendente directo de los reyes de Ilé Ife: Ooni, a quien se le considera emparentado por consanguinidad con dicha deidad. Según Fa'lokun Fatunmbi, en ob.cit.: “Desde el punto de vista metafísico [representa] el poder de la contracción [...]. Oduwa es una expresión original de las estructuras de las leyes de la naturaleza cuando se manifiestan en la Tierra. Orichanlá representa la calidad expansiva de la luz, mientras que Oduwa representa la calidad contractiva de la oscuridad. Juntos, los principios de la expansión y de la contracción, o la luz y la oscuridad, generan la polaridad de la dinámica y la forma en el mundo visible”.

(quizás buscando el restablecimiento de la justicia, uno de los fines de este caracol terrestre), aunque es factible aclarar que esta especie de caracol no existe en Cuba, por él se emplea el común caracol terrestre *Limax maximus*, de la clase *Gastropoda*, perteneciente a la familia *Limacidae*, o sea, la babosa gris.¹³ (Soher Roth, 2010a).

“Yo soy tradicionalista e imparto mi religión como aprendí a hacerlo de mis mayores”, dijo Stewart a *El Nuevo Herald*.

Stewart será uno de los invitados al congreso del sábado, donde expondrá las razones por las cuales sostiene que sus prácticas son auténticas de Ifá/Oricha. “Nuestro objetivo es el respeto mutuo a nuestras tradiciones”, subrayó. A la conferencia asistirán delegados de varias ciudades de Estados Unidos, así como de Venezuela, Argentina, Brasil y Nigeria.

Tony Martín, un babalao afrocubano de West Kendall, explicó que en Cuba no existe la especie de caracoles que usan los yorubás africanos. En la isla, los practicantes tuvieron que adaptarse a las circunstancias y optar por un caracol nativo. “No fue sólo el caracol, sino también muchos elementos de origen vegetal, animal y mineral que forman parte de las consagraciones religiosas”, señaló Martín, y agregó que los caracoles que se usan en Cuba se encuentran también en la Florida (Soher Roth, 2010a).

Cuando llegó el esperado sábado, se leía en *El Nuevo Herald* el siguiente titular: “Santeros deciden crear comité de ética para regular prácticas”:

Sacerdotes de la religión yorubá reunidos en Miami el fin de semana llegaron a un consenso para crear un comité de ética internacional a fin de regular sus prácticas, comentó el organizador de la reunión.

El comité, que será designado en un congreso en noviembre también en Miami, tendrá la tarea de crear un manual de normas de la santería para establecer los mandamientos éticos de esta religión milenaria que ha sido transmitida principalmente de manera oral.

“Estos mandamientos serán adaptados a la época”, dijo el babao-

13. Muchas veces este caracol terrestre es sustituido por un huevo de gallina dada su escasez.

sha¹⁴ José Montoya, organizador del congreso. “Basado precisamente en el gran número de representantes que formarán parte del comité de ética, estos mandamientos adquirirán automáticamente una visión legal entre los practicantes”.

Los babalaos de varias partes del mundo vinieron a Miami a limar asperezas entre quienes siguen la religión de forma tradicional Ifá/Ori-cha y quienes interpretan las enseñanzas según la tradición lucumí o afrocubana.

Según los tradicionalistas, el babalao tiene la supremacía dentro de la religión y debe estar presente en todas las ceremonias y consagraciones. En cambio, la tradición lucumí permite excluir la presencia del sacerdote mayor en ciertos ritos, dando la potestad a santeros de menor jerarquía.

“Eso va en detrimento de la religión”, dijo el babalao Roberto Cuesta, de la rama de Ifá. “Están tratando de transformarla a su estilo y manera”.

Una de las diferencias fundamentales entre la práctica yorubá ancestral y la afrocubana está relacionada con el ritual de las iniciaciones.

En la práctica afrocubana, estas ceremonias incluyen varios orichas o santos. A los siete días de la consagración, el iniciado acoge en su cuerpo varias deidades.

No obstante, en el orden yorubá tradicional, la persona es iniciada solamente con un oricha y, más adelante, con otros orichas si creen que es necesario.

“En África, la religión yorubá está dividida en zonas y territorios, que determinan los nombres de las diferentes deidades”, explicó Cuesta. “Por eso la persona de cada territorio consagra un oricha específico”.

En Cuba, que recibió esclavos yorubás de diferentes territorios africanos, hubo una fusión y las nuevas consagraciones comenzaron a incluir a todos los orichas en un solo acto, indicó Cuesta.

La celebración del reciente congreso fue precipitada, entre otros aspectos por la polémica en torno al empleo del jugo de un caracol africano de la especie *Achatina fulica*, que está prohibida en Estados Unidos. [...] Algunos babalaos de la tradición lucumí se oponen a esta práctica.

“Mucha gente de la diáspora está viajando a África para iniciarse en las tradiciones originales”, comentó Stewart. “En la medida en que estas costumbres han ido popularizándose en la diáspora, ciertos sectores de santeros locales se han preocupado”.

14. Padre de santo; padrino.

Según Montoya, desde que hace cuatro días se abrió el cupo para el congreso de noviembre se han inscrito más de quinientos representantes de las religiones yorubá y bantú, esta última conocida popularmente como palo mayombe, incluidos santeros que residen en Cuba (Soher Roth, 2010b).

El refranero español contiene una verdad simple: “Según Galeno, lo que para uno es malo para otro es bueno”.

Cuando no se sabe a dónde se va cualquier camino da lo mismo¹⁵

Ifá, el sistema tradicional del pensamiento y la cultura yorubá, tiene su matriz en Nigeria, África, aunque no han faltado quienes se han atrevido aseverar que es puramente cubano. Hoy, a la distancia en el tiempo del arribo de los primeros barcos de negros traídos de África por la trata como esclavos a tierras de América, la controversia entre los practicantes de Ifá tradicional por un lado y quienes practican Ifá al estilo afrocubano por otro, adquiere matices dramáticos que van de la ignorancia, el odio, la rivalidad, el descrédito, la intolerancia, la indiferencia, los intereses económicos y hegemónicos hasta la perversidad. La zanja abierta por ambos partidarios, atrincherados en defensa de sus respectivos puntos de vista, sobrepasa las argumentaciones y llega hasta la agresión verbal y física e incluso a las Cortes de Justicia.

Este fenómeno de “reclamación de autenticidad o validación religiosa”, por llamarlo de alguna manera, comenzó a galopar discretamente a partir de la década del 80 con la visita del Ooni de Ife¹⁶ a Cuba en 1987. El máximo representante de la religión yorubá obsequió públicamente al sacerdote de Ifá Filiberto O’Farril una vara de autoridad. En aquellos años no existía lo que hoy se conoce como Sociedad Cultural Yoruba, que realizó su primer encuentro en 1992; O’Farril representaba entonces a un grupo de babalawos que restab-

15. Proverbio yorubá.

lecieron la tradición de sacar la letra del año,¹⁷ una ceremonia que se había abandonado desde 1959.

El simbolismo de la vara de autoridad dentro de esta cultura¹⁸ ratificaba la aceptación por parte de los yorubás de la práctica de Ifá en Cuba y admitía su autoridad como una abanderada que había mantenido viva y en crecimiento a esa tradición. Ningún otro acto o sentencia del Ooni o del Consejo Internacional de la Religión de Ifá ha invalidado este reconocimiento. De hecho Wande Abimbola, vocero de Ifá para el mundo—quien ha visitado Cuba a través de los años y se ha relacionado con diferentes sacerdotes de Ifá—, no ha demeritado nunca al Ifá “cubano”. En sentido general, se refirió a una diferencia práctica cuando dijo que en América “se ha hecho énfasis en los rituales de sangre [...] y en los aspectos visuales, como ropas y collares.

16. El Ooni de Ife es conocido también como Onirisa, ya que está por encima de cualquier ser humano. Este se encuentra en la cúspide de la pirámide sacerdotal seguido por sus dieciséis jefes de palacio o ciudad (Ijoye Ooni), después los siguen sus dieciséis adivinadores: Awonis; y por último, los Otu, dieciséis sacerdotes que disponen de los sacrificios realizados por los Awonis para el Ooni. También forman parte de esta infraestructura tres cuerpos de oficiales que asisten al rey y a los jefes de Ife: el Emese, cuyos miembros actúan como mensajeros del rey y sus representantes en los variados festivales religiosos que se efectúan en Ife; el grupo conocido como Ogungbe [Ogun-(e)gbe: Sociedad guerrera], encargado de arrestar criminales y los Ogboni, que sirve como una de las más altas cortes de justicia. Cada uno de estos grupos de dieciséis tiene una jerarquía interna.

17. Después de realizar una serie de ofrendas, a finales del mes de diciembre, el primero de enero (inicio del año cristiano), se realiza una adivinación para el país cuyas prescripciones regirán durante todo el año. El precedente de esta ceremonia es una reunión anual que se celebra en tierras yorubás conocida como el festival del ñame o Molé, que además sirve para agasajar al rey, de ahí también su otro nombre: festival Egbodo Oba Oni y se realiza en el mes de junio, inicio del año del calendario yorubá. A partir del año 1986 se retomó en Cuba esta práctica y se ha realizado hasta la fecha, con la peculiaridad de que, generalmente, se sacan dos letras, una por la Asociación Cultural Yoruba y otra por un grupo de sacerdotes liderado por Lázaro Cuesta. Se ha dado el caso en que han sacado tres letras de odu diferentes para regir. Por otro lado, la casa del sacerdote Frank Cabrera, saca su letra en junio tal cual los yorubá. Este fenómeno, de pluralidad de letras para un país, se reproduce en el resto de Latinoamérica y los Estados Unidos, donde diferentes casas religiosas se pronuncian con predicciones para todo el año. Actualmente, también está llegando a América, vía web, la letra que rige a los yorubás desde Ife.

18. Cuando el proceso de adivinación de Ifá va a dar comienzo, el sacerdote de Ifá gentilmente golpea la bandeja de adivinación con el percutor. Esta acción es un saludo y una invocación para pedir a Orúnmila que revele el odu que muestre los deseos del Orí del suplicante. En un sentido, el golpeteo es la manifestación visible de lo que metafísicamente da comienzo al proceso de adivinación. Su forma larga y delgada es tallada en marfil (sobre todo para los reyes y jefes de alto rango), bronce y comúnmente en madera. Portar la vara denota que el sacerdote goza de un alto rango social.

Cuando los descendientes de los yorubás en las América perdieron la literatura y la filosofía, se concentraron en los aspectos visuales y rituales de la religión” (Abimbola, 1997b).

Hasta ese momento los sacerdotes cubanos residentes en la Isla habían sido considerados el punto de referencia y los paladines del culto de Ifá para el resto del mundo, pero en la década del 90 las contradicciones se hicieron palpables y adquirieron nuevos matices. De un lado estaban los que plantearon si se debía conceptualizar el culto de Ifá/Ocha como un producto cubano, nuevo e independiente. Del otro, a favor de reformar y renovar buscando legitimar el culto bajo la influencia de un proceso de yorubización.

A partir de la aprobación de ingresar a las filas del P.C.C. de los religiosos cubanos, casi de forma inmediata se buscaron contactos con los yorubás. Todo lo *afro* estaba a flor de piel. El culto Ifá/Ocha no sólo estaba ganando cada día más adeptos. Junto con el crecimiento horizontal, se percibía falta de espiritualidad y carencia de valores. El culto se convirtió—en sentido casi general—en un objeto turístico, exportable y de negocios que reportó no pocos dividendos a las familias cubanas que atravesaban un período intenso y profundo de crisis económica al cabo de la disolución de la URSS. Por las calles se podía apreciar a los sacerdotes de Ifá cubanos luciendo trajes típicos yorubas. al punto de que uno podía preguntarse qué estaba pasando, si como todos sabemos—y como bien escribió Cintio Vitier—: “un negro cubano típico se parece más a un blanco cubano típico que a un negro de África” (Vitier, 1970).

Los cubanos que habían emigrado a los Estados Unidos buscaron contacto con yorubás en tierras africanas, al igual que muchos venezolanos y puertorriqueños. Los primeros, en parte, abrieron el camino al regresar a Cuba de visita a sus antiguas casas religiosas. Con ello viajó la moneda dura, el dólar norteamericano, en medio de un duro período de existencia entre apagones, escasez de agua, alimentación y ropas. Por aquel entonces, el valor de un dólar norteamericano oscilaba desde ciento veinte hasta ciento cincuenta pesos cubanos.

El culto Ifá/Ocha no sólo estaba en ese tiempo perdiendo su ancestral fuerza y empuje en el ámbito internacional sino también credibilidad. No fueron pocos los ataques a soportar.

Largo es el camino de la enseñanza por medio de teorías; breve y eficaz por medio de ejemplos¹⁹

La Asociación Española de Ifá (AESI) se pronuncia y delimita el terreno de la disputa cuando plantea en un documento desde Valencia:

1º Entendemos que Cuba no ha llevado a otras partes del mundo la fe y el amor por la religión tradicional de Ifá y la tradición religiosa Orisa. Es más, Cuba, excepto en el inicio de la llegada de los esclavos yorubás a su territorio, nunca más ha practicado estas disciplinas religiosas puras, tal y como las llevaron los esclavos africanos en sus inicios, lo cual hace imposible que ahora puedan llevarlas a otros lugares, según manifiesta. No puede transmitirse lo que nunca se ha tenido.

2º Aceptamos que Cuba sí ha llevado a muchas partes del mundo la Regla Ocha (la Santería), y una particular interpretación del culto a Ifá que en ese país se ha desarrollado como producto terminado de un intenso sincretismo, mezcla o hibridación de las antiguas creencias de los antepasados yorubás y el cristianismo de los colonizadores españoles de la época...

3º Por lo expresado en el punto 1, reconocemos que en Cuba nunca se ha practicado ni se practica el llamado tradicionalismo africanista, el que representa a la religión tradicional de Ifá y a las tradiciones religiosas Orisas legítimas, tal y como han existido y existen, se han practicado y se practican en territorios yorubás de África Occidental. (Ifashade Odugbemi, 2004).

Y, finalmente, después de pronunciarse y delimitar terreno en la controversia, la asociación blande su daga y la clava sobre su oponente de manera injusta cuando en el punto vigésimo plantea categóricamente:

19.

Ningún seguidor del tradicionalismo Orisa/Ifá africanista, supuestamente defensor de los principios aquí establecidos, tendrá motivos ni razón alguna para entrar y/o permanecer en la casa Orisa/Ifá de cualquier miembro de la Ocha/Ifá cubano...²⁰

Es curioso señalar que el presidente de esta Asociación Española de Ifá/Orisa tradicional sea un cubano nacido en La Habana el 19 de noviembre de 1949. En 1961—es decir, a la edad de doce años—, se consagró en la Regla Ocha como seguidor de Changó²¹ y en 1975, a los veinticinco años, se consagró como babalawo en el culto de Ifá cubano hasta 1992, en que se convirtió en un exiliado político en España. Después se reinició en Ocha e Ifá tradicionalista africano en la ciudad de Ikire, Nigeria, y en 2003 fundó la AESI.

Ante estas ideas muy cercanas al fundamentalismo, cabe la pregunta de a qué se referirán estos grupos cuando hablan de *tradicionalismo*. ¿Será a la forma en que se practicaba el Ifá en tierras yorubás antes de la colonización inglesa y la trata de esclavos? ¿Al Ifá que practican las generaciones actuales de sacerdotes yorubás? De hecho, curiosamente, dentro de Cuba hay disparidad de criterios cuando se habla de tradicionalismo, al extremo de crearse enemistades entre familiares de sangre y religión. Existe un primer grupo partidario de hacerlo todo de la manera *tradicional*, como se lo enseñaron sus mayores; un segundo grupo asume como una cruzada rescatar las ceremonias *tradicionales* que se hacían a principios del siglo XX y ya no se hacen (esta pérdida caería sobre los hombros del primer grupo) y, por último, los que son etiquetados (por ambos grupos) de tradicionalistas de vertiente africana: quieren cambiar las cosas que siempre se han hecho en

20. Esta información aparece en el acta de una reunión extraordinaria de la AESI, el 17 de septiembre de 2004 celebrada en su sede principal en la ciudad de Valencia y los aspectos señalados aquí no son los únicos que trata.

21. Changó Arémú Olufinran: Divinidad de los rayos y la electricidad. Es viril y gallardo, violento y justiciero, libertino, aventurero, guerrero, feroz y agresivo. Castiga a los mentirosos, ladrones y malhechores, golpeando el pecho de las personas y produciéndoles un infarto. Es la representación arquetípica del ancestro deificado de regreso a la fuente como deidad después de haber vivido en la Tierra todas las experiencias que le permitieron crecer espiritualmente. Es por eso que a Changó se le considera, después de su transformación, como “el alba”, aquello que está allí antes que todo dé inicio en el transcurso de un nuevo día; “el testigo de toda consagración de Ifá”.

Cuba (aquí se percibe una unión como *mal necesario* entre los dos primeros grupos), o sea, el tercer grupo es responsable de permear la Regla Ifá/Ocha de *cosas nuevas* que acabarían con la *tradición*. Sin embargo, esos *nuevos* elementos forman parte del cuerpo filosófico-literario de Ifá desde siempre; por lo tanto, son anteriores al momento en que se comenzó su práctica en Cuba. El resto de América Latina y los Estados Unidos también atraviesan por esta crisis.

Asimismo están los yorubás, no menos importantes en esta disputa aunque estén al otro lado del Atlántico o viviendo en Norteamérica. Estos han interactuado con los sacerdotes del Nuevo Mundo de manera individual y sin un patrón litúrgico que dé uniformidad a los criterios africanistas. Más bien han abierto nuevos accesos a nuestro camino ya sincrético. Por consiguiente, para nuestra problemática actual no hay respuesta escrita o hablada.

En realidad, todos somos dueños de la *tradición* porque la defendemos a capa y espada; lo que necesitamos es comprenderla y honrarla mediante el diálogo enriquecedor, la fraternidad en las relaciones, la aceptación de los puntos de vista del otro; no hay que sentir vergüenza por aprender.

De algo podemos estar seguros: la cultura no es estática y afecta de manera contundente el contenido y la forma de las manifestaciones religiosas. Wande Abimbola explica:

Los yorubás han intercambiado muchos orichas con sus vecinos. [...] De ahí que haya tanto sincretismo en las ceremonias religiosas de Brasil y Cuba, porque eso mismo llegó del África. Ese cordón trenzado que comenzó en África, llegó a las Américas y se mantiene en ambas partes hasta la actualidad. [...] Los yorubás y africanos en general se mezclaron con los vecinos mucho antes de sobrevenir la esclavitud. Un buen ejemplo de ello es la cercana relación entre los yorubás, los fon y los ewe. Aún estos pueblos van a Ilé Ifé para estudiar Ifá. Uno de los errores de los estudiosos es pensar que los africanos no se mezclaban con otros antes de la colonización. Pero debemos recordarles que antes de la colonización, las fronteras de hoy no existían y los pueblos se movían libremente. Había más mezcla popular que hoy en día (Abimbola, 1997b).

Se puede tomar como ejemplo uno de los pilares de la filosofía de Ifá: el respeto a la ancianidad o jerarquía, descrito en los mitos a partir del orden señorial de los odus de Ifá por el que se rige toda la liturgia. William Bascom realizó un exhaustivo trabajo de investigación acerca del orden concebido por los diferentes asentamientos de la nación yorubá y compiló diferentes listas: una para Ife, otra para Ondo, Oyo y Benin y otra para el Suroeste yorubá (que coincide con el orden aplicado en Cuba y el dado por autores como Abimbola, Falade y Mau-poil). Su estudio también reveló que “un examen de ochenta y seis listas de las dieciséis figuras de Ifá basadas en sesenta y una fuentes, establecieron que estos nombres [de los odus] son correlativos a través del país yorubá, con algunas modificaciones en pronunciación y deletreo entre los fon de Dahomey, los ewe de Togo y Ghana, como también en Cuba y Brasil” (Bascom, 1991).

Las diferencias para estos órdenes señoriales también encuentran explicación en los mitos recitados por los sacerdotes, pero nos referiremos a uno solo que es lo suficientemente explícito:

Mucho después de que el pueblo de Oyo fuera fundado por Orunmi-yan; cuyo nombre en realidad es Yigbe, el hijo mayor del olofen,²² el Oseusluwo de Ife, los pobladores de Oyo decidieron encontrarse con Ogbe Eturá, un discípulo de Orúnmila en Ife, para que les enseñara la seña de los dieciséis olodús de Ifá. Ogbe Eturá les trazó los dieciséis odus en la bandeja de Ifá y ellos decidieron trasladar la bandeja de regreso a Oyo con las señales trazadas sobre esta.

En su camino de regreso a casa, hubo mucho viento fuerte (vendaval) que desordenó algunos trazos. Al llegar, trataron de reordenarlos por nombres y números, pero perdieron la secuencia después del décimo odu. Ogbe Eturá regresó al Cielo antes de que pudiera corregir los trazos, y es por eso que los pobladores de Oyo se han mantenido en su secuencia desde entonces, debido a la relación especial entre los reinos de Oyo y Benin; los bení aprendieron el arte de Ifá Not-Ogueya—el equivalente del arte de Ifá de los sacerdotes de Oyo (Osamaro Ibie, 1996).

22. Olofen (Olofi, Olofin o Alaafin): Se refiere a un título honorífico con que se distingue al rey de un territorio, “el señor que reina en el castillo”.

En la literatura de Ifá ha ocurrido algo similar. Hay historias que, básicamente, cuentan lo mismo; pero divergen en lo que podría llamarse la escenografía de la trama. Es, entre otros, el caso de la conocida historia de las tradiciones de Ifá en Cuba, en el odu Owanrin Ogbe, donde Echu²³ decide enfrentar a dos amigos que aseguraban no reñirían por causa alguna. Tiene reconocidas, al menos, cuatro versiones con cambios específicos en los colores u objetos responsables de la disputa, aunque la esencia permanece: en una la gorra es roja y negra; en otra, una camisa roja y negra el objeto de la disputa; en otra, un caballo blanco y negro y, por último, existe una versión donde Echu pasa entre los amigos con una parte de la cabeza peinada y la otra no:

El cuento de la gorra de dos colores de Echu que causa que dos amigos se peleen cuando empiezan a discutir de qué color es la misma, ha sido registrado en cuatro versiones yorubás y un análogo de los mpongwe de Gabón, que involucra un abrigo de dos colores, mitad rojo y mitad azul.

[Esta historia] fue registrada en un suburbio de Ife, colonizado durante las guerras del último siglo: los arabas después explicaban que el lado izquierdo del gorro era negro y que el derecho era blanco; este versículo no era conocido por cuatro de los mejores adivinadores de Ife, pero un informante había oído historias similares en las cuales los colores se cambiaban en blanco, rojo, negro o verde. Un sacerdote del culto de Echu residente en Oyo describe cómo Echu hace reñir a los buenos amigos usando para ello una gorra que es negra por un lado y blanca por el otro; y una más completa versión de esta historia, con un gorra negra y roja, fue recogida de los labios de un sacerdote del culto de Echu en Meko, el cual concluyó con este comentario: “esta sí es la verdadera historia”. [...] Esta comparación también aparece en los cuentos recogidos por Frobenius [...], en los cuales la gorra alternaba los cuatro colores: verde, negro, rojo y blanco, y el que fue recogido por Herskovits y Herskovits [...] de un informante yorubá para el cual la gorra era roja y blanca (Bascom, 1991).

23. Echu actúa sobre los parámetros del caos cuando ofrece diferentes opciones en el destino de cada hombre, poniendo o quitando obstáculos de su camino, en función de que este sacrifique para que pague su deuda con la humanidad y reconozca la posibilidad de transformación.

Puede decirse que tanto en Cuba como entre los yorubás, esta historia ha sufrido los embates de la oralidad, pero de hecho hay otro importante cambio: la versión recogida por Bascom en su libro está documentada dentro del cuerpo filosófico de la tradición yorubá en el odu de Ifá Iwori Ofún (distinto al de Cuba, que es Owanrin Ogbe).

Según Abimbola:

[Los poemas de Ifá] tienen una estructura de ocho partes, de las cuales, cuatro son obligatorias y las restantes cuatro opcionales [...] Todos los sacerdotes de Ifá dentro de una misma área de dialecto cantan las partes obligatorias con el mismo acento y el mismo estilo de presentación. Pero las cuatro partes opcionales se cantan por cada sacerdote de Ifá con su propio lenguaje, estilo e imaginación al narrar la historia de cada poema, cuyo marco él ha aprendido de su maestro (Abimbola, 1975b).

Philip Neimark, sacerdote de Ifá Fagbamila, quien escribe sobre la religión yorubá y cuyo mentor es Afolabi A. Epega, se refiere también a la condición de “extrapolar y ofrecer interpretaciones” que debe tener en cuenta un sacerdote de Ifá:

Lejos de ser literales e inalterables, los odus están vivos. Son organismos complejos que esperan ser relacionados únicamente con la energía personal de cada cliente antes de ser “escritos”. La tragedia de este falso entendimiento es que durante varios miles de años de escuelas misioneras y estudios occidentales, muchos practicantes de Ifá han aceptado una visión estática fija de los odus (Conner y Hartfiel Sparks, 2004).

Ninguno de estos elementos puede considerarse o justificarse *un invento* dentro de la literatura o la liturgia del sistema filosófico de Ifá, sólo nos permiten comprender mejor la movilidad cultural:

De las entrañas mismas de la práctica religiosa y, en general, social, van surgiendo historias frescas que dan cuenta de las más recientes intervenciones de los orichas en los asuntos humanos, de sus virtudes y sus vicios, de sus premios y castigos, de las vicisitudes de sus hijos humanos; historias que se mueven dentro de los patrones y esquemas del mismo modo de pensamiento y se despliegan bajo las mismas pautas del discurso. (Lahaye Guerra y Sardoya Loreda, 1996).

Por último, citaremos la respuesta de Abimbola cuando le preguntaron sobre la fidelidad del ritual que se hace hoy respecto a épocas lejanas:

Es muy posible que hayamos olvidado algunos o muchos de los rituales. Admito, que no hacemos tanto énfasis como se hace en otras partes en algunos rituales. Muchos rituales se han mantenido y se realizan en la diáspora actualmente. Si es mejor en África o en las Américas, es lo que nunca podré decir. Pero una de las cosas que diré, es que se ha vuelto muy costoso (Abimbola, 1997b).

En el odu de Ifá Ogbe Idí se dice que “el saber se repartió”, así que cada fracción debe tener una parte de razón en lo que hace y dice. No es un azar que en la historia de los caracoles para refrescar los suelos, Orúnmila repartió los regalos divinos que simbolizaban la inteligencia, un atributo humano que Oloddumare espera usemos.

El conocimiento viene, pero la sabiduría se demora²⁴

Ante la pregunta ya común sobre si un iniciado en América debe ir a Nigeria y volver a iniciarse, el sacerdote de Ifá Abiodun Agboola de origen yorubá respondió:

Esto es un error y siempre me lo han preguntado, el babalawo de esas tierras es babalawo, no debe hacer Ifá en ninguna otra parte del mundo, es y será babalawo ante los ojos de Oloddumare. Las consagraciones que se realizan en cualquier parte del mundo son verdaderas y las respetamos como cualquier ceremonia tradicional; solamente debe hacer una pequeña ceremonia que se llama acercamiento a Elá,²⁵ que le otorgará linajes ancestrales nigerianos además de los que ya posee. Al igual que para nosotros es muy importante que la persona tenga ceremonias consagradoras de oricha (Agboola, 2008).

Este hecho suele recordarme el caso de muchos latinos que han emprendido ese camino—lo cual no me parece mal—, pero hay uno particularmente interesante: la experiencia del joven sacerdote de Ifá venezolano José Hidalgo (Idí Ogbe). Fue consagrado al estilo afroc-

24. Alfred Tennyson, poeta inglés.

bano por el sacerdote de Ifá venezolano Julio Prado; pocos años después decidió ir a África:

Estando allá me dije: yo vivo de Orúnmila y creo rotundamente en él, por lo tanto si lo que tengo no está bien debo rectificarlo. Un sacerdote de Ifá, dirigido por el Chief Sikiru Solagbade Popoola, que es el custodio de las escrituras de Ifá, me realizó mis primeras consultas para verificar mi consagración de Ifá estuviera bien, para mi sorpresa, el primer odu de Ifá fue Idí Ogbe [el mismo odu que había atefado ²⁶ cuando fue consagrado como babalawo años atrás] dándome una alegría extraña con un poco de miedo. El segundo odu fue Ogbe Osa y el tercero fue Idí Ogbe nuevamente. En ese pequeño lapso pasaron muchas cosas negativas por mi cabeza [...]. Los sacerdotes de Ifá empiezan su conversación felicitándome y haciendo hincapié en que Orúnmila estaba muy bien en mi consagración “ya que estábamos absueltos por falta de culpas.” [¿Culpas? ¿Es que hacerse Ifá al estilo afrocubano es un error?]

Desde ese momento realmente me sentí orgulloso de todo el sacrificio que he venido haciendo hasta el día de hoy [Yo agregaría algo mucho más importante que el sacrificio personal que debió experimentar José Hidalgo y parece no tuvo en cuenta y es que las consagraciones que recibí del padrino venezolano, su benefactor, estaban bien hechas y ningún yorubá pudo hacer crítica alguna según el proceso adivinatorio a que se sometió. Sin embargo, puntualiza el sacerdote]: “a raíz de todo esto tomé la decisión de traer a Venezuela al Chief Sikiru Solagbade

25. Etimológicamente Elá se relaciona con: seguridad; preservación; salvación. Elá es reconocida como la primera fuente de comunicación; la encarnación de la sabiduría, la comprensión y el conocimiento en todas sus formas verbales y visuales; el principio espiritual, la creación primigenia que hace comprensible para los humanos la naturaleza de Oloddumare y de toda su Creación. El sonido originario del cual aparecieron y se manifestaron todos los niveles estructurales que emergieron después—como la voz humana. Según Fa'lokun Fatunmbi, en ob.cit.: “Elá es el poder que da la expresión a las formas que existen en la naturaleza de Oloddumare [y] está constantemente dando soporte a las formas que existen en la matriz de Oloddumare. En términos metafísicos, Elá crea la palabra en el presente momento. [...] La descripción de Ifá sobre la relación entre Elá y Echu es una expresión del efecto de la Divina Voluntad sobre los parámetros del caos [pues según la cosmogonía yorubá], Elá es la única fuerza que neutraliza la acción de Echu cuando le pone límites a la desorganización causada por este”.

26. Atefar es el término que se emplea en Cuba para el proceso de la manipulación de las nueces de palma—por parte del sacerdote—que revelarán el odu de Ifá sobre la bandeja de adivinación. Esta palabra, asumida en Cuba para dicha actividad, no se encuentra entre las voces yorubás con el mismo significado. Según investigaciones de William Bascon recogidas en ob.cit.: “El tablero de adivinar es conocido como opón en Ife y dondequiera, sin embargo, con el nombre “atefa” o “ate Ifá” es conocido en Meko y en el Dahomey”. Al parecer, en nuestro país se asumió el mismo vocablo para el instrumento de adivinación y para el proceso de adivinar, que entre los yorubás se llama dafá.

Popoola para que se encargara de dirigir y de enseñarnos cómo es que realmente se consagra un Ifá [...]”.

Si su Ifá estaba bien consagrado como manifestó ¿por qué habría de enseñar el señor sacerdote Solagbade Popoola cómo consagrar un Ifá? Y continúa:

[...] Llegando a nuestro país -suscribe José Hidalgo—tuvimos la oportunidad de que este babalawo dirigiera y nos enseñara en los treinta y cinco ifases que hizo y las setenta y cuatro iyanifá²⁷ [que consagró] dejando en nosotros enseñanzas [y finaliza diciendo] Sres. lectores como ustedes se pueden dar cuenta, mi Ifá fue aceptado entre todos estos obas²⁸ dando a entender que nuestras consagraciones, a pesar de que perdieron la mayor parte de su linaje están bien.²⁹

Estas palabras evocan un refrán español: “Deuda pagada, otra empezada” y de su propio odu de Ifá—con el que fue consagrado por un venezolano y también repitió en África—, el proverbio que dice: “Usted puede volver con lo que siempre tuvo”. Como afirman muchos viejos sacerdotes cubanos: “Ifá no se equivoca, su palabra nunca cae al piso porque siempre habrá una cabeza para recogerla”. Entonces cabe preguntarse: ¿alguien puede atestiguar acerca de un Ifá “puro” africano?

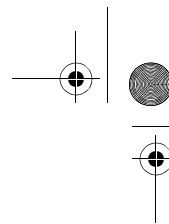
El asunto del linaje es como el as bajo la manga de quienes han movido el péndulo hacia el extremo africanista. Aunque las invocaciones en América también confirman su linaje ofreciendo sus respetos a Akodá y Asedá como los primeros sacerdotes entrenados por Orúnmila en el arte de Ifá, es cierto que los siguientes nombres son criollos —a excepción de Addé Iná³⁰ y otros pocos de ascendencia yorubá—, porque con la desarticulación de la familia africana se fracturaron tam-

27. Mujeres que acceden a los secretos del culto de Ifá conocidas también como iyalawo, las cuales estudian los odu y consultan el oráculo—entre otras ceremonias—, con algunas exclusiones, porque no están autorizadas a ver y/o recibir Igba Odu, que es la máxima ceremonia para un hombre en Ifá. Igba Odu es conocida como “la esposa mítica de Ifá”.

28. Rey.

29. Tomado del sitio web www.edibere.com.ve

30. Considerado uno de los precursores de Ifá en Cuba. Se dice que nació en tierra iyezá, Nigeria y su nombre criollo fue Remigio Herrera.



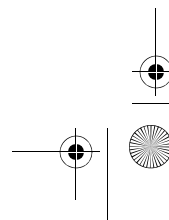
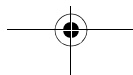
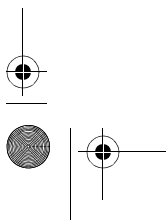
bién los linajes y las estructuras de parentesco; el anclaje identitario se extrapoló del nexa biológico al espiritual.

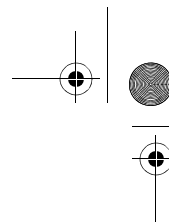
El mundo yorubá fue restaurado [...] en torno del culto de los orichas como encarnaciones modelares de tipos de personalidad. La personalidad fue la noción que permaneció cuando las ataduras regionales y de linaje que sustentaban los cultos de orichas particulares y los vinculaban a la familia y a la localidad se perdieron como consecuencia de la trata de esclavos. [...] la línea de descendencia fue transferida para una familia no-biológica, ritualmente constituida y reproducida (Segato, 2003).

El oráculo se convirtió en el único medio para develar la ascendencia sagrada porque ya no había familiares de quienes heredar la deidad que acompañaría al individuo en la realización de su destino, y en las ceremonias de Ocha—también a partir del oráculo—se revela el segundo oricha que completará el matrimonio sagrado. Homenajando así a los linajes patriarcal y/o matriarcal. No debe olvidarse que en la propia Nigeria, la trata y las luchas internas contra cruzadas cristianas hicieron desaparecer o quebraron fraternidades completas.

Hay que confiar en que seremos capaces de resolver este conflicto y de lograr el reconocimiento de nuestros ancestros nacidos en estas tierras de América. Debe partirse del convencimiento cultural yorubá de que los seres humanos reencarnamos habitualmente dentro de la misma familia y no podemos excluir la posibilidad de que algunos de nosotros cambiamos de color. Pero nuestros ancestros, con su infinita sapiencia, recompusieron en otra geografía linajes rotos por la barbarie.

Los mitos de la cultura Ifá han demostrado que toda representación del mundo gira alrededor del hombre, él es la más importante realidad, los otros reinos giran a su alrededor. Por eso mientras más lejos de él se haga el análisis y la comprensión de la naturaleza y su comportamiento, menos comprensible se hará este. En estos tiempos de rápidos cambios sociales y ambientales, se hace mucho más necesario conocer al hombre, al ser humano individual, al ser humano colectivo, porque de la experiencia acumulada depende no mucho, sino





todo; de ahí que sea imprescindible conocer su auténtica identidad: su pasado. Y esto sólo es posible bebiendo de la savia depositada en los mitos a través de sus símbolos.

Dios me dé en mi casa tomates y berenjenas y no faisanes y salmones en la ajena³¹

El prestigioso y experimentado sacerdote de Ifá cubano Lázaro Cuesta—quien goza de reconocimiento dentro y fuera de la Isla por la ya famosa letra del año en Cuba, conocida como “la letra de 10 de Octubre”—, responde la siguiente pregunta: ¿Qué piensa usted de todo este proceso que se está llevando a cabo dentro y fuera de la Isla en relación con eso que algunos llaman yorubización o africanismo dentro del culto de Ifá?

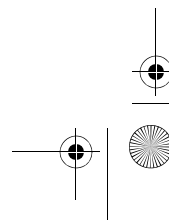
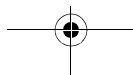
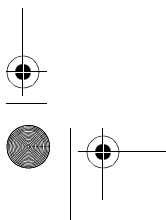
Nuestra religión en este momento vive momentos difíciles, pues una corriente de revisionistas trata de demostrar en el mundo que nuestras prácticas están distantes de lo real, según las costumbres de nuestros hermanos africanos.

Yo considero que las cosas que nos llegaron, por haber sido transmitidas de una generación a otra por la vía oral, pueden haber perdido algo de lo original, pero con lo que nos legaron nuestros ancestros hemos vivido y actuado con acierto, y hemos logrado con eso cumplir nuestro papel ante la sociedad.

Con las prácticas que aprendimos hemos salvado vidas, curado enfermos, restablecido matrimonios, mejorado la conducta social de un sinnúmero de personas; en fin, hemos podido cumplir con nuestro juramento prestado ante Olofin.³² Y aún mucho más: hemos sido capaces de exportar a todos los rincones del mundo nuestra religión cubana de origen africano y hacer posible que ella viva hoy con muy buena salud.

Los hermanos que hoy tratan de desacreditar lo que hacemos, desconociendo todo cuanto hemos hecho por mantener viva nuestra fe, sin mirar los sacrificios que hemos hecho, por los avatares que hemos

31. Del refranero español.



Ifá transnacional: tradicionalistas y criollos

atravesado, no son revisionistas sino traidores merecedores del más grande de los desprecios.

En mi caso particular, aprendí y practico lo que me enseñaron nuestros ancestros que vinieron de África. De forma oral aprendimos sus cantos, sus toques, sus danzas y todo cuanto hacemos. Por respeto a su memoria y por una profunda gratitud, no permito ni permitiré que en mi familia religiosa se cambien las costumbres y los ceremoniales. Eso sí, a mi poder llegaran documentos que por su originalidad merecieran crédito, tomaría lo mejor y con ello enriquecería lo que conozco, pero nunca las sustituiría.

Considero que todos estos trastornos han sido motivados por beneficios económicos que la religión cubana de origen africano ha generado a partir del interés de muchísimas personas en el mundo por iniciarse en sus secretos.

Las religiones y las instituciones crecen y con ellas sus miembros. Los de hoy ven las cosas acorde a su alcance y eso merece respeto por parte de los más viejos, pero los de hoy está obligados por principio a respetar y reconocer a los precursores y cuando eso no se hace se pierde lo principal: su historia (Cuesta, 2009).

32. En Cuba y Latinoamérica, es común el uso de esta palabra para identificar a Oloddumare, quizás, porque se le considera el Rey Supremo, y en innumerables historias donde aparece como personaje “Olofin” se implica que el propio Creador representa al personaje mitológico. Otros aseguran que Olofin es una divinidad que hizo al mundo, al resto de las divinidades, a los animales, a los hombres y a través de la cual nos dirigimos a Oloddumare. También en Cuba se nombra así a una deidad que reciben los sacerdotes de Ifá cuyo equivalente yorubá sería—aproximadamente—Igba Odu o Igba Iwá, quien preside las ceremonias de iniciación de un sacerdote de Ifá, pero que en Cuba se le conoce como Olofi, Olofin u Oddun. Los sacerdotes que han recibido a Igba Odu son conocidos entre los yorubás como Olodu (O-li-odu) “aquellos que tienen odu”, mientras que en Cuba se les llama Olofinistas u Omo Oddun. Según afirma Wande Abimbola en Ifá. An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus: “El contenido de esta cazuela es desconocido por los no iniciados y toda la información referida a [la deidad] Odu se trata como un secreto de importancia primordial en el culto de Ifá”. La representación material de esta deidad se conoce como “calabazo sagrado”. En la cosmogonía yorubá, Igba Odu representa potencialmente el poder femenino, pues se considera como el “contenedor” del aché que permitió la Creación del Universo y de todas las condiciones para vivir en la Tierra.

A más saber, más nos queda por aprender³³

Una opinión muy diferente a la del sacerdote Lázaro Cuesta la tiene el también sacerdote de Ifá cubano Víctor Betancourt. En un boletín fechado el 11 de septiembre de 2004, escribía:

Nuestro objetivo esencial es el “rescate de las tradiciones perdidas” y poner en práctica sus ceremonias en bien del mejoramiento humano. [...] Nuestra casa templo tiene el orgullo de haber iniciado el primer “Olokun³⁴ directo”³⁵ de América, la primera ceremonia del baile Égun-gun,³⁶ el primer “Aganjú directo,”³⁷ la iniciación de las primeras gelede³⁸ de América, las segundas mujeres iyanifá de Cuba, la primera iyanifá de Venezuela [...] Todos los iniciados con nuestros métodos han experimentado una mejoría en sus vidas [y puntualiza finalmente]: ¿Cuál es el temor? Por supuesto, y es una realidad, si se produce un intercambio socio-religioso tradicional y se establecen las normas docentes sobre un estudio metódico de Ifá, la mayoría de los babalawos cubanos tendrían

33. Del refranero español.

34. Es la divinidad que está en el fondo del mar. Otorga salud y prosperidad a los seres humanos; representa el misterio, lo oculto, lo que está vedado para el hombre. Controla las piernas de los seres humanos, las patas y las alas de los animales y todos los líquidos en nuestro interior. Bajó a la Tierra a través de la energía del odu de Ifá Idí Okonrón. Olokun es considerado masculino por algunos grupos yorubás, pero femenino en Ilé Ife [ciudad situada en el territorio de la actual Nigeria. La cultura yorubá considera a esta ciudad como el lugar donde comenzó la Creación, el centro del Universo, a partir del cual se expandió la humanidad. El propio nombre de la ciudad lo indica: se le llama “la ciudad extendida”, “la ciudad de los más antiguos días”, “la casa de los dioses y los espíritus misteriosos”. En lengua yorubá ife quiere decir “aquello que es ancho”; el prefijo Ilé (casa) fue añadido para significar que “aquello ancho” era la casa original de todos; además para distinguirla de otras ciudades llamadas Ife]. Según refiere Wande Abimbola en *Ifa Will Mend Our Broken World*: “En África, las personas [...] creen que ella [Olokun] fue la última esposa de Ifá. Ella es la deidad del Océano Atlántico y se le llama: Okun Yemideregbe. Se cree que Orúnmila aún está viviendo en las profundidades de Yemideregbe con Olokun, su esposa”.

35. Esta aclaración se debe a que, en Cuba, algunas divinidades no son coronadas habitualmente en la Ocha y al creyente se le inicia con una deidad sustituta bajo la justificación de tratados entre las deidades que permiten este intercambio. Según memorias de los mayores, al principio de las prácticas de la religión Ifá/Ocha todas las deidades eran coronadas, pero algunas de esas ceremonias se perdieron en el tiempo y deidades como Olokun, pasaron a ser lo que se conoce como “deidades de addimú”, se reciben, pero no se coronan; los “hijos de Olokun” hacen Yemojá (divinidad del mar). Escasas familias religiosas mantuvieron estas ceremonias, pero, en la actualidad, se puede constatar un interés significativo por rescatarlas.

36. La divinidad que representa el culto de los antepasados. También nombrada Eggun.

37. Espíritu del fuego en el centro de la tierra, por lo que es asociado con los volcanes. En algunos mitos aparece como el padre de Changó.

38. Culto que honra a las madres ancestrales.

que buscarse su sustento en la agricultura, como sepultureros o cazadores de cocodrilos en la Ciénaga de Zapata. Creo que ahí está el temor por lo que se convierten en ignorantes ya que: “Ignorante no es aquel que no sepa; sino, el que no quiere aprender”. (Betancourt, 2004).

El hombre cauto jamás deplora el mal presente; emplea el presente en prevenir las aflicciones futuras³⁹

Veamos la visión académica de la doctora Lázara Menéndez. Se trata de algunos puntos de vista que deben tenerse en cuenta cuando se aborda una diversidad de opiniones respecto al tema que nos ocupa:

Hacer descansar la caracterización y valor de la Santería sólo en la conservación de sus antecedentes africanos sin una valoración histórica, sistemática y sistémica de estos, es una pretensión ingenua. La tácita o explícita negación del fenómeno transculturativo puede convertirse en un problema ontológico.

Si nada se hubiera modificado desde la introducción de los primeros africanos en Cuba; si el medio sociocultural, criollo primero, cubano después, no hubiera logrado influir y atrapar en su órbita a aquellos y sus descendientes—sobre todo a estos últimos—; si los descendientes en primera y segunda generación no hubieran sentido como suyos los valores que se fueron creando en el nuevo contexto y no se hubieran definido como cubanos por conciencia y voluntad, como afirma Ortiz, habría que aceptar la inmovilidad de la historia, negar la existencia de nuestra cultura, la concepción ortiziana de transculturación y quemar en una pira a los que suscriben que la cultura es un fenómeno dinámico.

La sustantivación indiscriminada y acrítica del componente yorubá y su pretendida demostración por encima de los mecanismos de discontinuidad que operaron en las transformaciones culturales, tiende a bloquear la acción cognoscitiva y a negar la estratégica acción desacralizante y revitalizadora que proponen los mismos patrones cristalizados dentro del universo santero.

El énfasis en el eje africano, por encima de los rasgos que cualifican el fenómeno como cubano, tiende a agudizar el distanciamiento, desde la

39. William Shakespeare, dramaturgo inglés.

perspectiva sociocultural, con el universo santero, a entorpecer la asunción intelectual de dicho fenómeno más allá de las relaciones modales y volitivas que individualmente se establezcan con él, y a dificultar su reconocimiento como expresión cultural autónoma, bien diferenciada de sus antecedentes y de otras prácticas contemporáneas a ella.

[...] Las estructuras socioeconómicas y culturales a las que se vio sometido el africano en el nuevo contexto colonial cubano, la dislocación de valores y mecanismos culturales autóctonos, su reducción a la condición de esclavo, implicaron y determinaron cambios en las acciones y significados.

Sufrieron modificaciones las relaciones económicas, las instituciones rituales, las formas de agrupación, las relaciones de parentesco, el intercambio de bienes y servicios, las formas de vida doméstica, la institución matrimonio, el valor tradicional de la hospitalidad, sustentada frecuentemente en el matrimonio polígamo y las descendencias unilineales (Menéndez, 1996).

Por consiguiente, no debe parecer extraño que el yanrin⁴⁰ empleado para mezclar con ñame salcochado y aplastado—que solía ofrecérsele a la divinidad Ochún⁴¹ en tierras yorubás—, fuera sustituido por la verdolaga; que la nuez de cola, utilizada como alimento, medicina, material de ofrendas y como símbolo de la oración para hacer preguntas a las deidades se supiera por el coco. Y la rata de bosque por la jutía, la boa constrictora por el majá de Santa María o el toque de los cinco tambores yorubás por los tres tambores cubanos.

En cuanto a la parafernalia de Ifá—por ejemplo—, la vara de autoidad empleada por los sacerdotes cubanos es un tarro de venado,

40. *Launaea taraxacifolia* de la familia Compuestas. Hierba comestible.

41. La divinidad de los ríos, aquella que fue puesta en el camino de la bondad; interviene en la formación del feto, preside el embrión, es la diosa de la fecundidad y cura la infertilidad con sus aguas; se le llama para la obtención de abundante pesca. Se dice que es juez y no acepta la desobediencia. El hombre la ve como pequeña pero soberbia, alegre, coqueta, sabia, símbolo de la feminidad. Según Fa'lokun Fatunmbi, en ob.cit.: "Ochún es quien puede motivar a los individuos, a las comunidades y a las naciones para que luchen por conseguir lo imposible, superar las limitaciones de la genética, del medio ambiente, y desarrollar el potencial para hacer milagros. La relación entre Ochún, como manifestación de la contracción y las deidades masculinas como manifestaciones de la expansión, representa la habilidad de la naturaleza para trascender sus limitaciones".

pero en Nigeria se talla en colmillos de elefantes, bronce o madera; el polvo sagrado de adivinación yorubá, obtenido del polvo que roen las termitas del árbol de osun, fue reemplazado por el polvo de ñame y el de otros palos llamados “fuertes”, como el moruro⁴² e incluso por gofio o harina de trigo.

El tiempo transcurre y aún siguen latentes las controversias. El número de iyanifás consagradas en América aumenta cada vez más, como los nuevos sacerdotes de Ifá al estilo ¿tradicional yorubá?—por ejemplo, de los siete días que habitualmente se dedicaban a la consagración de un babalawo ahora se emplean tres. ¿Cómo se vería esto en Nigeria? El vocero de la Cultura Yorubá para el Mundo atestigua:

Si una persona está siendo iniciada, permanecerá en un lugar confinado al menos por siete días. El número siete es muy importante en los rituales.

Olúgbón kè sorò, kó mó kẹ́jẹ.

Àrèsà, àjẹ́jẹ, còtù làlò,

Kì í, sorò, kó mó kẹ́jẹ....

(Canto Ìjálá grabado por el fallecido Ode Abónkada en Òyó).

Olúgbón hace rituales que duren no menos de siete días.

Àrèsà, cuyo otro nombre es Àjẹ́jẹ,

que recuerda los nombres de aquellas personas

que hacen temblar de frío en Àlò...

No se hace un ritual que al menos no dure siete días (Abimbola, 1997).

Aparecen en las casas religiosas cubanas nuevas deidades como Egbe,⁴³ Igba Odu, Orí, Igbo Eggun;⁴⁴ rituales como el esentaye⁴⁵ se van haciendo costumbre a lo largo y ancho de la Isla, mientras otro grupo de sacerdotes se mantiene escéptico al respecto y a otros no suele importarles para nada.

42. *Pithecellobium arboreum*, perteneciente a la familia de las Mimosáceas.

43. Ente espiritual que toma responsabilidades de grupos en el Cielo; relación de grupos de avanzados jóvenes y adultos (parejas celestiales) que poseen dones espirituales. Egbé es líder de dichos grupos y apoya y protege a sus miembros, les da hijos, riquezas, salud, etcétera; pero exige que se cumplan las promesas contraídas en el Cielo. Si no es así, la persona pasará por diferentes experiencias traumáticas hasta que cumpla con los designios del destino escogido en el Cielo o haga todo lo necesario para compensarlo a través de rituales.

44. Igbo Eggun se traduce como el bosque sagrado de Eggun. La materialización de la deidad implica crear un lugar sagrado para rendir culto a los ancestros.

De todo tiene la baraja: "oros y copas, bastos y espadas"⁴⁶

El Primer Taller Internacional sobre problemas de la Cultura Yorubá en Cuba, patrocinado por la Asociación Cultural Yoruba y la Academia de Ciencias de Cuba, tuvo un saldo positivo según el investigador Tomás Fernández Robaina.

Desde hacía mucho tiempo se venían discutiendo entre algunos sante-ros, entre babalaos y entre santeros y babalaos, acerca de la convenien-cia de lograr cierto consenso con la finalidad de intentar una práctica religiosa más uniforme, al menos en aquellos rituales en los cuales su implantación no lesionaba las formas ritualísticas peculiares de cada casa de Santo. Con ese objetivo se informó que habría una reunión especial de los santeros y babalaos con el propósito de debatirse esas cuestiones, pero dicha reunión no se dio, al menos no se informó a todos los santeros y babalaos de su celebración. Sin embargo, algunas de esas ideas se dieron como resoluciones que el taller sugería debían aplicarse por los babalos, iyalo-chas y babalochas. Entre ellas estaban: a. no denominar a los orichas con los nombres de los santos católicos; b. tratar de usar los nombres de babalochas e iyalo-chas en lugar de sante-ros y santeras; c. no referirse a la religión con el término de Santería, sino de Regla de Ocha; d. mantener la tradición de que todo iniciado debe dar un tambor de fundamento al oricha del padrino/madrina para poder tocar después en su propia casa.

Los comentarios fueron muchos, a nivel de pasillo, acerca de las inci-dencias del congreso, de la asistencia de los religiosos cubanos y extran-jeros, de los resultados y de los trabajos presentados. Realmente el taller tuvo un saldo, para mí, altamente positivo, pues hoy, por primera vez, profesionales blancos y negros, mayoritariamente babalaos, se presentaban como tales en el evento [...].

45. Es una ceremonia tradicional en la cual, transcurridos nueve días del arribo al mundo de una criatura, se invita a sacerdotes de Ifá especializados en estos menesteres para que le realicen una adivinación. Ahí se le dice a los padres cuál es el camino que debe seguir este niño/niña en la vida, y qué sacrificios se necesitan para eliminar las pers-pectivas de peligro que lo amenazarán y encuentre el equilibrio necesario para llevar una vida plena. También se determina por el odu que prescribe el oráculo, si el niño viene por poco tiempo a la Tierra y qué hacer para evitarlo. Según la revelación del oráculo es que se da nombre al niño. Con esta ceremonia el niño es iniciado dentro de la tradición de la cultura.

46. Del refranero español.

[...] lo que afloró en ese primer taller fue la existencia de una tendencia, posible movimiento entre nosotros de un fenómeno, que desde hace ya años se viene operando en los Estados Unidos y en otros países de América y del Caribe en cuanto a la africanización no sólo de la Santería sino de aquellas religiones traídas por los africanos y que en virtud de las nuevas condiciones sociales, económicas, geográficas, lingüísticas y culturales impuestas a los esclavos sufrieron reformas, adaptaciones, para poder perdurar y sobrevivir bajo los nuevos contextos a que el sistema esclavista sumió a los africanos y a sus descendientes, independientemente de la condición de esclavo o negro libre.

Parece lógico que en virtud de la expansión de las religiones africanas y del contacto de los babalochas, iyalochas y babalaos con algunos de sus homólogos en África, exista cierto interés entre ellos por rescatar cierta pureza, cierta ortodoxia, en la manera de efectuarse determinados rituales; por supuesto, dicha pureza posee un valor relativo, pues ni en África ni en las Américas las religiones africanas se mantuvieron estáticas; también fueron influenciadas por las condiciones materiales y espirituales de las sociedades a las cuales sus practicantes fueron forzados a vivir (Fernández Robaina, 2003).

Por otro lado, la antropóloga Lioba Rossbach de Olmos hace una llamada de alerta:

La inquietud de crear una uniformidad ritual y teológica en una religión que desde siempre se ha caracterizado por una autonomía rica de sus distintas casas y ramas requiere una explicación—puntualiza. Si la necesidad de una homogenización no se presenta por diferencias debatidas entre las distintas ramas [que sí existen y que de ninguna manera estuvieron presentes durante el debate], entonces sólo puede explicarse como un intento de establecer la religión como institución que cuenta con el reconocimiento del mismo Estado [...]. Es muy probable que especialmente la Asociación Yoruba persiga precisamente esta intención, es decir, crear cierta uniformidad institucionalizando las Reglas Ocha/Ifá en comunidades religiosas para un reconocimiento estatal. Si al mismo tiempo se espera conseguir la aspirada uniformidad litúrgica y teológica a través de un regreso a los orígenes suponiendo que la heterogeneidad fuera un producto del sincretismo, es decir, de las mezclas con otras influencias (religiosas), este podría ser una equivocación (Rossbach de Olmos, 2007).

La imagen de África para los cubanos practicantes de la religión Ocha/Ifá siempre ha estado muy lejana, se reconoce como punto de origen de la religión. Sin embargo, me pregunto en las palabras de la doctora Lázara Menéndez:

¿A qué causa podría deberse este empeño en yorubizar o africanizar la Santería? Puede considerarse como el inicio de una corriente de revitalización de las culturas africanas por una necesidad de legitimación sociocultural? ¿Son esos criterios la evidencia de una influencia del ejercicio santero procedente de Puerto Rico y de los Estados Unidos, lugares en los que algunos omo Ocha (hijos de santo) han vuelto sus ojos hacia África con la intención de obtener información, legitimación y algunas cosillas más para las prácticas que realizan? ¿Puede ser este, acaso, el tentáculo de un “pulpito” que adopta un perfil religioso, pero en el fondo obedece a una manifestación de naturaleza discriminatoria? ¿Era una expresión de preocupación por los cambios que se avecinaban en virtud de la “despenalización” de la conciencia religiosa? (Menéndez, 1996).

Y agregaría: ¿La asimilación de todo el nuevo caudal yorubá fracturaría todo lo que se ha creado haciendo más sincrética la religión Ocha/Ifá destruyendo algunos de sus basamentos adquiridos originales típicos de nuestro entorno e idiosincrasia?

¿Cuán provechoso resultaría? ¿Implicaría mayor unidad? ¿Aportaría un mayor nivel de crecimiento espiritual? ¿Serviría esta asimilación *como un proceso de reflexión para perseguir el conocimiento sobre la vida y la acción humana mediante el recurso al discernimiento y a procesos epistemológicos determinados?*, como dijo el filósofo africano Emmanuel Chkwude Eze al conceptualizar a Ifá. Porque un buen ejemplo que ha traído como consecuencia el ir desatinadamente en busca de lo africano está dado en el movimiento americano/yorubá.

El movimiento americano-yorubá del americano-africano Walter Serge (o Eugene) King que se propuso eliminar todos los elementos católicos de la Santería y retornar a la ortodoxia yorubá africana [...] El movimiento Oyotunji (Oyo regresa) al que King le dio vida y la fundación de un mismo nombre en Sheldon en South Carolina que declaró ser un reino africano [...] muestra ciertas congruencias con algunas tendencias minoritarias dentro del movimiento de los derechos cívicos de los

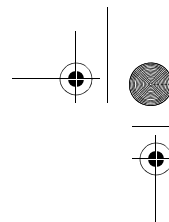
negros norteamericanos, el que pasa revista a movimientos en retrospectiva o a intenciones de regreso buscando muchas veces la supuesta África verdadera. Al principio el fundador del movimiento creía haber encontrado en la Santería una auténtica religión africana y se hizo iniciar en Matanzas [Cuba]. Después le empezaron a molestar las influencias católicas. Él empezó a eliminarlas y desvió su atención hacia la religión yorubá de Nigeria. Se prohibieron las representaciones de orichas en forma de santos católicos y se separó y se separaron las fiestas religiosas en Oyotunji del calendario oficial católico. Lo que él y sus adeptos tal vez no se dieron cuenta fue que en vez de reintroducir la ortodoxia africana, lo que hicieron fue crear un nuevo sincretismo que entremezcló la religión yorubá con algunas convicciones típicas del “movimiento de derechos civiles de los Estados Unidos”, ningún otro detalle lo muestra más claramente que la actitud inexorablemente radical de Oyotunji de negar la iniciación a personas blancas, lo que no solamente está en contra de los principios de la Santería, sino también que no cuenta con ningún antecedente en Nigeria (Rossbach de Olmos, 2007).

Por otro lado, en Brasil ocurrió el siguiente suceso:

En Salvador de Bahía en Brasil se introdujeron doce ministros (oba) para Changó en el templo o “terreiro” axe opo ajonjá por parte de la conocida sacerdotisa Mae Aninha Obabaii, quien se remitió a tradiciones de la Corte Real de Oyo, las que, sin embargo, averiguando los detalles, fueron un invento para entregarles a un número de personajes importantes de la vida pública de la ciudad unas funciones dentro del candomblé. Eran personas no iniciadas pero que mantenían unas relaciones amistosas con el templo y que podrían traer ventajas en un futuro (Rossbach de Olmos, 2007).

¡Cuántas palabras, cuántas nomenclaturas para un mismo desconcierto!

Corría el año 2003 cuando se celebró el VIII Congreso Mundial de Tradición y Cultura Oricha en La Habana. Se hizo un llamado a la tolerancia religiosa y a la tan mencionada paz. “No estamos buscando un mundo para conquistar”, expresó el vocero de la cultura yorubá para el mundo, el profesor nigeriano Wande Abimbola. Por otro lado el



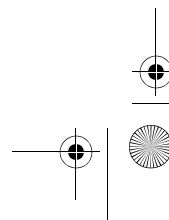
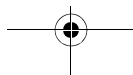
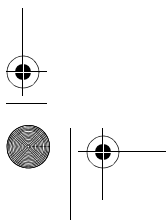
babalawo cubano, presidente de la Asociación Cultura Yoruba de Cuba, Antonio Castañeda, dijo: “Nos hemos convertido en el auténtico exportador de esta cultura en el mundo”.

Siete años después de este evento, en que ambas fuerzas se mezclaban y asimilaban unas a otras, se contradicen en las calles. Estamos a la espera de un congreso en Miami, al parecer con suficiente autoridad como para crear un comité de ética que regule las prácticas religiosas de raíces africanas que puede acarrear la institucionalización de Ifá donde quiera que esta se origine. Habrá que esperar.

El cuerpo literario de Ifá brinda a quienes lo estudien con profundidad numerosos elementos que demuestran que no es una filosofía llamada a universalizarse, porque lo integran un número de personas descendientes de las generaciones seguidoras de las divinidades al inicio del tiempo. Este hecho nos lleva a una religión que, en esencia, es de práctica individual, aun cuando el colectivo es empleado en las ceremonias de consagración. Según Ifá, la vida de un individuo gira alrededor de él y su divinidad guía a la que debe servir. No es admisible que un hombre piense que para ofrecer su sincero y honesto servicio a Oloddumare y a las divinidades tenga que recurrir a un templo, establecimiento o asociación cuando se está en presencia de una obligación de índole personal.

Ifá prohíbe la institucionalización de Ifá en templos y sociedades y no admite nada parecido a un culto, altar o medio de congregación para crear, a través de la “adoración”, un medio de recaudación económica que les permita subsistir. Sin embargo, sus códigos éticos no van contra la creación de instituciones sociales capaces de ayudar a mejorar al mundo, pero sí se oponen a fachadas religiosas que degenerarían en una manifiesta invitación a Echu para que, haciendo uso de sus prerrogativas, corrompa todos los objetivos con que fueron formadas.

La institucionalización religiosa, en general, ha sido un paso involutivo en la transición del hombre: ha revelado fines políticos y económicos suficientemente egoístas como para tomarlos en cuenta.



No hay razón lógica para institucionalizar ninguna filosofía religiosa porque esto facilitaría la oportunidad de desbaratar conceptos básicos que atañen a las fibras más íntimas del ser y convertirlas en instintos gregarios, produciendo un fenómeno sociopolítico y no religioso que enturbia su concepción original. La religión trata con las almas, mientras la política se refiere a las mentes. Ifá se basa en la revelación divina y la inspiración espiritual del individuo, no de la sociedad o comunidad.

Mientras tanto, valdría la pena preguntarse desde ahora si estos aires miamenses soplarán hasta nuestra Isla. ¿Terminará el culto de Ifá/Ocha institucionalizándose en Miami mediante un manual de normas con el fin de regular las prácticas, adquiriendo con ello una “visión legal” entre sus practicantes? ¿Serían considerados los practicantes de la modalidad africanista de mayor jerarquía que los creyentes de Ifá/Ocha afrocubanos o lucumíes—o viceversa? ¿Obedecerá todo este giro a un intento de centralización y/o mercantilización de la fe ajeno a la voluntad de reincorporar y enriquecer por las partes en contradicción lo que se tiene como propio y válido? ¿Será que el “pulpito” del que habla Lázara Menéndez (Menéndez, 1996) ha crecido con el transcurrir del tiempo y sus tentáculos ahora tienen mayor alcance para atraer a su presa?

En realidad, no tengo la respuesta porque aún es muy prematuro. Todos estos ingredientes están bullendo en el caldo denso; pero alerta, según mi juicio, los peligros. Tengo por sabido que ningún tiempo presente puede mostrarse sin el debido respeto de un tiempo pasado, además vería con mucha satisfacción hecho realidad:

Un reencuentro con la cepa originaria, con el fundamento visto este no como procedencia, sino como origen primero, principio, cimiento, razón principal sobre la que se funda—ajeno a cualquier voluntad de yorubización. De lo que se trata es de reincorporar el caudal de sabiduría, de auténtica poesía, la profundidad filosófica, ontológica, cosmogónica y moral de la cultura yorubá sin que por ello nuestra criolla Santería [e Ifá] pierda un ápice de su cubanía plena, sentida, consciente y deseada; antes al contrario que nos la enriquezca como parte del mismo proceso dialéctico de transformación que hoy nos complace al

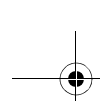
admitir como legítimo que se le ofrezca un violín a Ochún, un cake a Obatalá o una rumba de cajón a Eggun (Quiñones, 1999).

El resto es el trayecto social obligado que la mar de las veces, por intereses egoístas, demostrados así en los hechos que, lamentablemente, han ocurrido, hemos convertido en anaíboa de catibía sin necesidad alguna. No creo poseer la verdad, ella es el señor de los cielos y en mi opinión está mucho más allá de donde se mira.

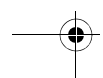
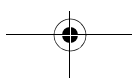
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14 The Issue of Race in Cuban Society Today: The Letter and Spirit

Miguel Barnet

I would like to begin by synthesizing the state of the discussion about race in Cuba. To that end, I will endeavor to answer the following questions:

- What identified elements need to be taken into consideration to evaluate the impact of policies intended to eradicate racial discrimination starting from the triumph of the Revolution in 1959 to today?
- What are the main achievements and shortcomings in the implementation of this policy?
- What objective and subjective factors have a bearing on the development of racial problems in Cuba, specifically with respect to the population of African origin, both nationally and internationally?
- What are the differences in perception among various segments of the Cuban population?
- How are the problems of racial discrimination that are still extant in Cuba being confronted?

This analysis of racial issues and discrimination based on skin color is not definitive although we chose to pose questions intended to

focus more clearly on this complex problem. The initial approaches are centered on methodological aspects (criteria to evaluate policies, analysis of objectives, achievements and shortcomings) with the aim of endowing this interpretation with objectivity.

From the triumph of the Revolution, the impact of Cuban policy intended to eradicate racial discrimination may be evaluated from diverse perspectives that run the gamut from indulgence and inertia to confrontation or out-and-out criticism. This implies that we should devote attention to the establishment of those elements which allow a balanced assessment of this policy. In other words: to avoid the prejudices for or against during half a century with a broad legal foundation has meant overcoming racial problems in Cuba. There are those who consider that any pattern of conduct or legal rule is a worthless bit of paper before the sea of inequalities that may destroy people whose physical color they identify with a historic “burden” which originated with slavery and is today anchored in poverty.

In my opinion, the factors that must be taken into account to undertake a comprehensive and impartial evaluation of Cuba’s racial policies between 1959 and 2011 may be summarized, in three groups: governmental discourse, aimed at raising awareness and arranging in order of importance, the values of equality among all human beings as the basis of Cuban society; legal status—laws, instruments and directives which oppose all racial discrimination and promote the exercise of full citizen access to education, health, culture, sports and social security among others; and economic practice, where the capacity of the productive forces have not satisfied the demands of employment, consumption, investment, accumulation, and so on. The resulting negative effects for the Cuban population were intensified in stages like that of the “special period.” There are effects that should be followed with special consideration in population groups with inherited disadvantages resulting from a greater poverty and marginalization due to place of origin (countryside v. city), race (black v. white) and sex (women v. men), to occupational sector and age, among others.

Having to do with *governmental discourse*, the strategy developed by the leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro, takes first place as a vital factor in the process of endowing the most needy in the population with self-respect, particularly after the overthrow of the pseudo-republican dictatorship during which being black, poor or a woman meant lower educational and cultural levels and poorer health care. Fidel Castro, in defense of these elements, said:

“The problem of racial discrimination is, unfortunately, one of the most complex and difficult that the Revolution has to approach. The problem of social discrimination is not the problem of the rent, of expensive drugs, it is not the problem of the telephone company and not even that of latifundia, which is one of the serious problems we have to face...

“And I ask myself what is the difference between one injustice and another injustice, what difference there is between a peasant with no land and a person who is not given the chance to work. Doesn’t a black who does not work starve to death just as a peasant with no land does? And why must the Revolution be compelled to solve other injustices and not to solve this one?”¹ (1)

Around the hurricane transforming Cuban reality a strong synergy of ideas and actions joined together between the political leadership and society favoring growing equality between men and women, blacks and whites, workers and peasants, and thus creating a process of broad popular and intellectual scope. It was necessary to study the life and work of advanced thinkers to understand the roots and expression which characterized the evolution of this subject. Three of the most important thinkers to be studied are Fernando Ortiz, Jose Luciano Franco and Nicolas Guillen, in the fields of anthropology, history and literature.

1. Fidel Castro, TV appearance on March 25, 1959. Source: *Granma* newspaper. Internet. www.granma.cu

“Without blacks Cuba would not be Cuba,” sententiously declared Ortiz, with the same scientific and humanistic sharpness with which he said:

“It would be trivial and erroneous to study human factors in Cuba by races. Apart from the fact that many racial categories are conventional and indefinable, we must acknowledge their actual insignificance to understand Cubanness, which is nothing but a category of culture. To understand the Cuban soul it is not races that should be studied, but cultures...

...The contribution of blacks to Cubanness has not been scant. Apart from their immense labor force which made the economic entry of Cuba in world civilization possible, and besides their liberating pugnacity which cleared the advent of the independence, their cultural influence can be noticed in the food, the cuisine, the vocabulary...but especially in three expressions of Cubanness: art, religion and the tone of collective emotive nature.”²

As to legal status, the institutionalization of a new political and socioeconomic order in the country during the revolution gave undeniable backing to social conquests. A system of laws, codes and regulations, whose highest expression is the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, condemned every expression of racism and guaranteed the right of all citizens to education, health, culture, food and social security.

It is well to remember that the racial problem in Cuba—as in any other country—could not be solved through legal channels alone. The outcome depends on diverse elements such as educational level, group idiosyncrasies and others. Therefore more attention needs to be paid to how “coercive legislation” complements other actions which facilitate the full integration of all Cubans into the national project regardless color of their skin.

2. Fernando Ortiz, lecture delivered on November 28, 1939 under the title of “The Human Factors of Cubanness.” Source: *Fernando Ortiz y la cubanidad* (Fernando Ortiz and Cubanness) Fernando Ortiz Foundation, Havana, 1996.

Compliance with every law requires equal attention to its letter and spirit and cannot be limited to a mechanical interpretation of its contents—a limitation that at times may work against better performance. We are aware that the existence of legislation against racial discrimination is not enough in itself to transform the habits and customs closely linked to daily life. It is necessary to explore other ways of achieving increased compatibility, between the dynamics of national reality and the law, and a balance between what, in legal parlance, is established “de jure” and taken for granted “de facto.”

As to economic practice and its social repercussions, the situation of racism seem highlighted when the impact of Cuban state policy against racism is evaluated. Cases of elementary orthodoxy in which political criteria were directly extended to economic performance yielded negative results, for example when access to employment, housing and other options were implemented in an egalitarian manner without taking into account the diversity of conditions of the members of society. Liberal positions which exaggerate the moral excellence of some economic mechanisms have a negative effect.

Taking these general factors into account, I will discuss a series of achievements and shortcomings of the policies intended to eradicate racial discrimination.

Achievements

- Helping human beings feel dignity is one of the largest achievements and an essential value in Cuban society during the period of the revolution that started in January 1959;
- The establishment of a system of guarantees for genuine access to all levels of national programs in education, health, culture, sports, and social security, among others—including something as complex as stable food supply (especially for children from zero to fourteen years of age)—in conditions of full equality for the entire Cuban population;
- The promotion of artistic and literary values with an African origin and emphasis of their contribution to Cuban cultural identity. The publication of books about

Africa and of African literature and history with no comparison to the rest of Latin America.

- The strengthening of general and specialized systems of teaching throughout the country, of national publications and support for the development of museums and music and dance groups, among other institutions, some world famous such as the National Folkloric Dance Company, the Casa de Africa (African House) in the Office of the City Historian, the System of Houses of Culture, the Juan Marinello Institute or the Fernando Ortiz Foundation.
- Gradually increasing respect for popular religions and worship of African origin, at the highest levels (such as consideration of this topic at the Council of State, acceptance of religious practitioners in the Cuban Communist Party, etc.) and at the level of society such things as inclusion of the theme in theaters and film programs and in visual arts exhibition halls, etc., in contrast with what the mass media offers (we will return to this issue in the section on shortcomings).
- Working to overcome feelings and practices of racism in communities where respect usually prevails among neighbors on the basis of shared attitudes about family, study, work, compliance with rules, harmonically living side by side, participation in neighborhood tasks, although the high degree of subjectivity this implies makes it difficult to measure.

Shortcomings

- Insufficient practical implementation of the policies of the leadership intended to eradicate racial discrimination, especially by institutions whose systematic efforts in this area would complement the actions of the party and the state. This could be the case with national radio and TV, but for decades they have continued disseminating stereotypes of blacks and mulattoes, especially in soap operas and sitcoms where at times they are the object of negative appraisals or the butt of contemptuous jokes, thus exercising a strong negative impact on their large audience;
- The absence of a national agenda involving all the factors directly or indirectly linked to the development of social issues in present Cuban society;
- The U.S.-Cuba discrepancy has brought about domestic silence on questions that might undermine the unity of the people before their main foreign enemy. As time went by its counterproductive effects have become visible, such as the weakening of domestic debate on topics of profound popular importance, such as race.;
- Low profile debate of this topic in Cuba today regarding a national agenda. This frequently surfaces in conversations by the most dissimilar groups of youngsters, elders, workers or intellectuals, but mostly with superficial expressions not dealing with the essence. From the methodological and conceptual points of view, this has

hindered and hampered the implementation of a Cuban policy against racial discrimination during the last half a century.

Something deserving far-reaching consideration is the recent statement by Cuban President Raul Castro when talking about “the representativeness of the ethnic and gender composition of Cuban population in leadership positions. I personally consider that the insufficient advance in this issue in fifty years of revolution is shameful.”³ If we are incapable of offering a serious and objective analysis, on scientific grounds and with multidisciplinary approaches, to guarantee genuine and systematic impact against racial discrimination we have not reached our goal.

Awareness of the advances and limitations of the way racial topics have been dealt with in Cuba cannot only be attributed to the political leadership—it is increasingly necessary to widen the spectrum of analysis to other objective and subjective factors. This may prevent the emergence or survival of conceptions or expressions of racism and discrimination in our environment. The following aspects need to be taken into account:

- the idiosyncrasies of the Cuban people, still awaiting an updated sociological interpretation which would include human, geographical, historical and economic factors,
- the racial composition of Cuban emigration as basically white during the revolutionary period, taking into account the material contribution its members have offered their relatives in the island, especially in the conditions of the “special period,” after the fall of the socialist system in Europe.
- on the other hand internationalist actions by the Cuban Revolution, stressing the military aid and medical cooperation offered to the African peoples in a gesture of solidarity, with many professionals being trained in Cuba,
- the globalization of behaviors generated by the information society and the new technologies that increase the dynamics at an unprecedented pace in the exchange of knowledge, products and services have created new social differentiations of every type “and color,”
- the development of international projects like “The Slave Route” by UNESCO, which defends the identities derived from slavery through the promotion of

3. Raúl Castro, intervention on December 20, 2009 at the closing of the People’s Power National Assembly. Source: *Granma* newspaper.

knowledge and public awareness, as well as the designation of 2011 as the “International Year of Afro-Descendants” by the United Nations General Assembly, among other world initiatives.

Before we continue, I will dwell on an element that, paradoxically is often overlooked: the level of racial integration our society has achieved, where the problem is not denouncing individual cases but something more subtle—having to face more surreptitious discriminatory obstacles. This is the case of people who aspire to hold some given position in the sectors of tourism or joint ventures or would like to play some given roles in TV and theater and have been prevented by the color of their skin.

Now, the question of the different ways in which various segments in Cuban society view the racial issue should be answered in two parts; It would be unthinkable that this topic is seen or perceived similarly by the various social segments in Cuba, as would happen in any other country.

The acknowledgment that we are a people with diverse roots and identities, the fruit of a constant process of transculturation, is not equally understood by the many groups which make up the Cuban population, in some cases because of lack of education and in others because of denial. This gradation of perceptions has to do with human logic which may produce a wide variety of reaction. In the specific case of race, the following trends can be identified:

- remaining feelings left by centuries of oppression under slavery and racial discrimination, with remnants of individual attitudes generated by the colonization and capitalization of our society;
- the shaping of an anti-racist social ethic, together with the consolidation of social justice in the revolutionary period, although racial discrimination has not been eradicated as illiteracy was;
- the integration of an intellectual vanguard that dignifies blacks and acknowledges the great contribution of cultures of African origin in Cuba with exponents like Fernando Ortiz, José Luciano Franco, Lydia Cabrera, Natalia Bolívar, Nancy Morejón, Jesus Guanche, Rogelio Martínez Fure and Esteban Morales, among other authors.

A definition of the singular reaction to racial problems in present Cuban society, identified with the ignorance of them, may be defined with the words of this last researcher when he points out:

“Still today the greatest difficulty we come up against is making many understand that the problem exists...It is not difficult to realize that what is taught in schools about the racial question is very little... and in our scientific work we barely take on the research of racial problems...

“...Therefore the conclusion is clear. It is not only that we have not confronted racism but even worse, the prevailing thinking on race in Cuba, today, seems to be the same that liberals, led in the 19th century.”⁴

Finally, I think that the solution to the still existing problems associated with racial discrimination in Cuba will emerge from a combination of two essential processes: the consistent analysis of the phenomenon and its intelligent confrontation. Only with this type of formulation will the essential and punctual aspects of this topic be identified and examined from a global and comprehensive viewpoint that would keep us abreast of the challenges facing humankind in the 21st century. This is beginning to show in recent debates in publications such as *Temas* from the Ministry of Culture and *Catauro* from the Foundation Fernando Ortiz.

Both processes are being given increasing attention today by prestigious authors and national institutions, as is the case of the UNEAC's Commission against Racism and Racial Discrimination, headed by writer Heriberto Feraudy. In their first year of work the effort to eradicate racism from Cuban society increased with, among other things, the holding of tributes to Mariana Grajales, Antonio Maceo and other relevant figures in our country's history; an Informative discussion on Cuban TV about racial topics in Cuba. The promotion of monographs and periodicals about race and discrimination have had national and international impact and have also drawn attention to

4. Esteban Morales, interview offered on December 2009. Source, *Inter Press Service*; Correspondent's office in Cuba.

dozens of foreign delegations interested in interracial relations in the country, especially those interested in the real conditions of Afro-descendants.

In previous times, the “black” component in Cuban culture was dealt with superficially, a hidden and taboo topic especially throughout the republican period. Few movies and plays that dealt with race, with the honorable exception of the poetry of Nicolas Guillen, and the works of Wifredo Lam which offered a genuine view of our reality with all its nuances, acknowledged and projected the essential values of the population of African origin in its full dimension within what is “Cuban.”

Today, national institutions like the Juan Marinello Institute and the Fernando Ortiz Foundation work on topics of race in the context of cultural identity with regular publications. In the case of the NGO bearing the name of the learned Cuban anthropologist, these publications include several numbers of the anthropological Journal *CATAURO*, the *Ethnographic Map on the Slave Route in Cuba*, as well as the books: *La tradición ewe-fon en Cuba* (The Ewe-Fon Tradition in Cuba) by H. Sogbossi; *Negreros catalanes y gaditanos en la trata cubana* (Traders from Catalonia and Cadiz in Cuban Slave Trade) by E. Sosa; *El culto de San Lázaro en Cuba* (The Cult to Saint Lazarus in Cuba) by L. Zamora; *Tras las huellas de las civilizaciones negras en América* (After the Footprints of Black Civilizations in America) by A. Leon; *Oraciones populares en Cuba* (Popular Prayers in Cuba) by J. Guanche; *Las almas del pueblo negro* (The Souls of Black Folks) by W. Dubois; *Retorno a las raíces* (Return to the Roots) by I. Barreal; *Rodar el coco* (Rolling the Coconut), de L. Menéndez; *Remanentes de las lenguas bantúes* (Remnants of Bantu Languages) by G. Valdés; *Brujas e inquisidores* (Witches and Inquisitors) by F. Ortiz; *Cazadores de Esclavos* (Slave Hunters) by G. La Rosa and Mirtha González; *Desafíos de la problemática racial en Cuba* (Challenges of Racial Problems in Cuba) by E. Morales; and *Contra la raza y los racismos* (Against Race and Racisms) by, de F. Ortiz, forthcoming.

We cannot conclude this presentation about race in Cuban society today, following its letter and spirit—a discourse and its voice, together with its still latent thousand-year-old hopes and heritage—without understanding other important elements of behavior and ideas.

First of all, we should recognize the growing role of community organizing as the cornerstone for the elimination of racism and social discrimination in Cuba. Through education, recreation, and other activities aimed at individuals and families in the streets and neighborhoods, this reconnects us to the original national idea of creating a free and equal nation.

Among the sociocultural projects with the greatest impact on communities with a large percentage of black population we may mention, as examples: Concha Mocoynu, La California (Havana); Música folklórica Alfonso Iyaé, Taller de la conga y rumba charanguera (Alfonso Iyaé Folkloric Music, Conga and Charanga Rumba Workshop-Bejucal); Templo de Oyá (Oya Temple, Havana); Visibilidad de la Africanía (Visibility of African Elements, Trinidad); Cabildo Quisicubaba (Quisicubaba Town Hall, Havana); and Tras las huellas de los ancestros africanos (After the Footsteps of African Ancestors, “México” Sugar Mill, Matanzas).

The dynamic ideas emerging in Cuba about these problems and their multiple institutional and territorial ramifications urgently require a body of specialized knowledge about this topic as a specific area of the social sciences.

This will contribute to an increasing understanding of procedures to be implemented in specific situations, and will emphasize the importance of family and school in the shaping of values, together with political and patriotic education, as well as a technical and professional upgrading that will comprehensively and systematically contribute to overcome the present praxis of racial issues in Cuban society.

Part of the focus should be the sustained development of more democratic educational and research projects which pay attention to

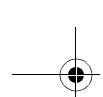
important topics in the national context, such as the so called “affirmative action” programs developed in other countries, and the one coined as “Afro-descendents” in the international level.

To finish, allow me to repeat some words I heard from the main character in my book *Biografía de un Cimarrón* (The Autobiography of a Run-Away Slave), that black Cuban named Esteban Montejo, who in one of our first meetings confessed: “Because of being a run-away I did not know my parents. I did not even see them. But that is not sad, because it is true.”

I finally would like to invoke a great friend of Africa and Cuba, Dr. Federico Mayor, Former General Director of *UNESCO*, who in this poem reflects my own view on racism as the most despicable feeling a human being may experience, from the moment Africans were turned into pieces of ebony, forced to work as animals as part of the great mercantile business of the slave trade, with total contempt for their human nature—only because of the color of their skin and their condition as enslaved men and women:

“In the House of the Gore Slaves, in Senegal, in 1992, I exclaimed in horror:

His last look,
before being laid out in the hold.
His last look,
to that narrow door,
to that island,
to that land of his
now sailing in the waves of lack of love
towards unknown coasts.



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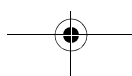
How much we want today those sobs,
that last traveling look
brutally uprooted from its landscape
from its home
from its banks

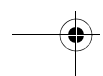
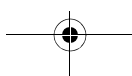
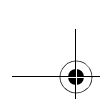
They were sold by their weight
we must pay the debt.”⁵

There is still a long way to go. The future can not only be a hope. It
has to be an achievement.



5. Federico Mayor, poem written in 1992; Source: *Africana, las raíces africanas en Iberoamérica* (Africana: African Roots in Latin America), First International Colloquium of Afro-Latin American Studies, University of Alcalá-UNESCO, Madrid, 1994.





15 The Sparks of Civil Society in Cuba: Afro-Cuban Cultural Production, Art Collectives, and the Struggle for a New Public Sphere

Zoya Kocur

Introduction

In the literature on Cuban civil society the relative lack of discussion of the role of art and cultural production in general, and Afro-Cuban culture in particular, is striking. This is perhaps understandable as most civil society research comes out of the areas of political theory and philosophy, and increasingly from the social sciences, but in overlooking the key role of cultural production, the debate does not reflect the spectrum of activity that is contributing to the formation of civil society in Cuba. The focus of this paper is the role of Afro-Cuban art and cultural production in the formation of Cuban civil society, in particular Afro-Cuban cultural production since the 1970s with attention to visual art as well as the influence and role of Afro-Cuban religious traditions.

As defined here, cultural production encompasses all forms of creative expression, including visual and performance art, literature,

music, theatre, dance, film and video, and expressions that originate in religious, folkloric, or other cultural traditions. Civil society as defined here encompasses the various ways in which people independently and collectively express themselves in relation to the state, whether in support or in opposition. Contributors to civil society include the range of expressions directed toward the public sphere intended to provoke debate, offer critical commentary on society, promote dialogue among groups of citizens, or support the status quo.

Useful for understanding the evolution of civil society in Cuba and relevant to this analysis are Antonio Gramsci's ideas on the structure and terrain of civil society. For Gramsci, civil society encompasses the spectrum of conflicting social and political forces, and represents not only the hegemonic realm of the status quo, but also the contested realm in which cultural change takes place. The political and social space of civil society narrows when people identify closely with political and social institutions (when hegemony prevails), and expands when this identity is weak. In this way civil society works both to reproduce the status quo, and serves as a potential agent of transformation. (Cox, 1999: 5) This dialectical approach characterizes the process by which new forms of civil society have taken shape in Cuba in recent decades

Afro-Cuban Culture and Civil Society

From colonial times to the present Afro-Cuban culture and cultural production, including religion, music, art, dance, and literature, have been a central but often submerged or suppressed component of Cuban civil society. Afro-descended Cubans have carried on a variety of cultural traditions and developed new cultural expressions that are popular and form an integral part of Cuban society, even if they are not uniformly acknowledged as such. In the civil society discussion it is critical to recognize that these expressions have always existed in Cuba, but that during many periods throughout Cuba's history, could not be manifested in an open public sphere. Despite unfavorable con-

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ditions, these traditions continued to circulate in a quasi-public sphere and could be considered a latent form of civil society, shared within families and communities, providing a space for civic engagement within Afro-Cuban society.

Since the Revolution, the Afro-Cuban religious practices that have provided a cultural and spiritual foundation for many Cubans have been at the same time the focus of government sanction and repression as well as the target of societal disapproval. Gayle McGarrity cites epidemiological studies conducted in Cuba in the early 1980s that identified participation in Afro-Cuban religions as pathological behavior (along with child and drug abuse, truancy, and juvenile delinquency). (McGarrity, 1992: 199) Alejandro de la Fuente notes that in the mid-1960s a measure was passed prohibiting initiation ceremonies of *santería*¹: “By 1971,” he continues, “these ceremonies had been authorized again, but they required special permission from the local police district. Santeros were interviewed in advance and asked to identify the participants, the types of rituals to be performed, and the origin of the materials required for ceremonies—many of which could be obtained only on the black market. Authorization was not automatically granted, and attendance of minors was strictly prohibited.” (de la Fuente, 2001: 293-5)

De la Fuente also cites a letter sent in 1970 to Celia Sánchez, personal aide to Fidel Castro, by the former president of an Afro-Cuban religious association, the Casino Africano San Antonio in Las Villas, in which he asserted that the Casino Africano (and other Afro-Cuban religious associations as well) had been closed against their will, and requested it be reopened. (de la Fuente, 2001: 293-4) A demand such as this on the part of religious practitioners, directed to the highest levels of government, for restoration of rights to associate and conduct religious ceremonies, represented not only a religious demand but a political one as well. Through the act of insisting on official rec-

1. *Santería*, also known as *regla de ocha*, along with *palo monte* or *reglas congas*, and the Abakuá secret society are Afro-Cuban religions.

ognition, Afro-Cuban religious organizations indicated that they were willing to mobilize themselves to protect their interests and rights.

Rafael Hernández has suggested that “Santería’s hierarchies and modes of social organization are rooted in civil society itself...” and contends that “if the associations and sites of worship of these popular religions were a breeding ground for political opposition, then the stability of the system would be broadly placed in question.” (Hernández, 2003: 95) I suggest that this is precisely why Afro-Cuban religions have been the target of state repression in Cuba. Referring to Afro-Cuban religions’ informal networks for sharing information and social life, Haroldo Dilla sees a potential for concern for the state, contending that Afro-Cuban religious groups “clearly possess a considerable ability to mobilize people—an ability that is bound to increase in the future.” (Dilla, 1999: 3) These kinds of analyses point to the prominent (if seldom publicly acknowledged) place in the civic imagination occupied by Afro-Cuban religious associations and networks.

A Gramscian approach characterized by a dialectical interaction between society and hegemonic ideas that acknowledges the emancipatory potential of civil society suggests the possibility for an eventual acceptance and incorporation of counter-hegemonic and contestatory ideas, in this case, for Afro-Cuban religious practices within a socialist state. The increased outward display of symbols of Afro-Cuban religions and the circumscribed encouragement of such displays on the part of the government, if only for economic reasons linked to tourism, indicates the potential for broader acceptance of these religious practices. However, the question of the state’s actions in response to concerns about potential challenges from a strengthened Afro-Cuban religious or cultural community explicitly raise the issue of power that arises as a result, calling forth another element of Gramscian civil society, that is, the coercive power of the state as exercised in concert with the hegemonic structure.

Since the start of the Special Period in 1990, the practice of Afro-Cuban religions has become both more visible and more widespread.

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In 1992, the Communist Party Congress declared Cuba to be a secular rather than atheist state, opening a space for believers of Afro-Cuban and other religions to practice more openly and to gain official recognition in some cases. However, this constitutional change did not mean that Afro-Cuban religions were openly embraced. Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, a Cuban psychologist, writes that Afro-Cuban religion, before it became “legitimate” to practice in the 1990s,

was seen as an ‘uncultured’ or ‘primitive’ form of having a religious practice...it was not well-regarded to have religious beliefs, much less if they were of African origin. Thus, many of our parents hid their religious interests, which unavoidably led to our postponement of this type of motivation, a sort of ‘de-culturation.’ It was only when it was given value that many of us returned to our origins. (Álvarez Ramírez, 2009: 2)

In addition to such examples of reluctance to carry on Afro-Cuban religious traditions in the home, external societal pressures against these practices have remained strong. Lázara Menéndez writes in her study of Afro-Cuban religions that:

...social and religious prejudice has disallowed external manifestations of religious symbols in certain places of business, in theaters and movies, in museums and galleries located in certain Havana neighborhoods, or municipalities not considered appropriate venues for displaying ones connection with such ‘folkloric activity.’ Looks, gestures, veiled comments or disapproving murmurs, and expressions of surprise are still observed today in places or toward people who, it is believed, should have rid themselves of that type of ‘virus.’ (Menéndez, 2005: 270-1)

The hegemonic underpinning for the devaluing of Afro-Cuban cultures in the dominant society is made visible through these examples from the “personal” sphere, as are, increasingly, counter-hegemonic attempts to re-value it by various social actors and sectors within the population. Despite the lack of approval or support on many fronts, the Special Period saw a significant increase in Afro-Cuban religious expression not only in more open practice of religion and an increase in numbers of adherents, but also in the proliferation

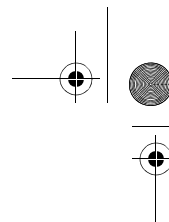
of references to Afro-Cuban religion in all types of art and popular music.

Acknowledging the role of visual art that incorporates aspects of Afro-Cuban culture, Lázara Menéndez suggests that artistic production made room for Afro-Cuban religious practices and culture in the public sphere:

The issue of myth and the artistic sphere was a pretext that paved the way for reflection on different aspects of Cuban culture and made it possible to examine issues of being Cuban in their more immediate context...Artistic creation, which since the eighties had staged a frontal attack on such issues as poverty and exclusion, began to subvert institutional-legal boundaries...There was increasing space for the religious beliefs of African origin in Cuba heretofore relegated to the sphere of folklore and in exceptional cases the fine arts... (Menéndez, 2005: 277)

This example illustrates one way in which submerged and repressed Afro-Cuban religious beliefs were aestheticized, taken up as part of the artistic movements of the 1980s and via this path, entered the public sphere. This is not to suggest that Afro-Cuban religious beliefs and their expressions required legitimization through the fine arts, but that through the window of art, elements of Afro-Cuban religions were brought before a public that may not have been inclined to consider them or accept their cultural value.

Cuban popular music has also been vital in the efforts to create new spaces for civic expression and an expanded public sphere. *Timba* and rap, growing since the 1980s and considered part of a black aesthetic, grew rapidly in popularity during the 1990s under the conditions of the Special Period. In the social and economic upheaval of the period, which disproportionately affected non-white Cubans, timba and rap lyrics spoke openly of harsh new realities, along with their attendant racial dynamics and discrimination. Importantly, they also spoke from a position of black identity: "Under a political regime that rejected displays of identity based on race, religion and the like, timba boldly paid tribute to Afro-Cuban heritage, both religious and secular." (Hernández-Reguant, 2004: 33)



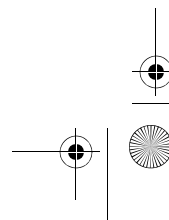
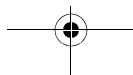
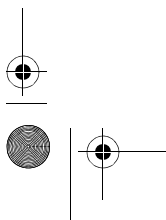
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The hip hop movement, which started to form during the 1980s in Cuba with breakdancing, and emerged strongly with its own Cuban rap production by the mid-1990s, was a vital part of the larger and more recent movement among young mostly non-white Cubans to claim a public space for expression of social concerns and criticisms, and to lay claim to an Afro-Cuban and/or diasporic identity. Building on the efforts of diverse musical and artistic predecessors, rap musicians today are contributing strongly to an increasingly racially-conscious youth movement. Nonetheless, popular cultural manifestations, whether in the form of Afro-Cuban religion or music, are rarely mentioned in the academic civil society debate inside or outside of Cuba. The fact that a significant percentage of the producers, participants and audiences are considered “marginal” may explain in part why much of the associated contribution to civil society has been ignored as such.

Art and the Public Sphere in the 1970s and 1980s

The moment that has been canonized as the harbinger of the New Cuban Art was the 1981 group exhibition *Volumen Uno* (See Mosquera, 2002). The artists involved had begun working in various ways during the latter part of the 1970s to break free of the dogmatic style and pedagogy that had had been imported from the Soviet Union. As the 1980s progressed, art schools began to implement curricular reforms. At the same time, the Soviet Union was experiencing the effects of policies of glasnost and perestroika, momentous changes that had a profound effect in Cuba. The external political changes prompted young artists to react to the new situation. Amidst the economic, social and political tumult, artists took stronger and more provocative stances and engaged in ever more vigorous criticism of the government.

The 1980s saw the formation of a significant number of art collectives, springing mostly (though not exclusively) from Cuba’s art schools. Breaking new ground by presenting their work outside of



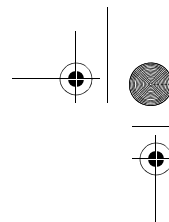
officially sanctioned spaces for exhibiting art, the hallmark of collectives of the mid-1980s was the activation of the space of the street and the public sphere to disseminate their ideas and engage directly with the public. ArteCalle, Grupo Provisional, Art-De, Grupo Independiente La Campana, Grupo Puré, and other collectives emerged, electing to work in public spaces, often with performances and other activities structured around interaction with the public.

Integral to these new artistic expressions, an Afro-Cuban artistic production intersected and overlapped the artistic movement that expressed itself in *Volumen Uno*. The work of collectives such as Grupo Antillano and others can be seen as one of several concurrent but distinct currents in 1970s and 1980s Cuban art. A number of the groups formed in this period were interested in the potential of art as an expression of an emerging identitarian discourse, including Grupo Raíces, founded by Miguel Angel Ruiz Silva in the early 1980s, Grupo Origen,² and Grupo Antillano³ (Ramos Cruz, 2000). With respect to the Afro-Cuban movement, the racialized nature of the project presented the regime with a problem as this would contradict the myth of a Revolution that had eradicated racism and call attention to the fact that much of the institutional and social apparatus of racism inherited from Cuba's pre-Revolutionary history remained intact.

Together, the external influences of race-based movements such as Black Power, and the experiences of Afro-Cubans sent to serve in the civil war in Angola from 1975 on, had a significant impact on artists seeking to develop a distinctly Afro-Cuban cultural identity. A large percentage of the troops sent to Africa were black, among them the artists Eduardo Roca Salazar, known as Choco, and Nelson Domínguez (Bettelheim, 2005). The years of military service spent by thousands of black Cubans in Angola, and also Ethiopia, reaffirmed and

2. Active from 1974-1980. Group members were Miguel de Jesús Ocejó López, Mariano Suarez del Villar and Pablo Daniel Toscano Mora.

3. Active from 1975-1984. The core group members included Rafael Queneditt, Ramón Haití Eduardo, Arnaldo Larrinaga, Rogelio Rodríguez Cobas, Leonel Morales, and Manuel Coucerio. Other participants in the group were Manuel Mendive, Ever Fonseca Cerviño, Rogelio Martínez Furé and Guillermina Ramos Cruz.

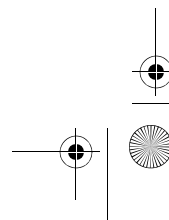
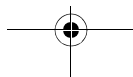
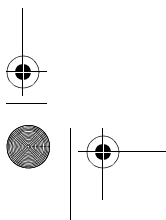


The Sparks of Civil Society in Cuba: Afro-Cuban Cultural Production, Art Collectives, and renewed historical and cultural ties between Afro-Cubans and Africans (particularly in Angola, as many Cubans' descendants came from that region) and resulted in the desire among many black Cubans to emphasize this African connection after their return home.

Grupo Antillano was composed of artists, historians, and cultural scholars and intellectuals. Group director Rafael Queneditt explained that members of Grupo Antillano were interested in specific socio-political issues: "For example, no group member was on the faculty of an art school, and that was part of the impetus to organize conferences and exhibitions—to help the public understand what 'black consciousness' meant and that Afro-Cuban artists were active in the Havana art scene" (Bettelheim, 2005: 36). The group's first exhibition in 1978 was sponsored by the newly-formed Ministry of Culture. However, assertion of an explicitly Afro-Cuban identity was seen by the government as problematic in light of the leadership's insistence that a Revolutionary national identity supersede any other group identity. Art historian and group member Guillermina Ramos Cruz asserts that the government withdrew its support because the group's Afro-Cuban and African cultural focus was considered divisive (Ramos Cruz, 2000: 148-9).

In fact, Cuban artists across generations have addressed and incorporated issues of race. From the art of Ramón Haití Eduardo, who has for many decades been making African-influenced paintings and sculptures and claiming a black identity, to the work of Alexis Esquivel, whose performance "*La Soga Maravillosa*" ("The Amazing Rope" 1999-2001) made direct reference to racial segregation in contemporary Cuba, artists have worked toward expression of the cultural history as well as social realities of black Cubans. But artists who insist on addressing race have often been isolated because of their subject matter and official disapproval of raising the issue of racism or racial discrimination in Cuba.

In terms of an Afro-Cuban movement, by the mid-80s, the withholding of government support combined with the official silence



about race served to discourage further collective efforts by artists interested in building an Afro-Cuban cultural and racial movement. Despite this setback, members of collectives such as Grupo Antillano and others continued to explore these themes in their individual work. A number of black Cuban artists who began to exhibit their work in the mid 1980s and early 1990s explored Afro-Cuban themes including religion, cultural heritage and race in varying degrees, among other topics, in their individual art works. Among these were Belkis Ayón (b. 1967, d. 1999), María Magdalena Campos Pons (b. 1959), Manuel Piña (b. 1958) and René Peña (b. 1957). Ayón and Campos Pons attended the *Instituto Superior de Arte* in the 1980s while Piña and Peña began their art careers in the beginning of the 1990s after careers in other fields, engineering and English language respectively. While each of these artists' work addressed Afro-Cuban topics in varying degrees, their output is not considered part of a distinct movement.

By the late 1990s, with a younger generation of artists coming to the forefront, the parallel but mostly separate trajectories of the art school collectives and the Afro-Cuban groups started to blend. Various 1990s collectives addressed issues such as sexuality and gender in various forms, and criticized the government for problems such as lack of adequate housing and economic opportunity, attempting to intervene in some of these problems within the limited means available to them.

Projects explicitly dealing with race, such as *Queloides*, began to carve out space in official art venues. Two group exhibitions took place in 1997, first *Queloides*, curated by critic Omar Pascual Castillo and artist Alexis Esquivel, and later that year, *Ni Músicos, Ni Deportistas*, curated by Ariel Ribeaux. A second *Queloides* exhibition took place in 1999. The first *Queloides* exhibition was held at Casa de Africa and presented in an anthropological context (part of a conference on Afro-Cuba), placing the discussion of race within the more acceptable framework of ethnological and historical research rather than as part of contemporary social relations.⁴ However the second and third exhibitions were presented in art venues, with *Ni Músicos* presented at the

The Sparks of Civil Society in Cuba: Afro-Cuban Cultural Production, Art Collectives, and Centro Provincial de Artes Plásticas y Diseño in Havana, and the second *Queloides* at the Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales. With the original *Queloides*, for the first time a visual art exhibition dealing explicitly with the dynamic of race in contemporary Cuba was held.⁵ The exhibitions spurred debate in the art world and beyond and had an important impact in opening up a discussion on race.⁶

The collective from the 1990s with the most longevity is OMNI-ZonaFranca. Based in Alamar, east of Havana, the group has been working since 1997 on a variety of artistic projects, including poetry and sound works, performance events, public interventions, community projects, theatrical performances with children and a festival, *Poesía Sin Fin*, held during the last two weeks of December each year. OMNI is the strongest example of a collective that has taken on what many of the various projects and collectives of the 1980s had set out to do, that is, to engage on a long-term basis within a community, in a material, creative and spiritual sense, through art. It is relevant to note that Alamar is a massive housing project built in the 1970s to accommodate the population overflow of Havana's poorest neighborhoods. Geographically isolated and poorly served by public transportation, and with a large black population, Alamar is considered a "marginal" area. The artists of OMNI are a racially mixed group and their work incorporates rap, spoken word, and other expressive forms that have emerged out of the struggles of African-descended people. Unlike the artists of Grupo Antillano and their contemporaries, for both pragmatic and philosophical reasons the members of OMNI have skirted the question of an explicitly named Afro-Cuban group identity; they emphasize their diverse spiritual practices, artistic influences, collective process, and commitment to their community. OMNI's longevity

4. The artists in this exhibition were Douglas Pérez, René Peña, Elio Rodríguez, Gertrudis Rivalta, Roberto Diago, Manuel Arenas, José Ángel Vincench, Alvaro Almaguer, Omar Pascual Castillo and Alexis Esquivel.

5. The artists in *Ni Músicos, Ni Deportistas* were Douglas Pérez, René Peña, Elio Rodríguez, Manuel Arenas and Alexis Esquivel.

6. An expanded and updated version of *Queloides*, organized by historian Alejandro de la Fuente and artist Elio Rodríguez was on view in Havana at the Centro Wifredo Lam in the spring of 2010 and traveled to the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh in the fall of 2010.

is a result of the group's commitment to the community and the relationships the group has built over more than a decade of working together.

The examples of the *Queloides* artists and OMNI-ZonaFranca point to a changing situation for Cuban artists starting in the late 1990s (not only for black artists, but for all) of a new possibility to approach issues of race, to adopt black cultural styles, and to engage publicly in discussing these issues. These younger artists have been inspired by groups such as ArteCalle and later groups such as ENEMA, DIP (El Departamento de Intervenciones Públicas) and Galería DUPP, and have also benefited from the efforts of artists who engaged with Afro-Cuban and African diasporic issues and themes before them. They have been able to take advantage of this diverse set of predecessors to invent their own forms of critical and ethical art and create new spaces in the form of an expanded role for art in Revolutionary society.

Conclusion

Over the past several decades, Cuban artists and cultural producers have challenged the government's hegemony in several key arenas, including free speech, artistic freedom, the right to religious expression, and the opening up of cultural and other institutions to civic debates. Out of this interaction between social actors and hegemonic structures, new spaces for civil society have been forged, manifested in large measure within the terrain of cultural production.

The continuous assertions of Afro-Cuban religious and cultural identity, along with the incursions of art into the public sphere that began in the 1980s, constitute two intertwined forces that have made intermittent progress toward creating a form of civil society in Cuba. In aggregate, these activities might be seen as acts of resistance, as struggles to create new social, aesthetic and political space through maintaining cultural practices and making and performing art against the backdrop of a government apparatus that continually seeks to exert its control over such expressions.

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Considering the work of cultural producers and artists who have insisted on the right to enter the public sphere through their diverse forms of expression, I suggest that all of this does in fact “count” as civil society. It represents a vibrant force for creating new spaces in the public sphere, providing a means to raise critical questions about Cuban society and initiate public debates in contemporary Cuban society that are relevant to large sectors of the population. All of these efforts have provided the sparks for energizing a movement toward civil society and the expansion of the public sphere in Cuba. Within a contested social and political ground, an emancipatory civil society is taking shape.

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16 Sharing Strategies for Racial Uplift: Afro-Cubans, Afro-Puerto Ricans, and African Americans

*Raquel Alicia Otheguy*¹

In 1899, Afro-Cuban intellectual and statesman, Juan Gualberto Gómez, sent his son and a group of Cuban students to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute with a letter of introduction. These were the first in a wave of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican students who attended Tuskegee in the first decade of the twentieth century. This academic exchange was accompanied by a great interest in Booker T. Washington's educational philosophy and in his Tuskegee Institute by another Afro-Cuban intellectual and leader, Rafael Serra, during his years in exile in the United States. This connection between Afro-Cubans, Afro-Puerto Ricans, and African Americans reveals an important exchange of strategies for racial uplift among members of these post-emancipation societies.

This paper will argue that while black leaders throughout the African diaspora in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century often concentrated primarily on the attainment of narrowly defined

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political rights such as voting and citizenship as a way to fully integrate themselves into their societies, they were also very concerned with social, economic, and educational issues. When Booker T. Washington developed an innovative way to advance precisely these causes, and actively recruited Cuban students through his alumni, business, and military networks, Cuban leaders responded positively, reviewing his educational philosophy in their newspapers, and sending dozens of students to study in the heart of the empire while their parents stayed behind and participated in their own nation's affairs. Examining this exchange as the United States invaded Cuba and Puerto Rico will further our understanding of the strategies used by black leaders in post-emancipation societies to move forward in the face of racism, nationalist goals and imperialist aspirations.

In the Tuskegee-Cuba connection and Tuskegee-Puerto Rico connection, we see a particular interest on behalf of Afro-descended people in economic methods of advancement, and an understanding that education was linked to economic improvement. Education and economic advancement were seen by leaders in both areas as crucial to racial equality and racial uplift. In particular, Afro-Cubans looking at the example of African Americans in the United States noted their success in the economic realm, as well as the ways that improvement in socioeconomic status and education might be able to mitigate the worst parts of Jim Crow. With the U.S. invasion and occupation of Cuba and Puerto Rico, and the attempted transfer of strategies for racial uplift from one place to another, these observations became all the more relevant, and were transformed into action as dozens Afro-Cuban students attended Tuskegee over the course of fifteen years. However, putting into practice this transfer of ideas revealed the limits of sharing strategies in two different contexts, despite their increased connections—socially, politically, and particularly economically, as the Cuban sugar industry became oriented to the US market and US capital sustained and increasingly controlled Cuban sugar.

This exchange was complicated particularly because it coincided with a US imperial project to Americanize its new island possessions

Sharing Strategies for Racial Uplift: Afro-Cubans, Afro-Puerto Ricans, and African Amer- through education. As part of this effort to disseminate American values, the American occupying governments sent white Puerto Rican and Cuban teachers to the United States to learn at the Normal Schools there. A well-known example of this is the summer schools at Harvard and Cornell, though there were also longer-term stays at The State Normal College at New Paltz. At the same time, this parallel exchange was going on between African-American institutions of higher learning and Afro-Cubans and Afro-Puerto Ricans. The United States' intervention and occupation of Cuba and Puerto Rico complicated this diasporic exchange, as now the source of inspiration also challenged these Afro-Cubans' nationalist goals. Yet Gómez, Serra, and other Afro-Cubans managed to maintain their nationalist loyalties while reaching out to the African diaspora to adopt a very specific strategy of racial uplift.

The mechanisms for this exchange was different for the Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican students attending Tuskegee, however, and the Puerto Rican case seems to fit into the rubric of imperialism more squarely. The Cubans were recruited by Washington himself, sent from Cuba by the famous Afro-Cuban intellectual Juan Gualberto Gómez, and funded by wealthy Northern donors, but the Puerto Rican group was sent and funded by the American colonial government in Puerto Rico, at least in the beginning years. Thus the presence of Puerto Rican students at Tuskegee was clearly part of the larger strategy of imperialism-through-education being employed by the U.S. government. This does not exclude the possibility that for the students and parents themselves the experience was part of an effort at building transnational ties with an eye toward specific strategies of racial uplift—that Afro-Puerto Ricans could put this imperial project to their own use (Guridy, 2010 and Sobe, 2010).

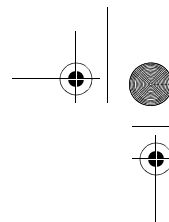
The existence of empire that not only added North American racist ideas to the existing racism in Cuba and Puerto Rico, but also contributed to an economic shift in these areas. Empire transformed the relations between these countries radically, and altered the opportunities for work and economic status available to both white and blacks

in the new colonies. For Afro- Cubans and Afro-Puerto Ricans, this economic change came on the heels of abolition, which had radically redefined their working experience. While Afro-Cuban leaders worked to prevent a permanent imperial relationship and secure independence for Cuba, they were also thinking about how the new realities might affect the socioeconomic status of blacks, and acting to improve it.

In order to illuminate these intersections, I will examine the writings of Rafael Serra that are housed at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, which point to the accomplishments of African-Americans, including Booker T. Washington, as a model for Afro-Cubans. Based on archival research at the Tuskegee University Archives, I will then study the case of Juan Gualberto Gómez sending his son and a group of Afro-Cuban students to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Their experience will be compared to that of the Puerto Rican students at Tuskegee, who were sent there by the US-instituted civil government in Puerto Rico as part of their imperial strategy.

Historical and Historiographical Context

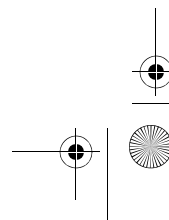
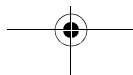
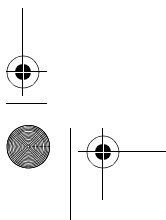
Race relations in the United States, Cuba and Puerto Rico have had different historical trajectories, but at the turn of the last century the areas were undergoing remarkably similar transformations that would forever alter the place of people of African descent. Slavery in these societies ended roughly around the same time period, from the 1860s to the 1880s. In the construction of the post-emancipation societies that were starting to develop, former slaves and their descendents raised their voices and worked to effect change that would ensure that African Americans, Afro-Cubans, and Afro-Puerto Ricans would have a place in these new social arrangements. In addition to advocating for political rights, particularly that of suffrage, freed people in each of these areas re-doubled their interest in a tradition of schooling from the days of slavery, and struggled with the radical changes in their role



Sharing Strategies for Racial Uplift: Afro-Cubans, Afro-Puerto Ricans, and African Americans as workers. But their efforts were not taken in isolation. Working with long-standing currents of communication and exchange, and creating new ones in new circumstances, African Americans' ideas and actions of racial uplift intersected with those of Afro-Cubans and Afro-Puerto Ricans, particularly when they came to education and labor. Their efforts at sharing strategies across the diaspora were undertaken in a wider context of the nationalist ideals of the Cubans and Puerto Ricans and their confrontation with US imperialism.

In the years after emancipation, it became clear that black people in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the United States would face terrible obstacles to their advancement. In the United States, efforts at Reconstruction ended in 1877 and the federal troops left the South and its African American population to fend for themselves. By the 1890s the rights initially given to blacks, particularly that of suffrage, and their meager advancements, were being rolled back and blacks were being disfranchised throughout the South. On the heels of disenfranchisement came institutionalized segregation, lynching, and Jim Crow. Political avenues for advancement were foreclosed to the black population of the US South. Black aspirations to economic autonomy as small landowners and farmers were also thwarted as white southern elites, assisted by the Freedman's Bureau, forced African-American laborers to sign work contracts that forced them into an exploitative sharecropping system (Zimmerman, 2010).

In Cuba, the worst kind of oppression was mitigated, but Afro-Cubans were far from being granted an equal place in society. Black military service in the wars of independence ensured that freed slaves and other Afro-Cubans were treated with some measure of respect. With a largely integrated army and the prevalence of black war heroes, the Cuban revolutionary leaders had quickly realized that the support of African slaves and free men was necessary to sustain the rebellion. When espousing ideas of who belonged in the new nation, Cuban leaders proclaimed that being Cuban was more important than one's race, and that all Cubans were equal. Some scholars, most notably Alejandro de la Fuente, have emphasized that this idea mitigated the



worst kind of racism, because, in Cuba, to be openly racist became synonymous with being unpatriotic. This led to some very real gains by Afro-Cubans. For example, despite the intervention of the United States, which was currently under an administration that was allowing the oppression of its own African-descended people, Cubans were able to guarantee that Afro-Cubans be given the vote. The Cuban Constitutional Convention seated men of all colors, and—along with town councils, mass meetings and veterans associations—clamored in support of “writing a positive right to vote directly into the Constitution” (De la Fuente, 2001: 371, and Scott, 2005: 203- 4).

However, despite the right to vote and the existence of some Afro-Cuban representatives in the national legislature, Afro-Cubans continued to struggle for equality. Some scholars, particularly Aline Helg, have criticized the “myth of racial equality,” and the way that it obscured a deeply segregated and racist environment. The same discourse of nationalism based on racial equality that prevented the worst racism also allowed whites to gloss over complaints of racial inequality, and to maintain the status quo. Continued racial inequality and oppression culminated in the race war—really a massacre of Afro-Cubans—of 1912, which was a response to an attempt on the part of some Afro-Cubans to organize a black political party. In the face of dashed hopes and increasing oppression, therefore, blacks in Cuba and the United States mobilized to improve their situation. Afro-Cubans were particularly active in establishing mutual aid societies that provided education and assistance to black Cubans. This independent organizing along racial lines had a specifically Cuban origin—the ethnic African *cabildos*—but was also a counterpart to strategies implemented by African Americans.

In both the North American and Cuban historiographies, historians writing about racial uplift have focused on the *political* efforts, and political exclusion, of black people. In part, this is the because of the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement—it was an insistence on civil and political rights that created a major breakthrough for African Americans in the United States in the 1960s. It is also because, in the period

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of Jim Crow, the situation of black people in the US South seemed so bleak and oppressive, with institutionalized segregation, a lack of voting rights, and condoned lynching, that historians could not seem to find any instances of attempts at improvements that seemed worth writing about. As Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore has shown, however, even in periods of extreme oppression, it is possible to find examples of African-Americans striving to improve their status in society. In Cuba, too, historians have been very interested in the existence of political rights and participation. They have been especially focused on how discourses of racial equality were translated into real political rights in the aftermath of the War of Independence, as Ada Ferrer and others have brilliantly demonstrated. Rebecca Scott has written about a transnational circulation of political ideas, particularly ideas of citizenship rights, throughout the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. However, in Cuba the period of political organization and advancement is often seen as coming to a screeching halt with 1912 massacre and the end of the independent Afro-Cuban political party, *el Partido Independiente de Color*. Helg argues this point forcefully, and adds that after 1912, Afro-Cubans' efforts at organizing can be seen in the cultural realm better than in the political realm. And indeed, the historiography on Afro-Cubans in the mid-twentieth century has focused on afrocubanismo and other cultural forms. And because Puerto Rico became a U.S. colony at the turn of the century, the historiography has focused on colonialism and US imperialism, and the racialization of all Puerto Ricans, rather than the specific challenges facing Afro-Puerto Ricans.

This paper proposes that in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the United States, blacks were focused on economic methods of advancements for their community, as well as on political and cultural ones. In their attempts to expand educational opportunities that would help lead to new employment situations for those who had been formerly enslaved, black intellectuals looked beyond their national boundaries, even while keeping solidly within them when it came to their political efforts. Juan Gualberto Gómez and Rafael Serra, both black Cuban

intellectuals, journalists and independence activists, had been exiled to Florida and New York in the 1880s and 90s, and had there become familiar with the African American response to slavery, racism, and discrimination—particularly under the leadership of Booker T. Washington, whose autobiography was widely read. When the next generation of Cubans—including Juan Gualberto Gómez's son—went to Alabama, they entered a society that, to be sure, was racist and segregationist, and under the control of Jim Crow laws, but where nevertheless African Americans were also continuing to take action within their own communities. In particular, Booker T. Washington had developed an alternative educational system, called industrial education. In addition to literacy—which had long been a cherished goal for African Americans—and other academic subjects, his students had to specialize in a trade. The Caribbean students, for example, specialized in trades as varied as millinery, dairy, dress-making, electrical engineering, agriculture, and architecture.

Booker T. Washington's commitment to economic methods of advancement was highly criticized both in his own time and in the subsequent historiography, which has seen him as accommodating the white power structure. His educational philosophy has been criticized as a way to keep African-Americans doing menial labor without the possibility of socioeconomic advancement. When it comes to his involvement with the African diaspora, Washington's most famous biographer describes him as taking up the white man's burden himself, cooperating with white colonial authorities in a way that was consistent with his acceptance of southern racism and his partnerships with American white elites (Harlan 1966: 441). More recent historiography, however, has absolved Washington of these claims. A recent biography by Robert Norrell asserts that previous historians have ignored the inefficacy of political protest at Washington's time. He points out that Washington did in fact attempt to advocate for political rights at various moments, but was almost always defeated in that realm, whereas his school was successful by many measures (Norrell 2009). Wilson Jeremiah Moses has pointed out that even in his own time, it

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was Washington's focus on education and economic progress that earned him disdain. W.E.B. Dubois, for example, thought that Washington should be focusing on the moral imperatives in southern race relations, as Frederick Douglass had done. But, as Moses asserts, Washington rightly realized that while abolitionism allowed its supporters to take the high moral ground, Reconstruction required mundane attention to industry, agriculture, and labor (Moses 2004: Introduction, Chapter 8).

Critics of Booker T. Washington's industrial education ignore the significant academic component of Tuskegee's program. In addition, it is highly unlikely that intellectuals as keenly aware of the threats of empire as Gómez and Serra would have willingly interacted with Washington had they suspected him of having similar goals to his imperial government. In fact, this paper seeks to demonstrate that it was precisely the aspects of Washington's strategies that were denounced during his time and in the subsequent historiography that appealed to the Afro-Cuban leaders. Dismissing Washington as a willing participant in a white imperialist project not only inaccurately describes his position, but also causes us to overlook or downplay the ways that Afro-Cuban leaders attempted to deal with the imperial threat and changing economic situation by reaching across the diaspora to find new solutions.

Though the criticism of Washington as actively participating in US empire is overstated and obscures the important contributions he made to a method that was appreciated through the African diaspora, we cannot separate the exchange of strategies of racial uplift explored here from the US imperial project. The presence of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican students at Tuskegee was part of an ideological and strategic circulation of ideas among intellectual leaders in the black diaspora that should be taken seriously. However, the student exchange was also clearly bound up in the US imperial project. The Afro-Cuban students ended up at Tuskegee through the impetus of several Afro-Cuban leaders and Booker T. Washington's interest. But their tuition and travel expenses were often funded by wealthy north-

ern donors, who likely had a more explicitly imperial interest in bringing them to the United States. The Puerto Rican students, moreover, appear to have been funded and sent by the United States Occupying government in Puerto Rico. In addition, historian Andrew Zimmerman has recently noted the participation of Washington and Tuskegee in the efforts of white elites to mitigate African American efforts at total emancipation and economic autonomy. White elites in the American South were successful in channeling newly freed laborers into exploitative contracts that kept them in a subordinate position, and in mobilizing racial arguments to continue to oppress blacks, and their strategies were repeated by German imperialists in Togo, Africa, with the help of Tuskegee Institute representatives (Zimmerman, 2010). The creation of a “Global South,” would also affect people in the United States’ new island possessions, and particularly the recently freed slaves in Cuba and Puerto Rico, as North Americans came to control the Cuba sugar industry.² Given this economic shift, more research is needed to uncover whether black leaders in Cuba and Puerto Rico looked to African-American models of education and economic advancement, rather than sticking to their own existing models, because they were anticipating or experiencing a changing economic order that would be ushered in by the United States occupation. I seek to hold in tension and explore both the spread of oppressive strategies to check black advancement, and the exchange of black people’s ideas on how to advance in the face of the increasingly hardening ‘global color line’ of the twentieth century.

2. See Franklin Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), Chapter 8, Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), Chapter 1, and Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality and Politics in Twentieth Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Chapter 3.

Sharing Strategies for Racial Uplift: Afro-Cubans, Afro-Puerto Ricans, and African Amer-

Rafael Serra: Education, Economic Uplift, and the United States

Rafael Serra was a Cuban intellectual and independence activist who began his working life as a cigar worker and early on turned to education and journalism. He was exiled in 1880 for his pro-independence activity, and continued his independence and educational work with the community of exiles in New York. Serra's efforts were in no way apolitical—he held strong beliefs about Cuban nationalism and independence, protested against annexation to the United States, and he worked to promote these causes. After his return to Cuba, he served as representative to the national legislatures, switching from the Moderate to the Conservative Party in 1908. And yet his writings also demonstrate a concern for the socioeconomic status of *la clase de color*. In particular, he decried and advocated for a solution to their educational paucity and poverty. These concerns are highlighted when he discusses the position of American blacks and Booker T. Washington's strategies for racial uplift.

Apart from his political work, Serra was always involved in educational projects. In the United States he founded an educational society with José Martí's help. Its stated purpose was to "procure intellectual advancement and an elevation of character for men of color born in Cuba and Puerto Rico." Intellectual and moral advancement was tied to improved work opportunities: this educational access would allow young people in particular to go on to "a career or trade that are still uncommon for the class of color." A salon was also established for members, to facilitate mutual education for adults and to improve culture. "The only and primary object of this organization," wrote Serra, was "to prepare men and women who would be useful for the success of Cuba and Puerto Rico."³ Thus for Serra, education and morality as methods of racial uplift had material benefits: they led to improved work options that were usually inaccessible for black people, and a

3. Rafael Serra, "La Liga," *Ensayo Político, Tercera Serie*, Schomburg Center for the Research of Black Culture (hereafter SCRBC). [All translations mine]

general elevation of socioeconomic status. He then tied the improvement of the situation of *la clase de color* to the success of the nationalist project, so that his educational work and emphasis on economic improvement was connected to his political work. Serra accepted Martí's vision of a race-less, integrated Cuba, but thought that the position of Afro-Cubans must be improved in order for this vision to succeed.

Serra understood race relations in the United States to provide useful examples and also cautionary tales for Cuba. When Serra looked at the racism of the United States, and particularly at the efforts at disenfranchisement of blacks in the South, he understood the racists to be justifying their actions based on the professed incapacity and lack of preparation of African Americans. Literacy tests effectively disenfranchised African Americans because they were uneducated. Poll taxes did the same because black people as a group had not achieved a certain level of material wealth.⁴ Therefore, education and prosperity were not only generally good for people of African descent, but they also had the potential to guard against the worst abuses of Jim Crow. For a Cuban intellectual committed to Cuban independence and opposed to U.S imperialism and its effects, this would be a cautionary tale indeed, and the solutions well worth noting. Serra's call for the elevation of the moral character and culture of Afro-Cubans was also a response to real or potential threats to blacks based on their debasement as a race, their lack of culture and refinement. Improving themselves in these specific ways would take away justifications for exclusion from the white racists, as Glenda Gilmore has argued in her book about African Americans in Richmond (Gilmore 1996: 18).

Serra's admiration for Booker T. Washington's strategy of economic progress is evident in the articles that he wrote or had translated from English on Washington's work and the Tuskegee Institute. Disappointed with "the lack of [Cuban] solutions," Serra claimed that it was necessary to look to foreign strategies as long as they were

4. Rafael Serra, "La Brasa a su Sardina," *Para Blancos y Negros*, SCRBC.

Sharing Strategies for Racial Uplift: Afro-Cubans, Afro-Puerto Ricans, and African Americans applicable to Cuba's situation.⁵ Serra had to fight against the perception that Cubans (and many Americans) had of Booker T. Washington that he opposed black participation in politics. Serra pointed out that in fact, Washington focused on education and prosperity because of the difficulty of working within the particular political situation in the South—a nuanced point that is echoed by Norrell's recent biography of Washington. Serra also asserted that Washington himself acknowledged a difference between African Americans and Afro-Cubans; Afro-Cubans had fought in the wars of independence, and had a long tradition of artisanal work and trades, which positioned them differently vis-à-vis the dominant society. Serra understood, then, that the situation of Afro-Cubans and African Americans was not necessarily completely parallel, and argued that Washington similarly understood this.

Despite the differences between Afro-Cubans and African Americans, Serra still found Washington's strategies worth exploring. Economic progress of the kind advocated for by Washington, he felt, had been successful for African Americans. His compilations of essays and newspaper articles include statistics about the successes of African Americans, stating that in the United States there were black millionaires, black dentists, black lawyers, etc. "Education and money," stated an article in his newspaper, "... are the only object of the black American for the practical and decisive solution to this complicated problem."⁶

Like Washington, he advocated for Afro-Cubans to undertake efforts to improve their own lot independent of whites or the larger political situation. "The disinherited classes," he wrote, "should also get moving, and not trust everything to Providence and miracles."⁷ Serra's organizations—his mutual aid societies, educational societies, and newspapers, were organized along racial lines. But he often had

5. Rafael Serra, "Promsea Cumplida: Booker T. Washington Interpretado por la Preocupación Cubana," *Para Blancos y Negros*, SCRBC.

6. Serra, *Para Blancos y Negros*, 163, SCRBC.

7. Serra, *Ensayos Políticos, Tercera Serie*, 50, SCRBC.

the support of white people such as José Martí. Between his experiences and his confidence in the myth of racial equality promoted by Cuban nationalists, Serra grew to expect white cooperation for the solution of black problems. The efforts of black people would not suffice on their own. The only fix, wrote Serra in 1899, was their own efforts, but assisted by the cooperation of pure souls. Serra believed that Afro-Cubans had earned the brotherhood of whites in the fight for independence, and that whites, no less than blacks, should be concerned about the welfare of *la clase de color*. Afro-Cubans don't ask for much, he wrote: only that they be "protected, respected, and encouraged." He was disappointed in white Cubans. White Cubans "do not value the progress of *la clase de color*", he wrote, which forced the black population to "resort to the force of the vote, which is its only amulet so far."⁸ Therefore, he particularly lauded the Tuskegee Project for the participation of white philanthropists. He mentioned that the fifty-seven buildings at Tuskegee were due to the foresight, good morals, and real and constant philanthropy of white Americans, and that almost all the whites of the South generously helped Booker T. Washington.⁹ This is obviously an exaggeration—in fact, most of the private funds that Washington got were from white *northerners*, not southerners.

Still, here we find a Cuban contemporary lauding Washington for the very same strategies that made him suspect in his own time and have damned him in the historiography. For Serra, white cooperation was sadly lacking in Cuba, though he believed it should have been forthcoming, given the ideological underpinnings of the Cuban nation and the service of Afro-Cubans to the wars of independence. Looking at the United States at a time of increased segregation and oppression of blacks, he found in Tuskegee a collaboration between blacks and whites whose fruits are physically evident in the campus and in the students, and which approximated more closely the Cuban ideal. This kind of cooperation between whites and blacks was not only impor-

8. Serra, *Para Blancos y Negros*: 74, SCRBC.

9. Serra, *Para Blancos y Negros*: 140, SCRBC.

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 tant to Serra for nationalist reasons. Rather, it affected the socioeco-
 nomic status of black people within the nation. In the same piece
 where he lauded white Americans for assisting Booker T. Washington
 and denounced white Cubans for not doing the same with black
 Cubans, he pointed out that the effects of their lack of concern is that
 Afro-Cubans have very few job opportunities. He gave examples of
 jobs in public service, of which only a small percentage were held by
 blacks. His concern with white-black cooperation, therefore, also con-
 nected with his concern for black economic progress within the
 nation—and it is there that he saw Booker T. Washington and his
 white supporters succeeding.

Juan Gualberto Gómez and the Tuskegee Institute

Juan Gualberto Gómez was an Afro-Cuban intellectual, journalist,
 and later statesman who emerged as a figure of considerable impor-
 tance when he returned from exile in NY to sit in the Cuban Constit-
 uent Assembly. Historian Aline Helg has criticized him because of his
 supposed lack of concern for the specific plight of Afro-Cubans and
 what she considers his whole-sale acceptance of the myth of racial
 equality and the idea of a cross-racial Cuba. “Although he protested
 racial discrimination on various occasions,” she admits, “he mostly
 used his political skills to preach resignation to impatient Afro-
 Cubans...In other words, Gómez backed the official policy, which
 delayed Afro-Cubans’ full participation in the nation.” Helg also pos-
 its that Gualberto Gómez’s insistence on education for Afro-Cubans
 to be qualified for public service jobs delayed the creation of a black
 middle class in Cuba, since these were the only kinds of jobs available
 (Helg, 1995: 120- 123).

Yet under Gómez’s leadership the *Directorio Central de las Sociedades
 de la Raza de Color*, an umbrella organization of separately organized
 black mutual aid societies, had flourished. That his concern for Cuba’s
 independence and his opposition to American imperialism should
 overshadow his denouncement of continuing racism in Cuba is not

surprising. His primary interest had always been Cuban nationalism and independence. In addition, an important goal of Afro-Cubans had been met with the guarantee of suffrage for black men.

Juan Gualberto Gómez was certainly integrated into the power structure after independence. He sat on the Constituent Assembly, was appointed to the Havana Board of Education, was elected as a representative for the national legislature, and generally had good connections to the American occupation government. Yet he was also highly critical of the American occupation. He fought against the Platt amendment, ultimately supporting Bartolomé Masó for president rather than Tomás Estrada Palma based on their stance on the Platt Amendment (Costa 1984: 237). And despite Helg's denouncement of Gómez for not supporting separate black organizations such as the Partido Independiente de Color, and for inadvertently placing obstacles in the way of those who would seek to improve their socioeconomic status by limiting their access to jobs, Gómez sent his son and several other Afro-Cuban children to an allblack school in the United States which focused on education and industry.

More research has to be done to determine Gómez's precise motivations in sending these Afro-Cuban students to Tuskegee. The first group arrived just as Gómez returned to Cuba from New York in the summer of 1898, suggesting that the plans for this exchange might have been laid while he was in New York, or more likely, during his trip to Florida to fundraise among tobacco workers there for the independence war effort on behalf of Estrada Palma.¹⁰ Booker T. Washington had sent a scout to Florida to recruit Cuban students for the school with little success, but perhaps those Florida Cubans transmitted the information to Gómez.

Sending students to this particular school signals that Juan Gualberto Gómez was still concerned for the specific conditions of black

10. Frank Guridy cites the four students as arriving in November of 1901 with a letter of introduction from Gómez. Four students, including Gómez's son, in fact arrived in 1899. By the time the 1901- 1902 school year began at Tuskegee, there were 21 students from Cuba.

Sharing Strategies for Racial Uplift: Afro-Cubans, Afro-Puerto Ricans, and African American people in Cuba, even if he did not support independent political organizations, as Helg asserts. Indeed, Helg's criticism echoes the criticisms that historians have leveled against Washington, and assumes that an emphasis on education and socioeconomic progress is somehow less valid than efforts to improve the political arena. Juan Gualberto Gómez was facing a different problem than Washington however—Washington turned to education and labor because the political question of suffrage was impossible, whereas Gómez turned to education and labor because suffrage had already been won.

Since Afro-Cubans had won their suffrage rights, and even had some Afro-Cuban representatives in the government, it is not unusual that Gómez should shift his attention to the areas that were perhaps in need of more improvement. In the fields of education and labor, Afro-Cubans were still notably suffering from lack of access and discrimination. Because of American ownership and consolidation of Cuban land and the sugar industry, all Cubans had been left with relatively few avenues for upward mobility. The public sector became a major employer of

Cubans, but here Afro-Cubans were also squeezed out, in part because of their lack of education.

Despite a desegregated public school system that was taken advantage of by Afro-Cubans, the school system did not suffice to serve the Afro-Cuban population, particularly at the upper levels. In addition, education alone did not help access to jobs—political connections were needed to penetrate the patronage system of public offices (De la Fuente, 2001). Despite his own participation in mainstream Cuban politics, Gómez was aware enough of the disadvantages facing his son and other black Cuban children that he reached out to an African American who was creating solutions for similar problems facing blacks in the South. It is not, therefore, that Gómez had abandoned the Afro-Cuban cause, as Helg suggests, but rather that he was pursuing a different strategy for racial uplift.

The Tuskegee Experience

Washington, Serra, and Gómez all had in common their interest in the economic progress and socioeconomic status of former slaves. This emphasis on their part has not been discussed enough by historians, who instead give more attention to the political efforts of these black leaders. Focusing on the efforts for economic and educational improvements of blacks across the diaspora, however, allows us to uncover more of the work of these black leaders, even in times of political oppression. It also allows us to more closely examine the educational and economic situation of former slaves and black people as this region underwent a transition from slave labor to free labor. But the economic and work situation of Afro-Cubans and Afro-Puerto Ricans was not the same as that of African Americans. Moreover, the class differences within the black population in these locations led to different approaches by different leaders, and different experiences between the Cuban students and the Puerto Rican students at Tuskegee.

Historians of Afro-Cubans have observed a fragmentation of this group along class lines beginning in the period after independence. Afro-Cuban leaders, not surprisingly, belonged to a higher social class than the masses they often wrote about. In particular, historians have found in these writers' calls for an improvement of culture and a banishment of African traditions, evidence for a disdain of the lower classes (De la Fuente, 2001: 139- 160). There was clearly a difference between the Afro-Cuban intellectuals and leaders whose records we have and the lower classes, particularly the mass of workers who remained in the countryside as agricultural workers. Though Rafael Serra and Juan Gualberto Gómez purported to speak on behalf of the entire *clase de color*, they worked mostly in Havana or other cities and focused on education, job access, and socioeconomic improvement in the urban context. Thus their concern was mostly for black job access to public sector jobs.

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Booker T. Washington, too, was set apart from most of his fellow-former slaves. He rose to a position as leader of African Americans and consorted and collaborated with the wealthiest and most powerful white and black Americans. However, Washington was committed to the agricultural workers of the South, and was wary of the pretensions of the emerging black middle class (Norrell, 2009 and Moses, 2004). Though it is not true, as earlier historians claimed, that he wanted to prevent African Americans from attaining professional careers, his focus was indeed on the lower classes of the South. As he pointed out, most of his students came from the country, where agriculture was the main source of employment. By giving them a trade that would work in their context, they would be more successful, and also be able to address the needs of their own communities. Washington “wanted to be careful not to educate our students out of sympathy with the agricultural life,” so that they would not abandon their communities for the cities.¹¹ This kind of skill set would not only be useful for themselves and their communities, and it would also help race relations. Washington thought that creating a place for African Americans in the larger economic context would make them useful to white society, causing whites to change their attitudes, and racial uplift would follow from there (Moses, 2004).

No doubt Serra and Gómez were attracted by Washington’s strategy of economic progress leading not only to racial uplift, but also racial harmony. Their commitment to the Cuban nationalist ideology of Martí would have made this strategy particularly attractive. But in fact, these Afro-Cuban leaders were not as interested in agricultural or rural laborers as Booker T. Washington was. As discussed above, they were primarily concerned with the economic status of the urban black population—artisans and tradesmen.

As Frank Guridy points out, the Afro-Cuban students sent to Tuskegee were likely an elite group. They had been sent by an influential and successful Afro-Cuban intellectual and politician, Juan Gual-

11. *Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute: Personal Growth Leaflet Number 86.* Tuskegee University Archives.

berto Gómez. In addition, in the first few years they all came from Havana. They were urbanites who were at least loosely connected to Cuban politics. Also, although Washington created a large funding drive for these students, the initial students appear to have been mostly funded by their families, and the case in which Gómez had to ask for a scholarship for one of the students was an exception, rather than the rule (Guridy, 2010: 17). These were most likely not representatives of the masses of former slaves who were still working in the countryside on increasingly American-owned sugar centrales, facing stiff competition from new immigrant laborers.¹² Even the lower class students were children of domestic workers or tradesmen who were connected to an intercity network that allowed them to work in different cities (Guridy, 2010: 37-41).

The Puerto Rican students at Tuskegee had a different background. From the beginning, they came from various different towns and cities throughout Puerto Rico, suggesting that these were not an elite group with political connections from the capital. Rather, they had been chosen by the American-led government in order to disseminate American values by teaching it to students throughout the island. The Puerto Rican group also included many more women than the Cuban group did. In addition, while the two records I have for Cuban students' specialization shows them majoring in architectural drawing, a professional field, the Puerto Rican students specialized in a wide variety of trades, including millinery, agriculture, dairying, engineering, dress-making, and carpentry.¹³

Many of the Afro-Cuban graduates from Tuskegee went on to successful professional lives, demonstrating that Tuskegee could and did produce "lawyers" as well as "farmers." Washington did not hinder,

12. Alejandro de la Fuente argues that urbanization did not greatly increase in the first decade after the war, suggesting that most former slaves were still working in the countryside and in the sugar industry, although they were now wage-laborers. Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Chapter 3.

13. *Student Records Book, 1895-1908* and *Student Records Book, 1894-1897*. Tuskegee University Archives.

Sharing Strategies for Racial Uplift: Afro-Cubans, Afro-Puerto Ricans, and African Amer- and surely greatly helped, these men. But the Afro-Cubans did not graduate in large numbers. Although many of them advanced from year to year, the commencement lists do not include too many Cubans. On the other hand, the Puerto Ricans, who specialized in trades, blue-collar work, and agriculture, graduated at much higher rates.¹⁴ The reasons for this are still unclear and much more research is needed.

However, the difference in graduation rates coupled with the difference in the demographic background of these two groups of students may suggest that though Afro-Cuban leaders were intellectually interested in Washington's strategy of economic advancement, this strategy did not apply to the students that they sent to Tuskegee. Being of a higher class with better connections than the Puerto Rican students, they may have found that the emphasis on agriculture and trades did not suit their professional aspirations. Despite the Puerto Rican students having been sent by the US government as part of a larger imperial strategy, their personal aspirations may have been more in line with the curriculum of Tuskegee.

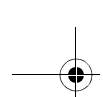
Conclusions

The Cuban leaders discussed here and Booker T. Washington shared a concern for the economic progress of black people in Cuba and the United States. Afro-Cuban leaders thought that Washington's strategies could be applied to their Cuban context. They believed in racial harmony and had fought hard for it in conjunction with independence. Washington's program linking economic progress as a road to racial uplift as well as racial harmony was especially appealing to them. And yet the economic situation that Afro-Cuban leaders such as Serra and Gómez focused on was not the same one facing all Afro-Cubans. Serra and Gómez were concerned with the dearth of secondary education which contributed to a lack of access to public service jobs.

14. *Tuskegee Institute Commencement Programs, 1908-1949* and *Tuskegee Institute Commencement Programs, 1908-1969*. Tuskegee University Archives.

Though in reality public service jobs were accessed through patronage networks, and Afro-Cubans were prevented from joining these through sheer racism, Afro-Cuban leaders sought to remove justifications for racism, and education was one such excuse used by those who would exclude blacks. Their interest in Tuskegee therefore makes sense. But Washington had different interests. He too sought racial harmony and racial uplift, and sought to prove to whites that African Americans could and should be accepted as cultured and educated members of the economy and society. However, he was particularly interested in the changing character of southern rural life as slavery and then reconstruction efforts ended, and many southern African Americans were caught in unfavorable sharecropping situations. Giving African Americans in the South the agricultural skills or an expertise in a trade that could be profitable was his goal. Therefore, their focuses were different—urban and middle-class for the Afro-Cubans discussed here, and rural and lower class for Booker T. Washington. In addition, when the strategies for racial uplift of black leaders were put into action, they were translated very differently by the historical actors who lived them than by the intellectuals and leaders who thought and wrote them. Thus some Afro-Cuban students at Tuskegee were incredibly successful, but most did not graduate. And the Puerto Rican students who were sent by an imperial government mastered their education and their trades before graduating from Tuskegee. More research is needed to explore what this diasporic exchange meant to the students.¹⁵ What was the experience of these people caught up in this experiment led by the American government and black leaders alike? Specifically, did they subscribe to the strategies of racial uplift shared by their respective leaders, or did the actual experience of nationalism, imperialism, and diaspora alter their views? Exploring their experiences, as well as the transmission of ideas of racial uplift by politicians and intellectuals, in a transnational context uncovers different concerns than those which are emphasized by the existing national historiographies.

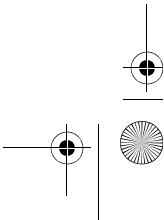
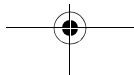
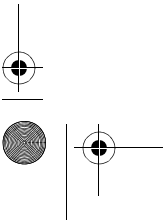
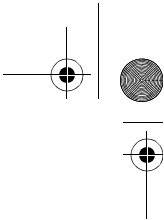
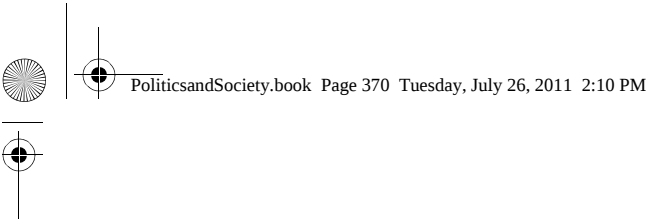
15. Frank Guridy has begun this work in his recent book.

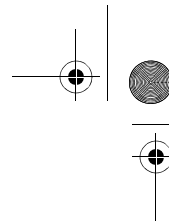


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This paper has explored the transmission of ideas and strategies across the diaspora. Ultimately, these leaders were responding to similarly drastic changes affecting former slaves. As abolition freed the slaves, former slaves became wage laborers and tenant farmers. In addition, other forces were changing the economic terrain. Of these, US imperialism was particularly important, as the Cuban sugar market was reoriented to the US market, and American capital funded and monopolized the Cuban sugar industry. The connections between Afro-Cuban and African American leaders are important because they reflect changes in the national and imperial situation that drew Cubans and Americans closer together, for better or worse. Black leaders took advantage of this situation, demonstrating and awareness of the way US imperialism affected not only Cuban goals of independence, but also the options of Afro-Cubans, and capitalizing on the opportunities it afforded.





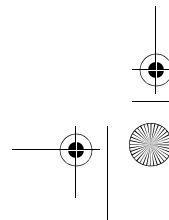
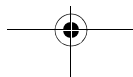
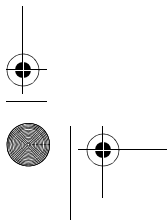


17 Revolutionary and Lesbian: Negotiating Sexual Citizenship in Cuba

Hope Bastian Martinez

Cuban. Revolutionary. Lesbian. By proudly claiming these identities, often seen as contradictory in the society in which she was born, the life story narrative of Barbara, a 41-year-old black Cuban woman, makes claims to a coherent social identity which simultaneously challenges the “broader expectations of power and authority,” while claiming the values of that revolutionary society as her own (Leap, 2008:287). As Charlotte Linde explains, “narrative is among the most important social resources for creating and maintaining personal identity...a significant resource for creating our internal, private sense of self and is all the more a major source for conveying that self to and negotiating that self with others”(1993: 98).

The way she speaks, the words she chooses, and the metaphors and symbols she utilizes to tell her life story as a lesbian woman demonstrate Barbara’s fluency in revolutionary discourse and strong identification with the Revolution. Barbara’s story is not only a story about Barbara, or a coming out story, but it also offers moral commentary



“on the way things are, the way things ought to be, and (most especially) the kind of person the speaker claims to be” (Linde, 1993: 81). The life story narrative is especially powerful as a tool for “understanding what speakers do as they construct their narratives and what is at stake for them in narrating parts of their life story” (Linde, 1993: 81). Linde also explains that “although narratives may be told for many reasons and many points, part of the hidden point of any narrative is to show that the narrator knows what the norms are and agrees with them”(1993:123). Despite the discrimination she has faced, and the ways in which the sexual citizenship of LGBT people has been limited in Cuba, Barbara still strongly identifies with the Revolution and believes that these same revolutionary ideals and values and the state’s goodwill towards oppressed peoples will ultimately result in state activism on behalf of Cuban LGBT subjects.

Following Leap, I consider life story narratives as ‘queer texts’: which “enunciate speakers’ claims to gendered and other forms of social identity” particular to the moment of social interaction in which they are created, identities which may still be in the process of formation (2008:287). The process of telling stories “becomes the context for (ex)pressing those claims, especially when events in those stories are framed in relation to broader expectations of power and authority” (Leap, 2008:287).

From January through April 2005, I was an active participant in “OREMI”, a group for lesbian and bisexual women in Havana, Cuba, organized by the National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX). As a member of the group, I proposed a documentary project consisting of interviews and photographs of women who participated in the group. I interviewed eight regular participants from different social, ethnic, racial, generational, educational, and geographical backgrounds.

This paper analyzes one of these life stories. Through the genre of a life story narrative, the speaker makes claims to sexual and social identities which are framed by the hegemonic social worldview as con-

tradictory and reframes these identities in ways which challenge the “expectations of power and authority,” namely that it is impossible to be lesbian AND revolutionary (Leap, 2008:287). Through the genre of a life story narrative, Barbara explains the ways in which the sexual citizenship of LGBT people has been limited in Cuba and challenges the revolutionary state and society to become advocates for the full citizenship of LGBT people.

Background: Gay ≠ Revolutionary

Since the early years of the Revolution, being revolutionary and being gay were seen as mutually exclusive self-identifications; a gay person could not be a “good citizen,” a good revolutionary, or a member of the Communist Party. In the 1960s, the construction of a new revolutionary society required the transformation of the Cuban subject into the “new man” (Bejel, 2001:99). Homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses (who refuse to complete obligatory military service), bourgeois intellectuals, and young people who refuse to study or work were among those who did not conform to the Revolution’s idea of the “new man,” and as a result were labeled as antisocial, and temporarily expelled from the social body to the UMAP (*Unidad Militar de Producción Agrícola*—Military Units for Agricultural Production) camps to perform agricultural labor in the countryside with the hopes that their socially deviant behavior could be cured, allowing them to be reintegrated into the new socialist society (Bejel, 2001). The project met with protests nationally and internationally, and in less than two years they were closed.

In 1971, The First National Congress of Education and Culture made homophobia official state policy by designating homosexuality as an “intrinsically ‘antisocial’ and ‘socio-pathological’ behavior,” and banned homosexuals from working directly with young people or representing Cuba in cultural activities abroad (Bejel, 2001:105). The National Congress of Education and Culture suggested severe penalties for homosexual behavior or corrupting minors. The policies

established in the education and culture sector “quickly became national policy adhered to by all governmental agencies,” leading to discrimination in employment (Bejel, 2001:105). By the late 1970s, the state gradually began to take a more liberal approach towards homosexuality (and difference more generally). In 1975, the Cuban Supreme Court overturned Resolution Number Three, the law which codified the homophobic recommendations of the 1971 Congress. In 1977, the National Workgroup on Sexual Education was formed, and in 1979, the Penal Code was reformed to decriminalize private homosexual behavior (although public displays of homosexual behavior remained illegal)(Bejel, 2001). By the end of the 1970s, the Cuban Communist Party “no longer considered homosexual behavior to be in fundamental contradiction with the revolutionary process”(Bejel, 2001). In 1979, the Cuban National Workgroup on Sexual Education published an East German sex education book which marked a turning point in the state’s position towards homosexuality. The book, which came from another socialist country, said that homosexuality is not a disease and that “homosexuals do not ‘suffer’ from homosexuality; they suffer from the difficulties that their condition causes them in society...Aside from their sexual orientation, homosexuals differed very little, if at all, from persons who are considered normal” (Schnabl, 1980). In 1980, the Mariel boatlift led to a second moment of state-sponsored homophobia in the midst of major moral panic. Those who choose to leave in 1980 were portrayed as criminals, undesirables, traitors, ideological enemies, and antisocial scum. Leaving the country was conflated with being anti-revolutionary, and “the discourse of Cuban officialdom at that time tried to associate gays and other ‘undesirable’ groups with the corruption and negative attitudes that the Cuban people supposedly rejected” (Bejel, 2001).

It is important to point out that the Cuban government’s treatment of LGBT people in this period was not that different from what was going on in other parts of the world. Structural homophobia and intolerance was not exclusively a Cuban or a revolutionary phenomenon, but it is as a result of this history that LGBT subjects have histor-

ically enjoyed limited sexual citizenship in the nation/state/society built by the popular revolutionary government despite their participation in its construction. By proudly identifying as both lesbian and revolutionary, Barbara's life story narrative challenges the heterosexual expectations of power and authority and the dominant discourse which has historically constructed gay and revolutionary identities as contradictory.

Revolutionary AND Lesbian: Creating, conveying and negotiating individual and collective identities

Life stories express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way. They are also one very important means by which we communicate this sense of self and negotiate it with others. Further, we use these stories to claim or negotiate group membership and to demonstrate that we are in fact worthy members of those groups, understanding and properly following their moral standards. [Linde, 1993:3]

In her work on life stories, Linde explains that pronouns are "a central linguistic resource for establishing the self" (1993:112). By paying close attention to the use of syntax in the life story narrative, we can learn more about how the speaker claims and negotiates citizenship in the national community, seeking to be recognized as a "good revolutionary," while simultaneously identifying as a lesbian, a member of a sexual minority often excluded from enjoying full citizenship.

Voice System.

My analysis of the voices utilized by the speaker in her life story narrative shows that the speaker switches between voices that demonstrate her simultaneous identification as both a lesbian and a revolutionary. She uses the collective first-person pronoun "we" to include herself in a larger group of sexual minorities who, despite the ways in which they are made invisible and discriminated against by the Revolution/state, continue to identify with the Revolution and fight for inclusion

as social actors. She uses the singular first-person pronoun “I,” to speak as a militant follower of the Revolution, a member of the revolutionary political/civic majority. In other moments, “they” refers to a Revolution/the state (a collectivity that Barbara momentarily disidentifies with) which limits the full participation of LGBT people in revolutionary society by restricting their opportunities to participate in its construction.

However, her use of collective and singular pronoun deictic markers (I, us, we, them, they) is not completely static: while in this portion of the text “we” is generally understood to refer to a collectivity of LGBT subjects, sometimes (as in line 18) the speaker uses the first person plural “we” to refer to herself as a member of the national/revolutionary society. By shifting the meaning of these deictic markers, the speaker enunciates her claim that these identities are not contradictory or mutually exclusive. In the selection from the text below, I have labeled the voices according to the multiple identities of the speaker as “lesbian voice” and “revolutionary voice,” as well as signaling moments in which the speaker chooses to distance herself from the narrative to create the effect of objectivity to her statements with the label “anonymous voice.”

Table 1. The Voice System of the Text

lesbian voice	011	That's why I hope that from this group a strong tree grows
lesbian voice	012	because what we have now is just a little seed that is growing for
		the good of homosexual society.
	013	Because we are a lot of people.
revolutionary voice	014	I am very revolutionary in my ideas.
	015	I'm very internationalist in my way of thinking.
	016	If I have to defend my homeland, I'll defend it ,
	017	with an arm I'll defend her.
revolutionary voice-critical	018	And I very much agree with the <i>social</i> system that we have
	019	I'm not sure if the word <i>socialism</i> is the right word to
	020	describe or I don't know what word works.
revolutionary voice	021	And so I want to defend that idea
	022	whether it's in my country or in any country that is being
		oppressed.
didactic	023	And a lot of people are like me.
lesbian/revolutionary voice	024	This doesn't have anything to do with one's political learnings,
lesbian voice	025	but we should,
	026	since we are willing to risk our lives for any type of mission,
	027	or anything to defend our Cuban soil
	028	or to defend any other
	029	then they have to take us into account
	030	because we are a large group.
	031	Even if we're just a few, even if we're just a few,
	032	we are human beings and they should treat us with respect
	033	and offer us all the support and make things possible for us .
	034	Can you believe it ,
	035	that we are so many,
	036	thousands,
	037	they should pay attention to us .
didactic anonymous voice	038	Look,
	039	a homosexual man who is gay cannot enlist as a member of the
		Revolutionary Armed Forces.
	040	A gay cannot be a military man.
	041	A gay cannot do his military service,
	042	like the little boys do here, military training in case of a military
		invasion or whatever
	043	A gay cannot participate.
didactic revolutionary voice-critical	044	Why not?
	045	He isn't going to go to battle to have sex with anybody.
	046	He's just going to defend his land where he was born.
revolutionary/lesbian voice	047	And I think this is wrong.
didactic anonymous voice	048	With lesbians it is the same.
	049	Lesbians cannot belong to the Revolutionary Armed Forces
	050	or to battalions of a ton of things.

Table 1. The Voice System of the Text

lesbian voice	011	That's why I hope that from this group a strong tree grows
lesbian voice	051	This doesn't have anything to do with it ,
	052	and I think that it is really bad.
	053	I think that if we are excluded from all of these things then
		they should give us a place where we can feel good
	054	without them accusing us or bothering us .
	055	For those who are making trouble,
	56	that's what the authorities are for, to take care of them.
	057	They should do what the situation calls for.
	058	But they shouldn't judge us because of a minority.
didactic anonymous voice	059	Conclusion:
	060	that in these days there is no place where people,
		homosexuals, can share freely and peacefully with people who are like them.

Sexual Citizenship: How Is Sexual Citizenship Negotiated Outside the Neoliberal Capitalist System?

The speaker's life story narrative provides examples of the ways in which the sexual citizenship of LGBT people have been circumscribed in Cuba's past. The narrative shows how the sexual citizenship of LGBT subjects have been constrained by discrimination at all levels of society: in the home/family, in the street/neighborhood, and in the military and party, as well as the invisibility of LGBT subjects in media, legal, and nationalist revolutionary discourses. But what is most interesting about the narrative is what its analysis contributes to the discussion of sexual citizenship as defined by Bell and Binnie (2000). Since the Cuban experience is radically different from the US/European context which gave birth to many of the theories of sexual citizenship anthropologists work with, we must ask what sexual citizenship means in the Cuban context. How is sexual citizenship negotiated in a nation outside of the capitalist world of neoliberal representative democracies? The discourse of citizenship, and subsequently sexual citizenship, in the capitalist neoliberal world is different from the discourse of sexual citizenship which emerges from the Cuban life story narrative I analyze here.

European/US Discourses of Citizenship.

Citizenship as “the Right to Have Rights”¹

European and U.S. discourses of citizenship are highly influenced by the Civic Liberalist tradition, which emphasizes “the state’s paternal role in securing the rights of its citizens,” as well as binding them together as a social unit (Bell and Binnie, 2000:7). T.H. Marshall, author of *Citizenship and Social Class*, is one of the most influential theorists of post-war citizenship theory (Kymlicka, 2002:287; Bell and Binnie, 2000:7). For Marshall, citizenship “is essentially a matter of ensuring that everyone is treated as a full and equal member of society...through affording people an increasing number of citizenship rights” (Kymlicka, 2002:287). Marshall’s classic ideas of citizenship, often called “passive” or “private” citizenship, framed citizenship in terms of the possession of rights and entitlements, to be guaranteed by a liberal-democratic welfare state, without any previous or subsequent obligation to participate in public life (Kymlicka, 2002:288).

In the late-modern/neoliberal moment, Marshall’s Orthodox post-war model of citizenship-as-rights came under attack from the Right (Kymlicka, 2002:288). In the context of the privatization of the functions of the state, passive citizenship was replaced with a more active model in which greater emphasis is put on individual responsibility: good citizens are economically self-reliant, don’t make demands on the (former) welfare state, and are valued according to their contributions as consumers. Citizens are “made over as a particular kind of sovereign consumer, who has the right to choose and ‘buy’ access to aspects of collective consumption provided traditionally by the state (welfare, healthcare, education).” As Lang explains, citizenship is commodified and, as a result, rights claims are based on LGBT economic/consumer power which translate to political power (Bell and Binnie, 2000:6).

In such a context, struggles for sexual citizenship have taken the form of fragmentary identity-based social movements, which mobilize

1. This comes from a US Supreme Court decision *Perez v. Brownell*, 356 U.S. 44, 64 (1958)] in which Chief Justice Earl describe citizenship as “by [as “man’s basic right, for it is nothing less than the right to have rights” (Tushnet 2010).

around sexual identities to claim full and equal rights to political participation and representation and access to welfare entitlements. LGBT subjects' acceptance in mainstream society in liberal-democratic capitalist states becomes contingent on the group's ability to prove their importance as a valuable economic block of good citizen-consumers.

Cuban Discourses of Citizenship

"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country"

Despite the fact that the rights guaranteed to Cuban citizens in the state's constitution far surpass those guaranteed to US citizens in our constitution, Cuban citizenship discourses fall within a civic republicanism tradition which "places more stress on [the citizen's] obligation [to the state], often mediated through political participation in common affairs" (Bell and Binnie, 2000:7).² The Cuban constitution guarantees all citizens equal rights, without regard to "race, skin color, sex, national origin, religious beliefs and any other form of discrimination harmful to human dignity" and holds them subject to equal responsibilities under the law (Cuban Constitution 1992, art. 43). While the state's obligations to its citizens are clearly outlined in the constitution, so too are the citizens' obligations to the state.

Cuban citizenship discourse focuses on citizen's responsibility vis-a-vis the state to be productive members of society, and contribute to the nation/Revolution. Rather than being tied to consumption, belonging to and being accepted by mainstream society is asserted through supporting the social and ideological goals of the Revolution through participation. Full citizenship is recognized contingent on one's ability to prove his or her importance to the construction of social project. In order to achieve full sexual citizenship, Cuban LGBT subjects argue for inclusion in contexts which allow them to contribute to the nation/Revolution.

Table 2. Duties of Cuban Citizenship

Article 45: Work in a socialist society is a right and duty and a source of pride for every citizen.	Artículo 45: El trabajo en la sociedad socialista es un derecho, un deber y un motivo de honor para cada ciudadano.
Article 64: Every citizen has the duty of caring for public and social property, observing work discipline, respecting the rights of others, observing standards of socialist living and fulfilling civic and social duties.	Artículo 64: Es deber de cada uno cuidar la propiedad pública y social, acatar la disciplina del trabajo, respetar los derechos de los demás, observar las normas de convivencia socialista y cumplir los deberes cívicos y sociales.
Article 65: Defense of the socialist homeland is the greatest honor and the supreme duty of every Cuban citizen.	Artículo 65: La defensa de la patria socialista es el más grande honor y el deber supremo de cada cubano.
The law regulates the military service which Cubans must do .	La ley regula el servicio militar que los cubanos deben prestar.
Treason against one's country is the most serious of crimes; those who commit it are subject to the most severe penalties.	La traición a la patria es el más grave de los crímenes; quien la comete está sujeto a las más severas sanciones.
Article 66: Strict fulfillment of the Constitution and the laws is an inexcusable duty of all .	Artículo 66: El cumplimiento estricto de la Constitución y de las leyes es deber inexcusable de todos.

Source: Cuban Constitution 1992.

2. The Cuban Constitution in Article 43: The state consecrates the right achieved by the Revolution, all citizens, regardless of race, skin color, sex, religious belief, national origin and any situation that may be harmful to human dignity:

- have access, in keeping with their merits and abilities, to all state, public administration, and production services positions and jobs;
- can reach any rank in the Revolutionary Armed Forces and in Security and internal order, in keeping with their merits and abilities;
- be given equal pay for equal work;
- have a right to education at all national educational institutions, ranging from elementary schools to the universities, which are the same for all;
- be given health care in all medical institutions;
- live in any sector, zone or area and stay in any hotel;
- be served at all restaurants and other public service establishments;
- use, without any separations, all means of transportation by sea, land and air;
- enjoy the same resorts, beaches, parks, social centers and other centers of culture, sports, recreation and rest.

In article 9, The state:

- b) as the power of the people and for the people, guarantees that every man or woman, who is able to work, have the opportunity to have a job with which to contribute to the good of society and to the satisfaction of individual needs;
 - that no disabled person be left without adequate mean of subsistence;
 - that no sick person be left without medical care;
 - that no child be left without schooling, food and clothing;
 - that no young person be left without the opportunity to study;
 - that no one be left without access to studies, culture and sports;
- c) works to achieve that no family be left without a comfortable place to live.

Although the Cuban constitution specifically contemplates measures intended to guarantee women the same opportunities and possibilities as men in order to “achieve woman’s full participation in the development of the country” (Cuban Constitution 1992, art. 44), sexual minorities are structurally invisible in the construction of the state and foundational legal documents like the constitution and the family code. This structural invisibility, combined with discrimination, challenges the LGBT subject’s ability to fulfill responsibilities of citizenship, therefore excluding them from the opportunity to be recognized as full citizens.

In the face of perennially hostile relations between the United States and Cuba, national identity continues to be an extremely important part of Cuban habitus. Those who do not fulfill their responsibilities as citizens are seen as threatening to the nation and excluded from citizenship (in different historical moments: emigrants, non-productive able-bodied adults, intellectuals, homosexuals). While in United States history a multiplicity of identity groups have organized struggles for political equality, bringing people together to make citizenship claims on the basis of non-normative identities (women’s rights movement, black civil rights movement, LGBT rights movements), in Cuba the construction of a unified nationalism has taken precedent over these fragmentary late modern identity-based movements. Long before the Revolution, fragmentary identity politics were seen as counterproductive to real political change and even dangerous or threatening to nationalist objectives. Given the differences between the US or European contexts, it is not surprising that the speaker chooses to fight for inclusion rather than constructing her sexual identity as oppositional to hegemonic Cuban nationalist or revolutionary identities.

Limits to Sexual Citizenship

Each of the stories of discrimination below gives examples to the ways in which the speaker’s sexual citizenship is limited when her abil-

ity to fulfill her responsibility as a conscientious revolutionary citizen is curtailed through discriminatory policies or attitudes. They also serve to illustrate the differences in orientation to sexual citizenship between the US/European contexts and the Cuban context. In parentheses after each heading I offer an approximation of how the same story might be framed from the US/European perspective in terms of a demand for full and equal rights to political participation and representation and access to welfare entitlements.

Ability to obtain socially valued/productive work

(Protection from Discrimination in the workplace)

In the text below, the speaker explains how being perceived as gay or gender nonconforming limits the LGBT subject's ability to obtain socially valued/productive work. In addition to the economic effects of such discrimination, this exclusion denies LGBT subjects the opportunity to be "good citizens:" productive members of society who contribute to the nation/Revolution. Since citizenship in Cuba is predicated on holding a political position which supports the Revolution, those who don't contribute as is expected of a citizen risk being labeled as antisocial, or counterrevolutionary, and pushed outside of the limits of the social body (UMAP, Mariel boat lift). In a frustrating Catch-22, being perceived as gay, or having a gender presentation that does not comply with the norms, means that LGBT Cubans are discriminated against in employment. Because they can't get work, they risk being seen as anti-revolutionary "bad citizens," who refuse to contribute their labor to the construction of the revolutionary social project.

707 There was a time in which you go to a work center looking for work
708 and they looked at you
709 and if you were a weak man they told you that there wasn't any work
710 and if you were a woman who looked very strong they'd tell you that
there wasn't any work
711 just because they thought you were homosexual.
712 You couldn't get work

713 your family would reject you,
714 the neighbors,
715 the society
716 everybody.
717 So it was a pretty discriminatory way to treat people.

Ability to Receive Training Abroad to Be Brought Back to Cuba

(Discrimination Which Limits an Individual's Access to Education)

Before the fall of the Soviet Union, it was quite common for Cuban young people and professionals to be sent to the Soviet Union or other socialist bloc countries to receive technical and professional training that Cuba needed. While studying in Leningrad, the speaker was expelled for being a lesbian and sent back to Cuba.

57 Well,
58 so they came from the Ministry of International Relations to see if
I was interested in studying abroad.
59 At that time I wasn't that interestd,
60 but they talked so much about how they needed people who were
skilled and highly educated that they convinced me, and I went to study
in the Soviet Union.
84 But what happened was that my roommate
85 who I cared for a lot and was very tender with because she loved to
study
86 she was a very knowledgeable about many things and I loved to
talk with her
87 and I cared for her so much that I knew that it wasn't a sexual
attraction,
88 but i loved her like a mother,
89 like a sister because we were so far away and without our families
90 that she was everything for me.
91 I loved her so much that we were always together.
92 We showered together in a small shower where only one person fit,
93 but we showered together there anyways, and for me this was all
innocent, but for the collective it wasn't.
94 In conclusion, we were set up
95 and they called us into a meeting

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96 in front of a whole crowd they accused us of being Lesbians.
97 Which we weren't.
98 Or rather, I knew I was but she didn't know that I was,
99 I never let her know or show it.
100 My caring for her was healthy.
101 They accused us of being Lesbians and took away our scholarships.
102 This hurt me a lot and I suffered a lot for her and for me.
103 Because they ruined this girl's life
104 I had gone to study just for the excitement of it,
105 but she had come to study because the only thing she wanted was
to study that career
106 because she loved it so much.
107 *Where was this?*
108 In Leningrad
109 They put an end to me,
110 they put an end to her.
111 They treated us like terrorists.
112 In that meeting everyone voted to take away our scholarships
113 and to kick us out of the USSR
114 and that they cut off our careers
115 and that was that.
116 That's what they did
117 and we were victims of that.
118 And that's what they did
119 and over the years it has hurt me a lot,
120 because if it had been true that would have been one thing,
121 but it wasn't even true.
122 In the first place,
123 nobody has the right to judge anybody else for their sexual orientation
124 but even if we were,
125 but without it even being true they did away with both of us...

Rather than frame this story as relevant because it is an example of discrimination in access to education, the speaker sees what happened as an unfair infringement on her ability to be responsible citizen (by responding to the nation's need for students to study technical careers in the Soviet Union) that would have allowed her to be integrated into society and contribute to the implementation of the revolutionary social project. This orientation to the event illustrates the Cuban ori-

entation towards citizenship in which the citizen's responsibilities weigh more heavily than the rights. Barbara was not interested in studying abroad out of self interest; she went because she was asked to do so in service to her country/the Revolution.

Ability to Serve in Military to Protect the Country

In this claim there are more similarities to the US/European contexts than others. As well as being important to the speaker, the right to serve in the armed forces is an important index of sexual citizenship in other national contexts. As Claudia Card notes, depending on one's class positioning, in the US context this can be seen as alternately the **right** to join the military, which for many working-class people provides opportunities to receive educational and other benefits otherwise denied them, or less cynically, as the opportunity to show allegiance to the state and fulfill the **responsibilities** of citizenship (Bell and Binnie, 2000:64).

- 537 Look,
- 538 a homosexual man who is gay cannot enlist as a member of the
Revolutionary Armed Forces.
- 539 A gay cannot be a military man.
- 540 A gay cannot do his military service.
- 541 like the little boys do here
- 542 military training in case of a military invasion or whatever.
- 543 A gay cannot participate.
- 544 Why not?
- 545 He isn't going to go to battle to have sex with anybody.
- 546 He's just going to defend his land where he was born.
- 547 And I think this is wrong.
- 548 With Lesbians it is the same.
- 549 Lesbians cannot belong to the Revolutionary Armed Forces
- 550 or to battalions or a ton of things.
- 551 This doesn't have anything to do with it,
- 552 And I think that it is really bad.

Ability to Participate in Political Life as a Member of the Communist Party

According to the Cuban constitution, the Cuban Communist Party, “as the organized vanguard of the Cuban nation, is the ultimate guiding force of society and the state” (Cuban Constitution 1992: art. 5). Following the ideas of José Martí and Marxism-Leninism, the Communist Party “organizes and guides the common effort toward the goals of the construction of socialism and the progress toward a communist society” (Cuban Constitution 1992: art. 5). Membership in the Cuban Communist Party is the ultimate marker of full citizenship and recognition as a “good citizen” or “good revolutionary.” In a country of 11 million, only 820,000 Cubans are members of the Cuban Communist Party, and another 600,000 young people are members of the Union of Young Communists (Frank, 2008). Far from being forced to join, one must be invited to join the party after having been recognized by neighbors, teachers, classmates or colleagues who are already members of the party to be an outstanding member of society.

- 815 *Can you be a member of the Party and homosexual?*
 816 No.
 817 No, this hasn't changed,
 818 I imagine that there are quite a few soldiers who are
 819 and who suffer a lot
 820 because if someone suspects that you are
 821 they expel you from the ranks.

Rights of Citizenship: Priority Given to Mothers

The next episode is the only one in which the speaker focuses on discrimination she experienced in which her rights, the state's obligation to her as a Cuban citizen and mother of a newborn baby, were denied because she was perceived as lesbian (because of her partner's gender presentation). The rights she claims here are not rights specific to LGBT people, rather she demands the recognition of her claim to state protection due to her status as a lactating mother.

627 I have noticed the disapproval of the people in the street too.
628 For example
629 one time I was in the Polyclinic
630 with my girl in my arms,
631 she was little.
632 I was with my partner who looked a little butch.
633 And so I had an argument with someone who wanted to cut in
front of me to see the doctor
634 and they realized that I had just given birth,
635 I had a baby girl in my arms
636 and it was my right (to go first).
637 That's a law in this country.
638 Women who have just given birth get preference.
639 They fought and the woman didn't like the way my friend looked
640 And I, I don't know if it was innocently,
641 I answered her. I asked "Why are you offending her?"
642 I got involved in the fight.
643 And she says to me,
644 "And who are you to butt in?"
645 I tell her,
646 "She's my aunt." It just came out to tell her that.
647 "Is she your uncle? Or your husband?"
648 Do you understand?
649 With that disapproval
650 and then I noticed that the rest of the people that were there were
staring at me too with their faces like this,
651 all weird.
652 It makes you feel pretty bad."
653 Sincerely, it makes you feel really bad.
654 Because you feel like you don't belong,
655 not to this society,
656 not to this place,
657 that you don't belong to any of it.
658 Truly, you go down the street and they are staring at you,
659 if its not because how I look,
660 its because the person that you're walking with.

How Ideology Works in the Text: “Defend” and the Military/Struggle Metaphor

The tools used in corpus linguistics to analyze discourse are especially useful for identifying “evidence of linguistic patterns and trends that reveals something about societies or ‘identity groups’” (Koller, 2004: 76). By looking for collocations, words that tend to co-occur in patterns, it is possible to undercover examples of how ideology works in a text (Koller, 2004: 77). In analyzing the life story narrative I discuss here, I found that the verb defend (*defender*) occurred several times throughout the thread of the narrative. By looking at the way that the verb was conjugated (i.e. who is doing the defending) and the direct object of the verb (i.e. who or what was being defended) the speaker’s concern for defending her homeland, Cuba, and socialism, is reiterated, a quality that she attributes to other gays in lines 525, 526, 546 and 867. She also uses the verb to speak about defending “my cause,” the right to live as lesbian (line 233) and expressed her approval for gay youth’s defense of their rights (line 730).

Table 3. Collocate “defend” with subjects and direct objects

233	I	defend	my cause (lesbianism)
515	I	defend	my homeland
516	I	defend	it (my homeland)
516	I	defend	her (my homeland)
520	I	defend	that idea (socialism/social system)
525	We (gays)	defend	our Cuban soil
526	We (gays)	defend	any other (sister country)
546	He (gay)	defend	his land where he was born
730	the (gay) youth	defending	its rights
867	One	defend	your homeland

Further analysis showed that the use of the verb *defend* (*defender*) was part of the greater military/struggle metaphor used in the text to speak about both the nation’s struggle and her own personal fight for inclusion/acceptance within her family and society at large (line 233-defend, line 234-betray, line 237-my path, line 238-battles, line 288 and 294-fight their fight).

233 and I knew I was going to **defend** my cause
 234 and I didn't want them to say later you **betrayed** us
 235 you told us one thing and it was another,
 236 because by that point
 237 because of experience I had had I knew that this was **my path**.
 238 And I knew that I was going to **face many battles**...
 239 but I faced them and today you see me here
 240 calm.

The use of the struggle/military metaphor in the text is very significant because it is a very common and accepted metaphor in Cuban public discourses and words dealing with struggle and eventual triumph in the face of adversity are the bread-and-butter of discourses of revolutionary ideology and identity (see Figures 1-4). I believe that the speaker's use of this metaphor is reflective of her fluency in Cuban revolutionary ideology and the rules of revolutionary discourse and confirms her self-identification as a "good revolutionary."

"Defend" and the Military/Struggle Metaphor in Cuban Political Discourse

In Cuba the streets and highways are lined with billboards much as in the United States, but the messages presented on them are radically different. Billboards in Cuba are used to present social and political messages rather than commercial advertisements. I present the images below, taken by tourists visiting Cuba, as an illustration of how the verb "defend" and the military/struggle metaphor are utilized in contemporary Cuban political discourse.

The following text, taken from General Raul Castro Ruz's April 4, 2010 key address to the closing session of the Ninth Congress of the Young Communist League in Havana, provides another example of the pervasiveness of the struggle/war metaphor and the verb "defend" in Cuban discourse.

Figure 1. "Revolution is: Defend Values in which we Believe at the Price of any Sacrifice"



a. Author's photo

Figure 2. "We Will Defend this Work until our Last Breath"^a



a. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/robinthom/4189152025/in/pool-cubanroadsigns/>

Figure 3. "Revolution is Defending the Values in which we Believe"^a



a. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stml/2389852831/in/set-72157604396971546/>

Table 4.

We have the right to **defend** ourselves. Let them know that if they try to corner us, we will **defend** ourselves, first of all with truth and principles.

Amidst this dramatic situation, no one was left to their own fate; this gave further evidence of the strength stemming from the unity of the people that **defend** just ideas and a work built with so much sacrifice. Only a socialist regime, despite its deficiencies, can successfully pass such a tough test.

At the same time, great challenges hang over humanity and it is the first duty of the youth to tackle them. They should **defend** the survival of the human species threatened like never before by climate change, a situation accelerated by the reckless production and consumption patterns fathered by capitalism.

Cuba does not fear the lies nor does it bow to pressures, conditionings or impositions, wherever they come from. It **defends** itself with the truth, which always, sooner rather than later, ends up being known.

Source: Castro 2010a, Castro 2010b

Tenemos derecho a **defendernos**. Si pretenden acorralarnos, sepan que sabremos parapearnos, en primer lugar en la verdad y los principios.

En medio de esta dramática situación, nadie quedó abandonado a su suerte y se evidenció la fuerza que emana de la unidad del pueblo cuando se **defienden** ideas justas y una obra construida con tanto sacrificio. Sólo un régimen socialista, a pesar de sus deficiencias, es capaz de superar gigantesca prueba.

Al propio tiempo, se ciernen sobre la humanidad colosales desafíos y corresponde, en primer lugar, a los jóvenes enfrentarlos. Se trata de **defender** la supervivencia misma de la especie humana, amenazada como nunca antes por el cambio climático, que se acelera por los patrones irracionales de producción y consumo que engendra el capitalismo.

Cuba no teme a la mentira ni se arrodilla ante presiones, condicionamientos o imposiciones, vengan de donde vengan, se **defiende** con la verdad, que siempre, más temprano que tarde, termina por imponerse.

CODA: Temporality: the Past, the Present, the Future

As I have explained in this paper, Cuban concepts of citizenship, and thus subsequently sexual citizenship, differ in significant ways from such concepts in US and European contexts. Citizenship in Cuba is dependent on ideological criteria and demonstrating/proving support for a sociopolitical revolutionary project. Through a life story narrative which follows many of the conventions of the North American/Western coming-out story genre, we have seen here how Barbara expresses her sense of self as a lesbian and a revolutionary, negotiating social identities which at the time she spoke were seen by hegemonic powers of authority as contradictory (Plummer, 1995). In doing so she transgressed the discursive limits of the lesbian and revolutionary subject positions, challenging the historical construction of the two as mutually exclusive and challenging the revolutionary state and society to become advocates for the full citizenship of LGBT people (Leap, 2008: 287). Despite the discrimination she has faced as a lesbian, the

speaker still identifies with the Revolution and believes that the ideals and values of the Revolution are worth defending. She also believes that the state's goodwill towards oppressed peoples will ultimately result in state activism on behalf of Cuban LGBT subjects.

In the following selection Barbara explicitly demands recognition of the belonging/inclusion of LGBT subjects in the national community and calls on the state to become an advocate for LGBT peoples by removing the structural barriers to full Cuban citizenship (defined here as barriers to participation in the construction of a social project rather than access to benefits, rights and protections offered by the welfare state, as in the US/European context). She is especially convinced that the state should harness the power of the media to create what she sees as necessary changes in society.

841 So much is needed, from my point of view,
 842 speaking from the experience that I have had
 843 there must be a psychological work with the population
 844 just like they have put in the different types of advertising that
 you have protect yourself from AIDS by using condoms.
 845 Well they could do the same by putting two women,
 846 or they could put two men,
 847 but they always put a man and women.
 848 That's the way.
 849 It seems to me that by this means they should start educating the
 society,
 850 the population
 851 so that they start taking homosexuality as a normal subject....
 855 The changes,
 856 well I think that's the way,
 857 using the means of communication,
 858 the media, the radio,
 859 television can help a lot.
 860 It could help to have meetings,
 861 lectures in workplaces.
 862 This is my opinion,
 863 what I think.
 864 In very little time society gets used to it
 865 and begins to accept homosexuals in the rank and file of the
 party,

866 in the FARC.
 869 if they,
 870 I don't know
 871 if someone was able to let them know all the worries, problems
 of homosexuals

 872 it seems to me that someone would listen.
 873 Because of one of the principle of the Revolution is that its people feel good
 874 and I don't know,
 875 look for wellbeing for them.
 876 So taking into account,
 877 that we are a group that is so large they should change the policy
 towards us.
 878 And so if someone were to hear this,
 879 this advice that I'm giving,
 880 I'd say "Through the means of mass communication,
 881 the posters that you see up everywhere,
 882 in the policlinics, even in the bus stops, the pharmacies, everywhere,
 883 can carry messages."
 884 So just using advertising (it can be done).

Five years later, looking at the life story narrative presented here, performed by Barbara in her home one afternoon in February of 2005, it is striking how much has changed, and how close Barbara has come to predicting the future in her ideas for what the revolutionary state could and should do. While it is not within the scope of the paper to discuss the reasons for these changes, it would be irresponsible to leave this story where Barbara's life story narrative ends, without adding my own coda, which as Labov explains, can act to bridge the gap between when her story leaves off and where the present begins (Linde, 1993:71).

Since the historical period in which many of the key events of Barbara's life story narrative took place, much has changed in the way the state relates to LGBT subjects. The Cuba of today is already different from what it was just five years ago, when she consciously constructed the narrative I have analyzed here. Life story narratives are "created in

specific moments of interaction” and the contours of the moment to which they respond are constantly changing (Leap, 2008: 287). In the last five years, the Cuban National Assembly began a long overdue project to update the 1975 Family Code to overcome the law’s hetero-normative assumptions, and offer same-sex couples the same legal rights guaranteed male-female partnerships, including legal marriage and adoption (Edith, 2007).

For the last several years, the government has sponsored large public events in Havana on May 17, International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, to raise awareness and celebrate (IDAHO, 2009). The rights of transgendered Cubans have been championed by Mariela Castro Espin, daughter of current president Raul Castro. As a result of the support that Castro Espin’s National Center for Sex Education has offered transgendered activists, great changes have been made: transgendered Cubans can now legally change their gender on ID cards, and sexual reassignment surgeries are being offered within the framework of the National Health System.

Today, the legal changes proposed by the state to the Family Code have been put on hold as those promoting them realized that, although the government was committed to the changes, much more education needed to be done with the general population to make such changes recognized as legitimate by the majority of the population. Just as Barbara suggested, the power of the media has been harnessed to this end. Once a month, a LGBT themed film is presented, with open discussion afterwards, at a movie theatre in downtown Havana. Last summer, *Brokeback Mountain* was shown to nationwide television audiences in a primetime Friday-night movie slot. The movies shown in this timeslot are always the subject of office gossip on Monday mornings and *Brokeback Mountain* was no exception. A series of PSAs for Cuban television based on the slogan “Two of the same also make a couple/pair,” use humor to challenge heterosexist assumptions, portraying the morning rituals of two young same sex couples. Things are changing in Cuba, and if Barbara’s predictions

continue to come true, we will find that, “in very little time society will get used to and begin to accept homosexuals.”

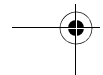
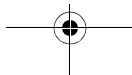
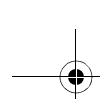
Figure 4. “Two of the same also make a pair”



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18 Rumba Performance and the Politics of Place in the Era of Cultural Tourism

Rebecca Bodenheimer

This paper examines the politics of place vis-à-vis the cultural tourism industry in contemporary Cuba, by comparing the conditions of rumba performance in two cities, Havana and Matanzas. This Afro-Cuban music and dance genre has been practiced in both cities since the late nineteenth century, but I propose that rumba musicians in each place face distinct circumstances in the post-Soviet era stemming from economic changes introduced in the 1990s to mitigate the crisis of the Special Period. Based on my ethnographic research with rumba groups in Havana and Matanzas from 2004 to 2008, I will detail the various categories and contexts of performance in both cities, including state-sponsored venues, community events, and “for-profit” gigs that have arisen as a result of the new market-oriented economy. I will also discuss the audiences that attend the different events, elucidating how these demographics relate to the politics of place. My main goal is to present a contrasting picture of rumba scenes in Havana and Matanzas and to propose that the particular positions of these two cit-

ies within the cultural tourism industry respectively influence their musicians' livelihoods and access to supplemental income. This paper ultimately views contemporary rumba performance as a case study through which to highlight the geographically uneven ways in which the Cuban state has invested in its tourism infrastructure.

The various types and contexts of rumba performance in Havana

Rumba is performed in a variety of contexts in contemporary Cuba, with some performances involving professional musicians and dancers and others involving amateur performers and/or community participants. In her book *Rumba: Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba*, Yvonne Daniel presents three distinct categories of rumba performance: "spontaneous" or traditional rumba, "prepared" or professional rumba, and "prepared spontaneous rumba," which starts off as a prepared performance and evolves into a spontaneous one (Daniel 1995: 101-05). She makes a further distinction between professional dance companies and traditional rumba groups, who also have professional status but, in contrast with the larger companies, usually have two or three dance pairs, are not trained in dance technique, and place less emphasis on theatrical elements of the performance such as costumes (ibid: 98-99). The groups with whom I conducted research in Havana (Yoruba Andabo, Clave y Guaguancó and Los Ibellis) and Matanzas (Afrocuba de Matanzas), would all be considered traditional rumba groups according to Daniel's criteria, as the majority of the members are "culture bearers" who grew up practicing these traditions. While it is important to outline the distinctions between "spontaneous" and "prepared" types of rumba, Daniel's categories and terms seem somewhat rigid when examined in relation to contemporary performance practice. For example, the groups with whom I conducted research can be characterized as both "traditional rumba" and "professional rumba;" although they are professionals and their shows are often prepared in terms of the sequence of songs, their per-

formances also contain a high degree of spontaneity and improvisation.

In an attempt to highlight the prevalence of rumba performance in non-professional contexts, Dutch scholar Paul Van Nispen presents his own classification of rumba performance in Havana, which includes *rumba de barrio*, *rumba de concierto*, *rumba religiosa* and *rumba turística* (Van Nispen 2003: 35-38). *Rumba de barrio* (neighborhood rumba) is his equivalent of Daniel's "spontaneous rumba," and has the following characteristics: it constitutes the oldest and most traditional context for rumba, it is usually performed in socially marginalized Afro-Cuban neighborhoods—either on the street, in a private home, or in *solares*¹—and there are no fixed roles in terms of who can play or sing, nor major distinctions between musicians and the audience. Van Nispen theorizes *rumba de concierto* (concert rumba) much in the same way as Daniel's "prepared rumba," as an organized event that can be performed on a theater stage or in a hotel, or nightclub/cabaret, where there is a clear distinction between the professional performers and the audience, most of whom are Cubans. *Rumba religiosa* (religious rumba), a less common variant, takes place within the context of religious ceremonies—usually those associated with Yoruba-derived *Santería* or *Espiritismo*²—and are usually held in a private home. At these events the majority of the public is Cuban and initiated into at least one Afro-Cuban religion, and the musicians are usually hired through the informal economy (they may or may not be professional musicians). Finally, Van Nispen's fourth category is *rumba turística* (tourist-oriented rumba), which he describes as similar to *rumba de concierto* in that the professional groups who play in the former category also tend to play in the latter, and the venues are often the same for both types of rumba—hotels, nightclubs, or *discotecas*.

1. *Solares* are small urban housing complexes with a group of small houses/shacks arranged around a central, common patio area.

2. *Espiritismo* (Spiritism) is a religious movement stemming from traditional Christianity that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in the United States, and was soon after disseminated to Cuba and other parts of the Spanish Caribbean, where it is still widely practiced. It is based on the idea of communicating with the souls/spirits of the dead through a medium, similar to what we might call, in American popular culture, a *séance*.

The main distinctions between the two categories concern the audience, which in *rumba turística* is made up primarily of foreign tourists, and the entrance fee charged to see each type of performance. While *rumba de concierto* usually costs between \$10-40 moneda nacional (national currency or MN, which is equivalent to \$0.50-1.50 Cuban convertible dollars or CUC) for Cubans and \$1-5 CUC for foreigners, *rumba turística* can cost up to \$15 CUC (ibid.).

I appreciate Van Nispen's expansion of Daniel's categories and his consideration of rumba performed in religious and tourist-oriented contexts, which can be explained at least in part by the fact that their respective fieldworks were conducted in very different social and economic contexts. Daniel's was conducted in the later 1980s when there was little Western tourism on the island and when religious practice was still heavily marginalized by the Revolution's ideology of scientific atheism. In contrast, Van Nispen's fieldwork was conducted in 2002, in the context of a hybrid economy and much greater religious tolerance by state officials. However, in my experience, the distinction Van Nispen makes between *rumba de concierto* as primarily for Cuban audiences and *rumba turística* as primarily for tourists is in fact quite hazy, for I have witnessed much more audience crossover than is suggested by his classification. For instance, the event he uses as an example of *rumba turística* is the Saturday Rumba sponsored by the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional (National Folkloric Group, or CFN), which is currently patronized by many more Cubans than tourists. Although it is a frequent stop on the cultural tourism circuit in Havana, I would estimate that the ratio of Cubans to tourists on any given Saturday in the five years that I conducted my research, 2004 to 2008, was 70 to 30%. In addition, the entrance fee at this event is also at odds with Van Nispen's criteria for *rumba turística*, as it has historically been the cheapest for Cubans of any of the rumba events for which a fee is charged: \$5 MN (\$0.25 CUC). If the CFN truly viewed their event as exclusively *rumba turística*, they would charge a much higher entrance fee.

More representative of *rumba turística*, in my opinion, would be the folkloric shows organized specifically for tourist groups and set up through Cuban tour operators. While I was conducting research, Los Ibellis generally performed a few shows for tourist groups each month at the Casa de África (House of Africa, a small museum that displays African instruments and art) in Habana Vieja, and AfroCuba de Matanzas performed several times for private tourist groups in Matanzas. Also representative of *rumba turística* would be shows performed in hotels, which, due to the longstanding rules prohibiting or severely restricting Cubans' access to tourist hotels, necessarily delimit the audience to foreign tourists.³

Rumba venues in Havana

While Daniel and Van Nispen distinguish different types of rumba performance based upon their function and the professional status of the musicians, I believe it is also important to consider the different venues in which rumba is performed on a regular basis in Havana (i.e., not for isolated events like private parties, religious ceremonies, or shows performed for a particular group of tourists), and the agents who sponsor them. In Havana, there is a diversity of rumba venues that is not found in other Cuban cities, mostly because there are many more groups in the capital than anywhere else. I divide Havana rumba events/venues into three basic categories that I feel have constituted the large majority of professional and semi-professional performance over the past decade: community-initiated events, state-sponsored rumba events and “for-profit” gigs at cabarets and nightclubs.

Community rumba events.

Community rumba events are generally free and open to the public, and none of the groups who perform are paid, regardless of their professional status. The principal event in this category is the *Domingo*

3. Given the changes since Raúl Castro assumed the presidency in early 2008, which included allowing Cubans to rent rooms in tourist hotels, this situation may have changed.

de Rumba (Sunday Rumba) at the Callejón de Hamel in the Cayo Hueso neighborhood of Centro Habana. The rumba at the Callejón has gained much international fame and scholarly attention since the event was founded in the early 1990s by local artist Salvador González, and it is mentioned in every tour guide as *the place* to go if you want to experience “authentic” Afro-Cuban music and culture. The vivid, bright colors of the Afro-Cuban religious-themed murals painted on the walls of the buildings that enclose the alley are a tourist attraction in themselves that seem to create a perfectly appropriate backdrop for rumba performance.

As is the case for many foreigners, the first rumba performance I experienced in Cuba was the Callejón event, which I attended the day after I arrived on my first trip to the island in July 2003. Because there is no entrance fee for the event, the Callejón is almost always intensely crowded with a diverse mix of locals and tourists, professional musicians and those who work *en la calle* (in the informal economy), plenty of *jinetes* (hustlers) attempting to establish relationships with foreigners, and often a few policemen who circulate through the alley during the course of the performance. Anthropologist Lisa Knauer discusses the Callejón as a “contact zone” between cultural tourists and Cuban musicians, noting that the latter often attend the Sunday rumba even if they’re not performing that day in the hopes of drumming up work opportunities or making a few dollars selling CDs (Knauer 2005: 479). Musicians can often find employment not only with foreigners seeking private lessons, but also with other Cuban folkloric musicians who might have a gig for a private religious ceremony and not enough musicians to play.

The musical line-up at the Sunday rumba usually includes a performance from the house rumba group(s) and an invited group, either from Havana, another province of the country, or occasionally, a foreign music group that does not necessarily play rumba. Although the Callejón event appears to many outsiders to be informal and spontaneous, there is a significant degree of planning and control by Salvador González and his wife Martiza, who determine which groups will

play and the order of performance (Knauer: 562-3). Havana super-group Yoruba Andabo was the original house rumba group invited by González to perform with legendary folkloric singer Merceditas Valdes when the Callejón event was founded, although the group later moved on to more profitable gigs (personal communication with Geovani del Pino, December 2006). Since I began attending the Callejón event, the principal house band has been Iroso Obbá, a group that has gained international attention since forming around 1999. By the fall of 2006, an all-female group called Rumba Morena had been added to the line-up as a second house group, and as their popularity grew, they began to be offered gigs outside of the Callejón. Most often, Iroso Obbá played the opening set, Rumba Morena played the middle set, and the invited group played the last set, with Iroso Obbá returning for the third set on the Sundays when there was no invited group. Although groups were technically playing for free at the Callejón event, members of Iroso Obbá and Rumba Morena always circulated after their respective performances soliciting tips from tourists.

State-sponsored rumba events.

The two events that fall into my second category, state-sponsored rumba events, are the Wednesday rumba at the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (Union of Cuban Writers and Artists, or UNEAC) and the Saturday rumba at the CFN's rehearsal and performance site, called El Gran Palenque. These events were organized under the auspices of prestigious cultural institutions, although they have not always enjoyed unilateral support from officials within these institutions and/or local residents. For example, when the CFN established the Saturday Rumba in the 1970s, they faced opposition from the residents of the historically affluent Vedado neighborhood, who complained about the noise and expressed concern about the event attracting large numbers of poor Afro-Cubans. In fact, the majority of *rumberos* (rumba musicians) with whom I conducted research feel that rumba still suffers from widespread racialized prejudice within Cuban society, and that the discursive valorization of Afro-Cuban traditions by the state rarely translates into practice.⁴ The CFN was founded in 1962 by

musicologists Argeliers León and Maria Teresa Linares, who recruited traditional musicians to provide empirical knowledge (Knauer: 83-4). It quickly became one of the most important cultural institutions in Cuba and the island's official performing representative of Afro-Cuban sacred and secular dance and music traditions. For rumba/folkloric groups that are deemed to be *grupos subvencionados* (subsidized groups) by their *empresa* (state-run artistic agency), and whose members earn a fixed salary each month in exchange for performing a certain number of events, these performances are considered to be part of their monthly quota. In the case of non-subsidized professional groups such as Los Ibellis—whose members do not have a regular monthly salary but get paid per gig—there is no payment received for these events; instead, the publicity and promotion generated by performing at these esteemed cultural institutions is viewed as a form of compensation (p.c. with Luis Lucas Rodríguez, July 2008).

Both the UNEAC and CFN rumba events charge admission in accordance with the dual currency system, where Cubans are charged in *moneda nacional* and foreigners are charged in *divisa* (hard currency or Cuban convertible dollars). However, while the CFN charges a very nominal fee for Cubans (\$5 MN or \$0.25 CUC), the UNEAC entrance fee is quite prohibitive (\$40 MN or \$1.67 CUC); both charge foreigners \$5 CUC. As noted earlier, the CFN rumba attracts many locals owing to its low entrance fee and the fact that it takes place on Saturday afternoon. Despite the relatively high cost of admission at the UNEAC event, I would estimate the Cuban-foreigner ratio to be roughly the same for both the UNEAC and CFN rumba events, 70 to 30%. The UNEAC is a very popular *peña* among Cubans due to the high quality of rumba groups who perform there and the fact that it takes place on alternating Wednesdays, meaning Cubans can “save up” to attend every other week.

4. Yvonne Daniel's book on rumba dance (1995) details the institutionalization and discursive elevation of the practice by the Castro government in the first decades of the Revolution.

Like the Callejon event, the UNEAC and CFN *peñas* also serve as “contact zones” between tourists/foreigners and Cubans. In my experience, the “folkloric hustling” (Knauer 2005)⁵ is more pronounced at the CFN because of the low entrance fee and the fact that the crowd usually far exceeds the number of chairs set up, resulting in more people circulating. At the UNEAC, on the other hand, the majority of the seating is around the tables set up on either side of the patio, and *jinetes* are less likely to approach foreigners seated at tables. The price of the UNEAC event is a crucial factor in determining the types of Cubans who can attend: those who can afford \$40 MN are likely to have foreign friends and/or romantic partner(s), or have a job or *negocio* (business) that gives them access to dollars, and do not need to hustle tourists.

The rumba event sponsored by the UNEAC, *La peña del Ambia* (Ambia’s gathering/event), is the brainchild of the country’s most famous contemporary black poet, Eloy Machado, known as “El Ambia.” The valorization of Afro-Cuban culture is a recurring theme in El Ambia’s poetry, as exemplified in his well-known treatise on the virtues of practicing various Afro-Cuban religions called “Soy Todo” (I Am Everything), which was famously converted into a salsa classic by Los Van Van in the mid-1990s. According to his wife and representative Graciela, El Ambia initiated his Wednesday *peña* in 1985 (p.c., October 2006), and it has come to represent one of the most prestigious regular rumba events in Havana, housed as it is in the stately, colonial-style site of the UNEAC.

Knauer asserts that El Ambia began the *peña* with the explicit intention of legitimizing rumba performance and black cultural expression by bringing it into a prominent cultural institution (Knauer: 102). As with the Callejón event, the first rumba group invited to serve as the house band at the UNEAC was Yoruba Andabo, and the event was the main catalyst for their transformation

5. Knauer discusses “folkloric hustling” as a recent phenomenon that has arisen due to the intense competition among practitioners of Cuban folkloric music and dance to secure foreign students and the economic benefits they bring (Knauer: 481).

from an *aficionado* (amateur) group to professional status. Graciela recounts that at one point in the 1990s, Yoruba Andabo and their principal rival rumba group Clave y Guaguancó shared duties as the house band at the UNEAC event, performing on alternating Wednesdays, and also alternating with other rumba groups from Havana and other Cuban provinces. In the past few years the *Peña del Ambia* has moved in the direction of presenting *espectáculos* (folkloric shows),⁶ where the first half of the event is dedicated to *música folklórica* (folkloric music), understood as Afro-Cuban religious traditions, and the second half consists of rumba performance. Around mid-2006 Clave y Guaguancó began performing the folkloric section of the *peña* as well as the rumba part, which signaled a turn for the group towards *espectáculo*-based, rather than only rumba-based performance. The group abruptly ceased to be the house band of the *Peña del Ambia* in January 2007 for reasons I was not able to discover, and since then the event has not, to my knowledge, had a regular rumba group in residence. Instead, El Ambia invites different local and extra-local rumba groups to perform for each Wednesday rumba *peña*.

“For-profit” rumba events.

The third category of rumba venues in Havana that I have identified consists of what I call “for-profit” gigs that take place in small cabarets/nightclubs. This type of venue appears to have arisen as a result of the expansion of the tourism sector and the dollarization of the economy, and allows rumba groups—at least those who are subsidized—to earn extra money over and above their monthly salary. Unlike community events, which are unpaid, and state-sponsored events, which are either part of musicians’ and dancers’ salaried quota of performances or unpaid in the case of non-subsidized groups, these cabaret gigs provide *rumberos* with an immediate source of income after each show. There are generally two ways in which performers are paid for these performances: either the group is allowed

6. In the Cuban context, *espectáculos* refer specifically to performances that include a diverse presentation of Afro-Cuban sacred (*Yoruba*, *Congo*, *Abakúa*, *Arará*) and secular (rumba, *comparsa* [Cuban carnival]) music and dance practices.

to take home the money collected at the door, or a fixed amount is agreed upon beforehand with the cabaret manager (p.c. with Daniel Rodríguez, September 2006 and Lucas Rodríguez, July 2008). In both cases the total sum, minus the percentage owed to the empresa, is divided equally among the members. While this may seem like a lucrative opportunity for *rumberos* to engage with the new market-oriented economy, the amount of money each performer takes home after these events can vary widely from group to group and performance to performance. For example, I have been at a cabaret performance by one rumba group where the audience never reached more than ten or fifteen people. With an average of eight Cubans to every two foreigners, the total door income would be around \$13 CUC (\$25 MN or \$1 CUC for Cubans and \$2-3 CUC for foreigners). This would then be split among the eleven or twelve group members (including dancers, singers and percussionists), averaging just over \$1 CUC per person, and without factoring in the percentage reserved for the *empresa*. On the other hand, on an average Saturday afternoon, Yoruba Andabo packs the Cabaret Las Vegas, their weekly nightclub gig, and easily takes in at least \$100 CUC.

Between August 2006 and May 2008, I became familiar with and attended regular rumba events at several cabarets in Havana, including three in the Vedado and three in Centro Habana. Judging from the dilapidated exterior of these venues, most of them appear to be relics of the 1950s, the golden age of Havana nightlife, when American tourists boarded weekend ferries to the island to party and gamble. These cabaret venues are all compact and generally have a small raised stage for the percussionists and singers with designated floor space for the dancers, which is surrounded by tables and chairs for the audience. As suggested above, the audience is largely Cuban, a function of the fact that these venues are relatively new spaces for rumba performance and may not be mentioned as such in tour guides. These venues are not obvious stops on the cultural tourism circuit, and foreigners generally need to have formed some sort of a relationship with a local musician to find out about them.

Cubans who regularly attend these events must have some level of disposable income, not only to pay the entrance fee (which ranges from \$25-50 MN or \$1-2 CUC), but more importantly to be able to consume alcohol and soft drinks, sold only in *divisa* (beers are usually \$1-1.50 CUC, sodas are \$0.50-1.00 and the cheapest bottle of rum is just under \$4). Most of the cabarets establish contracts with a particular rumba group to perform a weekly gig, the exception being the Delirio Habanero in Vedado, which, at least as recently as 2008, has boasted a weekly rotation of the current top three “names” in Havana rumba: Yoruba Andabo, Clave y Guaguancó, and Rumberos de Cuba. At these gigs, rumba groups usually perform three sets, each lasting 30-45 minutes. Given that the groups have three sets to fill, they usually perform one set of Afro-Cuban folkloric music—almost always several *Santería*-derived *orisha* dances, but sometimes also a choreographed dance representing Bantu/*Congo* traditions, an *Abakuá*, or an *Arará* piece—which is sandwiched between two rumba sets. Between sets a DJ spins popular recorded music, almost always a mix of timba (contemporary Cuban dance music) and reggaetón songs.

Yoruba Andabo’s Saturday *peña* at Cabaret Las Vegas is exemplary of these “for-profit” gigs because of its longevity and popularity among local audiences. The group began performing there in 1998 (p.c. with Geovani del Pino, December 2006), and every time I have attended the *peña*, they have had a packed, standing-room-only audience that is composed largely of young *Habaneros*. The day and time of the event—Saturdays, late afternoon/early evening—contributes to the party-like atmosphere as everyone is eager to spend their disposable income drinking, dancing and singing along to their favorite rumba group’s songs.

Rumba audiences in Havana.

While I have touched on the issue of audience demographics at the respective Havana rumba venues, noting the approximate percentage of Cubans to foreigners, it is important to emphasize the ways they are entangled with the politics of place. In other words, *who* comes to

these events is influenced by where they are held, i.e., the neighborhoods and their corresponding racial and class demographics, as well as the economic resources of a given audience member. Lisa Knauer briefly discusses the racialized geography of Havana neighborhoods, noting that the Revolution has had only partial success in eliminating residential segregation. She asserts that while formerly white neighborhoods like Vedado and Miramar have become racially mixed, there has not been a “whitening” of black, lower-class neighborhoods like Jesús María [in the municipality of Habana Vieja]” (Knauer: 30). Historic rumba neighborhoods within Havana are located in the previously mentioned municipalities of Habana Vieja and Centro Habana, as well as Guanabacoa, San Miguel del Padrón, Cerro, and Marianao. Nonetheless, there are no regular, organized rumba events in the majority of these neighborhoods—whose rumbas tend to be constituted by spontaneous street rumbas or rumbas played at private parties—and all of the venues mentioned above take place in the centralized neighborhoods of Vedado or Centro Habana.

The local audience at the free Callejón event is very representative of the Centro Habana neighborhood in which it is located, Cayo Hueso, which boasts a high proportion of poor Afro-Cuban residents. However, the local audience is not exclusively from Cayo Hueso—many local musicians and some spectators also “commute” into Centro Habana from other municipalities on Sundays to attend the rumba. The rumba events that take place in cabarets in Centro Habana attract audiences hailing from different parts of Havana and people often travel into the center of the city to attend them. The rumba events in the more middle-class Vedado neighborhood, whether state-sponsored or cabaret gigs, also tend to have diverse local audiences since it is a central neighborhood that is relatively easy to reach from Centro Habana or Habana Vieja. In short, local audiences and musicians come from different municipalities in order to attend the rumba events that take place in centralized locations in Havana. Nonetheless, finding transportation to the center of the city is never easy, particularly on Sundays, and the people traveling to Cen-

tro Habana or the Vedado from more distant municipalities must have enough money to get there by collective or private taxi. Thus, what tends to distinguish the audiences at these difference events, more than their race (most are black or *mulato*), is not only their neighborhood of origin, but also their economic resources and access to dollars. The Callejón rumba inevitably attracts a poorer audience because, being free, it is the only event that this audience can regularly attend, whereas rumba aficionados who have access to dollars often choose to attend other events which offer the comforts of being inside—with air conditioning and away from the humid heat and big crowds—or at least sitting down. In contrast to the Callejón, the Delirio Habanero rumba event is located above the Plaza de la Revolución, in a part of the Vedado that is less accessible by public transportation, and most of the people who regularly attend the Callejón event cannot afford to get there, much less pay the entrance fee of \$50 MN (\$2 CUC).

In addition to the factors of class and neighborhood of origin, it is also important to discuss the issues of generation and gender within the spaces in which rumba is performed. In general, contemporary rumba audiences can be characterized by a wide age range: the youngest spectators tend to be in their late teens—although there are always many children on hand at free events such as the Callejón rumba—and there are usually several rumba elders in their 60s and 70s. In fact, rumba events have an inter-generational quality: the children and/or parents of an adult performer often attend the performance, and audience members often go to these events with family members. The majority of rumba audiences at any given event appear to be between 25 and 50 years old. However, there are also distinctions to be made in terms of particular venues and rumba groups. While the Callejón and CFN events tend to attract many young spectators, the UNEAC event attracts some older, non-rumba audiences as well as rumba aficionados. Members of the UNEAC—including writers and television producers—are given priority in terms of admission to the event and having tables reserved for them, and so many of them attend the event despite not considering themselves to be rumba lovers. While

the cabaret venues are usually attended by people ranging from 25-50 years old, Yoruba Andabo's longstanding *peña* at Cabaret Las Vegas tends to attract a younger audience—the majority are in their early 20s and early 30s. I believe this age range has much to do with the style of rumba they have adopted in the last few years, particularly their incorporation of reggaetón choruses into their songs.

In terms of the gender dynamics at rumba events in Havana, I have found that, unlike the composition of rumba groups—in which male performers predominate—contemporary audiences are characterized by a fairly equal ratio of men to women. Women in rumba (and folkloric) groups almost invariably occupy the role of singers or dancers, and it is extremely rare to see a woman playing percussion, except in the case of all-female groups like Rumba Morena. Even among the singers, women usually account for only one or two out of five or six singers in an average rumba group. Notwithstanding the gendered associations of the practice, female rumba aficionados are often the most animated spectators at any given event, particularly in the arena of dancing. As in other Caribbean contexts, women do not play the role of “shrinking violets” at rumba events—they often dance in an explicitly sexual manner and are not afraid to go up to a man and initiate the danced game of sexual possession that is represented in the rumba *guaguancó*.⁷

The various types and contexts of rumba performance in Matanzas

A portrait of Matanzas' economic situation within the context of post-Soviet-era tourism.

7. The *guaguancó*—long the most popular genre within the rumba complex—is famous for its characteristic couple dance, which is sometimes discussed as symbolizing a rooster's sexual pursuit of a hen. The male dancer repeatedly attempts a *vacunao* (from the verb *vacunar*, meaning “to vaccinate”), a pelvic thrust directed towards the female's groin area that symbolizes sexual possession. The *vacunao* can also be performed by thrusting a leg or another appendage towards the female's groin. The woman's role in the dance is to protect herself from this symbolic possession by covering her groin area with her skirt or a scarf.

While there has been a fair amount of research on the Havana rumba scene since the Special Period, there has not been any in-depth research on the contemporary rumba scene in Matanzas. My discussion of current rumba and folkloric music venues in Matanzas is not necessarily comprehensive, given that my research was delimited by my methodological choice to focus on one group, AfroCuba de Matanzas (from now on referred to as “Afrocuba”). However, Matanzas is a small city, and presents a major contrast in many ways to the sprawling and seemingly endless geography of Havana; in the former there are only a few regular venues for rumba and folkloric music performance. In addition to its geographical compactness, cultural performance within the city of Matanzas is affected by its impoverished status vis-à-vis the tourism industry. For most foreigners Matanzas city is merely a stop on the bus line from Havana to Varadero, the island’s most famous beach resort, located 22 miles northeast of Matanzas. The city is currently characterized by a rather depressing restaurant and nightlife scene and a striking lack of tourist-oriented amenities; for example, during the ten weeks I spent conducting research there in early 2007, both of the city’s hotels were closed for repairs. While Matanzas’ folkloric scene is internationally renowned and foreigners come somewhat regularly for religious purposes or to take lessons with members of AfroCuba or Los Muñequitos de Matanzas, local musicians often experience periods of tourist draught and, consequently, economic hardship. Despite the negative economic effects correlated with the lack of a tourist infrastructure in Matanzas, and the fact that some Cubans consider Matanzas to be a “boring place,” conducting research there generally presented fewer problems for me in terms of transportation, the relatively small amount of petty crime and hustling, and the less hectic nature of the city as compared to the capital.

Some of my friends in Matanzas have suggested that the city’s lack of restaurants and entertainment venues is related to its proximity to Varadero, the island’s most successful, and for many years its most exclusive, tourist resort. They feel that the state has made a decision

not to invest in promoting tourism in Matanzas, preferring to focus their energy and resources on Varadero. This situation forces *Matanceros* (Matanzas natives) to travel to Varadero if they want to go out dancing or to eat at a restaurant that serves more than pizza, fried chicken, or hamburgers. In my experience, *Matanceros* enjoy a better standard of living than many Havana residents due to the lack of overcrowding, pollution, and crime. In addition, some Matanzas natives have been able to secure employment in the Varadero tourist sector. Nevertheless, a better standard of living does not necessarily translate to more material or economic wealth; it is also related to the broader social relations within a given place. Thus, while life is calmer and less chaotic in Matanzas than in the capital (a factor that I believe augments the standard of living), the majority of *Matanceros* do not have the disposable income to travel to Varadero, eat at one of its expensive restaurants, or party at one of its nightclubs. Even the musicians and dancers of AfroCuba, who during my research period performed a regular bimonthly gig in one of the Varadero hotels for which they were paid in dollars, rarely had more than a few dollars in their pockets at any given time and that money would usually be spent quickly on food for their households.

Rumba venues in Matanzas.

Matanzas is widely considered to be *la mata de la rumba* (the “tree” or birthplace of rumba), although there are still debates in Cuban music scholarship about whether the most popular and oft-performed style of rumba, *guaguancó*, emerged in Havana or Matanzas. As in the capital, there are several historic Afro-Cuban neighborhoods in Matanzas, such as Simpson and Pueblo Nuevo, that have been linked to rumba performance since the late nineteenth century. Cuban musicologist Nancy Grasso González asserts that the middle classes were historically concentrated in the central part of the city, which locals refer to as “Matanzas,” and in the Versailles and La Marina neighborhoods (Grasso González 1989: 5). Nevertheless, during my fieldwork in Matanzas, I came to know La Marina as a barrio with a longstanding, deep history of Afro-Cuban religious practice and rumba perfor-

mance. Many famous *rumbero* families—including members of Afro-cuba and Los Muñequitos—are from La Marina. Pueblo Nuevo was also a common site of rumba parties throughout the 20th century (ibid.: 9), exemplified by the fact that AfroCuba was formed in 1957 principally by musicians and dancers from this neighborhood. The founding members' main mission was to return the practice of rumba to Pueblo Nuevo, where it had declined; at that time rumba was played spontaneously and regularly only in Simpson and La Marina (ibid.: 25).

Since I began traveling to Matanzas to conduct research I have never been aware of a regular *peña* dedicated exclusively to rumba performance in the city. At the time she wrote her thesis (1989), Grasso González asserted that AfroCuba and Los Muñequitos de Matanzas participated in a rumba event called *Las tardes de la Rumba* (Rumba afternoons) that took place on alternating Saturdays in Matanzas, but as her research was conducted in the later 1980s it is hard to ascertain in which year the event was suspended. I have always been struck by the different nature and function of AfroCuba performances as compared with the rumba groups in Havana. AfroCuba performances are usually *espectáculo*-based, i.e., a prepared show in which an array of Afro-Cuban sacred and secular folkloric music and dance traditions are presented. The group rarely performs more than two or three rumba songs in any given show (unless the event organizers have specifically requested an all-rumba performance), and they are always performed after the folkloric dances. These repertoire decisions have much to do with AfroCuba's principal artistic mission since they transitioned from being a rumba group to a full-fledged folkloric group in 1980: to represent and demonstrate in the most comprehensive manner possible the diversity of folkloric music and dance from the province of Matanzas. Thus, many of their performances have a didactic as well as entertainment function, and AfroCuba's director, Francisco "Minini" Zamora Chirino, often says a few words before each choreographed dance about the particular folkloric tradition being represented. Grasso González's characterization of the nature of

Afrocuba's performances is strikingly similar to my own ethnographic experience, suggesting that the group has followed this formula for over twenty years. Corresponding with AfroCuba's artistic mission, she states that during the 1980s the group performed often in schools, workplaces, and *casas de cultura* (state-sponsored community cultural centers), mostly within the Matanzas province, and that less common were "dance" and "recreational" events (ibid.).

During my period of research with the group, AfroCuba performed often for state-sponsored events and within institutional venues, such as those listed by Grasso González. However, the group's performance venues had also expanded in line with the new economic order on the island: they were now involved in performances for tourist-only audiences such as the Varadero hotel gig mentioned above and private performances for specific groups of tourists. The group also performed within small provincial towns for local festivals/events several times a month, and was called on for state-sponsored events in Matanzas such as the *Feria del Libro* (the annual book fair that travels from province to province offering books at low prices). I witnessed one political-oriented performance in which AfroCuba, along with a variety of musicians performing other genres, participated in a celebration for a local Communist Party school dedicated to teaching Revolutionary ideals. There was one recurring event that could be viewed as AfroCuba's regular *peña*: the *Tarde de Cabildo* (*Cabildo* Afternoon), performed on the second Friday of each month under the colonial arches of the Palacio del Junco, Matanzas' provincial museum. This event is exemplary of the AfroCuba's pedagogical mission, as Minini often gives an explanation before each song about what African-derived tradition the dance is representing as well as a few details about the type of percussion instruments being played. I have rarely seen any other foreigners at this event due to the overall scarcity of tourism in Matanzas. The audience consists of local aficionados of folklore, and usually a sizeable group of casual onlookers also gathers around as the group begins to play.

Rumba audiences in Matanzas.

In contrast to the situation in Havana, the venues in which Afrocuba performs often predetermine or at least delimit the nationality of the audience members. In other words, when the group performs in small towns in the Matanzas province, or for local festivals or political/civic events, the spectators are almost invariably Cuban. Conversely, when Afrocuba performs in Varadero or at a private show for a specific group of tourists, the audience is necessarily composed of foreigners exclusively. Thus, there is less mixing of Cubans and foreigners at Afrocuba shows, and at rumba and folkloric events in Matanzas, in general, than in Havana. The few foreigners who do attend these events are usually in Matanzas for the purposes of academic research, individual cultural tourism—such as taking music or dance lessons with a local folkloric musician—or for religious reasons—such as being initiated into *Santería* or visiting their *padrinos* or *madrinas* (religious godfathers or godmothers). Matanzas is considered by many to be the center of Afro-Cuban sacred practice, where various religions are practiced in their most authentic manifestations. For this reason, many foreigners wishing to be initiated into *Santería* choose a house and godmother/father in Matanzas rather than Havana; they feel that the initiation will be conducted in a more traditional and “correct” fashion.

Local audiences who attend rumba events in Matanzas tend to be black or of mixed race and most are initiates of at least one Afro-Cuban religion. While the city still has a substantial white population, I have not observed as large a degree of interracial socializing in Matanzas as is characteristic in Havana. However, one context in which interracial mixing is fairly common is within religious worship: there are “houses” of *Santería* into which both white and black practitioners have been initiated, and this automatically ties them to each other as *hermanos en la religión* (siblings in religion). Because there are no “for-profit” gigs in cabarets as in Havana, and all events are free, it is hard to generalize about the class status (measured by one’s access to dollars) of rumba audiences in Matanzas. Some audience members have more access to dollars through jobs in the Varadero tourist sector,

remittances sent by relatives living abroad or foreign *ajijados* (religious godchildren), or private enterprise. As rumba and folkloric events generally happen during the day and in public spaces, the age range of spectators is quite wide, very often including young children who attend either with their parents in the audience or as children of performers. Due to rumba's long history in and association with Matanzas, many elderly Afro-Cubans attend these events—they remember the times when rumba was played spontaneously in the streets of Simpson, Pueblo Nuevo, and La Marina when there were no professional *rumberos*.⁸ Finally, in terms of gender dynamics, female spectators tend to be more numerous than male ones if I take my evidence from the monthly *Tarde de Cabildo* event performed by Afrocuba. This is probably because it is a mid-afternoon event during the week and women are more likely to be working part-time jobs that allow them to pick up their children after classes are over in the afternoon.

The politics of place vis-à-vis the tourism industry

As has been illustrated by my discussion of the different and contrasting contexts, venues and audiences in Havana and Matanzas, the micro-practices of rumba performance are very much informed by the politics of place vis-à-vis the tourism industry in contemporary Cuba. These two cities have very different statuses within the tourist sector on the island: Havana is the capital, an enormous city by Cuban standards—its residents number roughly two million—and the primary destination for a majority of foreigners who travel to the island, whether they be tourists, researchers, artists, or journalists. Matanzas, on the other hand, is a small city of about 100,000 residents with no tourist infrastructure to speak of.

Although Matanzas folkloric musicians do not enjoy the same possibilities for material gain as their Havana counterparts, many of them

8. Los Muñequitos de Matanzas was formed in 1952 and constituted the first group to attain professional status after the Revolution (Grasso González 1989). Gaining national fame in the 1950s, Los Muñequitos was also the first rumba group to enjoy widespread radio dissemination and have access to professional recording opportunities.

measure their standard of life by more than their access to dollars. I do not wish to assert that Matanzas musicians have no avenues for earning money within the informal economy: foreign students of folkloric music and dance—usually those who are already somewhat familiar with the different Afro-Cuban secular and sacred repertoires—do seek out teachers in Matanzas in order to *profundizar* (deepen) their knowledge, and, just as in Havana, folkloric musicians make much of their supplemental income playing at private Afro-Cuban religious ceremonies. Notwithstanding these economic opportunities, Matanzas musicians rarely “stumble upon” foreign students of folkloric traditions as Havana musicians do, because unless foreigners are already knowledgeable, they will not generally travel to Matanzas. Furthermore, because there are no regular rumba performances, there are no venues that facilitate first encounters between local musicians and the few tourists who do travel to Matanzas; tourists might travel to Matanzas and be interested in lessons, but unless they have the name of a musician, it is unlikely they will find one. In other words, the economic and spatial positions of Havana and Matanzas within the tourist sector influence their respective musicians’ livelihoods and access to supplemental income.

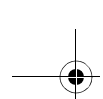
The audience demographics at rumba events in Havana and Matanzas also reflect their different, respective statuses within the tourism industry. The principal axes along which the two cities differ are in the nationality of the audiences, i.e., the ratio of Cubans to foreigners, and the class status of the Cuban spectators. At Havana rumba events there is much more intermingling between Cubans and foreigners, which in turn means a higher presence of folkloric hustling. In Matanzas, on the other hand, audiences tend to be composed exclusively of Cubans or of foreigners. Whereas one’s access to dollars does not make much of a difference in terms of audience demographics at Matanzas rumba events, because no one is paying to get in, it is a determining factor in the capital. Due to the existence of “for-profit” gigs in Havana, the class status of the Cuban audiences tends to be highly correlated with the price of admission at any given event.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the micro-practices of contemporary rumba performance in Havana and Matanzas, emphasizing how the politics of place vis-à-vis the tourism industry significantly impact both the political economy of local musicians and the composition of audiences in each city. The vast majority of literature examining the impact of foreign tourism in post-Soviet Cuba has focused on the capital, and thus not recognized the ways that the measures taken by the state to counteract the economic crisis of the Special Period—including the expansion of the tourism sector, the introduction of private enterprise, and the establishment of a dual currency system—have been carried out and experienced in geographically uneven ways across the island. It is my hope that this comparison of rumba performance in two cities characterized by distinct economic and social conditions, will contribute to an emerging body of scholarship that explores both the regional differences on the island as they relate to a variety of issues, and the correlated politically, economically, and culturally hegemonic status of Havana vis-à-vis the rest of Cuba.

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