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Lisa Brock

BACK TO THE FUTURE: AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND CUBA IN THE TIME(S) OF RACE*

CUBA HAS, AT LEAST SINCE the American revolution, occupied the imagination of North Americans. For nineteenth-century capital, Cuba's close proximity, its Black slaves, and its warm but diverse climate invited economic penetration. By 1900, capital desired in Cuba "a docile working class, a passive peasantry, a compliant bourgeoisie, and a subservient political elite."¹ Not surprisingly, Cuba's African heritage stirred an opposite imagination among Blacks to the North. The island's rebellious captives, its anti-colonial struggle, and its resistance to U.S. hegemony beckoned solidarity. Like Haiti, Ethiopia, and South Africa, Cuba occupied a special place in the hearts and minds of African-Americans.

Significantly, that special place evolved from a contact that proved of greater durability than African-American ties with others in the Diaspora. Long before 1959 Cubans and African-Americans had forged working relationships: abolitionists jointly formed organizations, leftists and trade unionists exchanged strategies, and journalists, novelists and poets aroused mutual sensibilities. On a mass level, musicians and baseball players actually shared the same cultural venues, entertaining millions of regular Black folk in Cuba and in the United States. When the Cuban revolution culminated in 1959 most Blacks applauded its success. Since then, these relations have suffered a rupture as a result of the United States blockade against Cuba, different but no less racialized social alignments in the post-Civil Rights era, as well as tense relations with recently-arrived Cuban-Americans. Thus, while Cubans on the island continue to visualize African-Americans through a greater, but nonetheless circumscribed flow of information from news and familial sources,² African-Americans born since the 1960s have come to imagine Cuba, if they do at all, through the cloudy lens of a more — racially and ideologically — sophisticated system of dominance. Based on preliminary research, this essay projects that present against aspects of past, primarily the nineteenth century, in order to provide reflection on the future.

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IDEOLOGY, RACE AND CURRENT DISCOURSE

While there has been substantial scholarship on the U.S. domination of Cuba, projects devoted to uncovering the historical connections between African-Americans and Cuba have been minimal. Aside from Willard Gatewood's several volumes, Johnnetta Cole's short 1977 article on African-American solidarity with Cuba, and Rosemari Mealy's 1992 collection of testimonials on Fidel and Malcolm, there is little else.³ In fact, given African-American sentiments concerning the Cuban-American community today, it is difficult for one to believe that any feelings of closeness ever existed. African-Americans under age forty — like their peers — have come to know Cubans through the opinions and activities of Cuban émigrés in Miami. Enraged at the revolution, the latter have been promoted and given political clout by successive U.S. administrations and the national media. Unlike previous Cuban-American populations, Cubans in Florida are largely White and drawn from Cuba's pre-revolutionary elite. Implicated in police brutality and overtly racist politics, they have attained disproportionate power in Florida.⁴ Police shootings have incited Blacks in Miami to riot in the section known as Liberty City. The differential treatment of Haitian and Cuban émigrés has prompted persistent demonstrations. Haitians, when not turned back, are held for months in detention camps while Cubans often attain political asylum within twenty-four hours.⁵

Tensions peaked in 1990 when Miami mayor Xavier Suarez, a Cuban-American, became the only United States official to refuse to greet African National Congress head Nelson Mandela—whose organization was known for its ties to Cuba—when he visited that city.⁶ Mandela had been invited to attend the national convention of the American Federation of State and Municipal Employees, a trade union long active in the anti-apartheid struggle. Mayor Suarez' position so angered the trade unionists and Black residents of Miami that they called for a convention boycott of Miami. The boycott was effectively sustained for three years and called off only when the city's politicians negotiated a deal with prominent Blacks for greater Black empowerment.⁷ In addition, the rightist Cuban American National Foundation, through its ties to the Heritage Foundation, became known for its support of right-wing contra wars in southern Africa.⁸

Many African-Americans have only known Cuba through such experiences, creating for them a somewhat muddled assumption that all Cubans are fascist and racist. The 1989 publication of Carlos Moore's *Castro, the Blacks and Africa*, added fuel to this fire by attacking Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution as consciously racist.⁹ A few prominent African-Americans such as Maya Angelou and St. Clair Drake endorsed the book, which boosted readership in the Black community. Even though Moore's book was of poor scholarship and based more on hearsay than in-depth analysis,¹⁰ it kneaded an already ethnically and ideologically charged situation. But more importantly, the work has served to whittle away at some of the support base of the Cuban revolution in the Black community. Paradoxically, it has served to relocate some African-Americans to the counter-revolutionary side of the U.S. government on the one hand, and on the other, bolstered the Congressional Black Caucus in its call for an end to the blockade. The CBC has argued that only an end to the United States blockade can better the lives of Black Cubans.¹¹

The popularity of Moore's book raises some important questions. Significant is the fact that there has been very little written on race in contemporary Cuba. The embargo has been the primary culprit in distancing African-Americans from information about the island but the Cuban revolution itself has not taken seriously the study of race. In fact, for years the revolutionary leadership argued that racism had been eradicated. Their position was: why should we encourage scholarship on a problem that no longer exists? Such utopianism was based upon three notable achievements. First, unlike any other country in the world, Cuba immediately established and sustained policies that drastically improved the life chances of Black Cubans. In fact, by 1987, employment, infant mortality, and life expectancy rates were better for Blacks in Cuba than for Blacks anywhere in the world — even in the United States.¹² Second, Cubans openly admitted to, and seemed to appreciate, their African heritage. Can one imagine an American president admitting to being partly Black as Fidel Castro has often done — even if only metaphorically? Third, they supported African liberation movements in ways that no other nation had been prepared to do. By the mid 1980s, they had not only sent hundreds of thousands of troops to southern Africa to fight against apartheid aggression but had educated over 80,000 medical, engineering, and secondary school students from all over Africa.¹³

Given this roster of activities, it is understandable that many believed racism to have indeed been uprooted; for the Cuban revolution had gone further than any modern nation towards that end. But had it gone far enough? Had racism disappeared from the landscape? No; it continued to manifest itself in the cultural and social realm.¹⁴ In jokes, in marriage choices, in media representations, in notions of beauty and ugliness, and in the superior value associated with Whiteness, it persisted.¹⁵ While the class-based affirmative action of the revolution in one single stroke initially benefited the lives of Afro-Cubans, there was no space created for a dialogue on race. In fact, according to historian Louis Pérez, Jr., “the subject of race in twentieth century Cuba is an elusive theme . . .”¹⁶ Therefore, the psychic, psychological, and cultural baggage that has historically accompanied institutional racism was never challenged. Race became the classic “non-topic” in Cuban scholarship.¹⁷

The Cuban revolution became trapped in its own history and its unfolding present where race was concerned. While Cuba, like much of Latin America, had historically used race and racism as an organizing principle, openly constructed challenges to the racial status quo seemed to diminish as slavery and colonialism ended. There had been less White violence after slavery and more social and cultural fluidity between the races than in North America. Some Cubans, however, did engage in confrontational racial politics in the first decade of the republic. Calls from the Partido Independiente de Color (Independent Party of Color) to challenge racist political power ultimately inspired masses of peasants to rise against poverty and economic marginalization. Many Blacks had fought in the war against Spain only to be shut out of Cuban society under U.S. hegemony. The Cuban elite, along with its United States backers, swiftly put down the uprising — killing thousands — which became known as “the 1912 Race War.” Naked racial challenges were disavowed and “signified the limits

of White tolerance for race as a political issue.”¹⁸ Afro-Cubans, while experiencing racism, therefore chose to struggle against it from within class-based and social and cultural organizations. These Afro-Cubans, however, through unions and secret societies, were central to creating the Cuban revolutionary stage between 1930-1959.¹⁹

Yet there existed no blueprint for an open discussion on race, and the Cuban revolution did not feel it should construct one. Given the barrage of U.S. hostility, Cuban leaders understandably feared that a discussion of race would divide the much needed Cubanidad (Cuban national spirit). Sadly, though, while encouraging debates on class and women’s rights, and raising public awareness on Cuba’s African heritage and international matters, they played ostrich on the critical topic of race. It is interesting to note the joining of classic Marxian and liberal positions in this regard. In pursuit of the orthodox Marxian belief that transformation of the material conditions can singularly dislodge racism, Cubans sought refuge — like liberals — in the hope that racism could be abolished through social integration alone.²⁰ The Cuban leadership has recently begun to review this position through policies known as “rectification.”

The lacuna in Cuban race studies and the lack of actual contact increased the vulnerability of African-Americans to internal U.S. propaganda and ideological trends. While it is clear that a majority of African-Americans supported the revolution — and for the most part still do — there have always been those in the community who have not.²¹ African-Americans, like all Americans, are influenced by capitalist hegemony and some perceive Cuban socialism as antithetical to their notions of social mobility. In fact, a few conservatives have been prepared to work with broader anti-Communist forces against Cuba. However, in Black communities the critique of socialism is rarely presented in philosophical terms or in support of market freedoms, but most often contextualized within a framework of racial concern. While not new, government strategies emerged most visibly in the 1970s as the state tried to dissipate and derail the more radical elements of the Black freedom struggle. This was accomplished by means of the FBI Counter Intelligence Program as well as through open ideological confrontation.²² One example of this latter tactic was President Richard Nixon’s adopting of the slogan “Black Power” to encourage “Black capitalism.”²³ Although unsuccessful at separating the catch phrase from its historical meaning, the tactic of racial concern continued to be employed, creating a comfortable space for Black conservatives as they could more easily lay claim to “helping their people.” The tactic also won less astute Blacks over to conservative positions. For instance, American solidarity movements such as the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) became split in the 1970s around issues of “racial” support in Africa. Some in the Committee endorsed the more mass-based, left-leaning Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) while others rallied behind the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi won considerable support by claiming to represent Black Angolans against the mulatto and White Marxists.²⁴ As time went by, it became apparent that Savimbi was tied to a right-wing strategy to wage contra-war against the Angolan people.²⁵ Clearly, this strategy has continued and gained ground in United States culture — for instance, Clarence Thomas’ largely successful use of the lynching metaphor to

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win considerable Black support during his Senate Hearing.

Moore's work provides an instructive example of this conservative strategy. While ostensibly pleading on behalf of Cuban Blacks in general, Moore really argues for the creation of more middle- and upper-strata Blacks. His class and ideological positions ring clear as he derides Afro-Cubans for supporting the revolution. The vast majority of Afro-Cubans, who were poor and shut out before 1959, backed the revolution because it improved their lives and opened up previously closed opportunities to them. Moore, however, belittles them, saying they have been fooled by the revolution and accusing them of not being "Black" enough. With respect to the latter point, Moore skillfully utilizes a North American definition of "blackness" in juxtaposition to Afro-Cuban working-class/peasant sensibilities. He never raises the fact that — if indeed Afro-Cubans do possess a different view of "blackness" than their North America counterparts — such an identity is rooted in a specific Cuban history. For example, like much of Latin American and the Caribbean, race has been largely conceptualized around three categories: Black or Indian, mulatto or mestizo, and White. Also, unlike in the United States, the fact that the Cuban independence movement against Spain shared the same historical stage with abolition is significant; the latter served to stimulate, albeit with tensions, a greater multi-racial notion of Cuban nationality than that which occurred in the United States. "Yankee" imperialism also bound all Cubans to a greater sense of class-based nationalism than has ever occurred in the more racially polarized United States.

While Moore's book might have expanded our understanding of the experiences of Blacks in Cuba and the Americas as a whole, using Cuba as a model for a critical discussion of race and socialism, it did not. Instead it supported conservative attacks on Cuba while arguing that a more class-stratified Cuba would be a better Cuba for Blacks, since more Blacks could then be at the top. In his book as well as his lectures Moore also reinforces a small but resilient tendency in the Black community to believe that "we" know more about "blackness" than any other people of color in the world. And while it may be true that "Black" consciousness has been more present and tenacious in the North American experience, an African-oriented consciousness has been more prevalent in Cuba.²⁶ Moreover, while African-Americans may be more conscious of race, they have not, in the words of one Chicago activist, "been successful at liberating a block." These are paradoxes fruitful to ponder; for in a words of Fernando Oyono, "the dog of kings" must be careful not to believe himself "the king of dogs."²⁷

As the crisis deepens in poor communities in the United States, conservative solutions are increasingly "raced" and "voiced" among a desperate population. From the state come calls for reducing social services and increasing the number of prisons; from within the Black community emerge narrow campaigns for cultural and entrepreneurial Black nationalism.²⁸ Masking its program, the right has conflated stark ideological divisions, tinkering with the boundaries of right and left. The U.S. Left has contributed to this problem by its unwillingness to make race a primary mobilizing theme. All of this comes at a time when the intellectual/ activism and internationalism of the kind reflected in the vision and projects of Martin Delany, W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Mary

McLeod Bethune, Langston Hughes, and Malcolm X seem to have receded. In fact, "traditional Black nationalism" was, according to Sterling Stuckey, tied fundamentally to anti-imperialist ideologies and structures.²⁹ It is difficult to find any intellectuals or activists in the nineteenth century who did not see the African-American struggle essentially linked to the liberation of all Black peoples. This is evident in the writings and speeches of the time. Today, Black nationalism is largely defined by domestic considerations and agendas; there is less tendency to commingle the domestic with the international in its rhetoric.³⁰ While there is a *sense* of attachment to the *Black world*, contemporary African-American nationalism is for the most part separated from international ideological trends and anti-imperialist projects.³¹

IMAGINING FREEDOM: THE EMERGENCE OF CUBA IN 19TH CENTURY AFRICAN-AMERICAN THOUGHT

Historically, African-Americans came to know Cuba through many channels. The initial path was forged via slavery. Many African-Americans passed through the Caribbean during the middle passage; some had relatives who had been sold to island or Brazilian destinations. For most, knowledge of Black peoples, especially in nearby Cuba, was lodged in their collective memories. Some people of color, particularly in Florida and Louisiana, actually spoke Spanish and/or had Spanish surnames.³² Not surprisingly, African-Americans monitored as best they could developments in the hemisphere. Information between North and South grew more fluid as United States politicians and capitalists began constructing empire in their "own backyard." In addition, while the Haitian revolution created widespread fear among planters and racists, it served as an inspiration and a challenge to all Blacks in the Americas. Herbert Aptheker's description of the decades following 1820 as a time of "sharply increased rebellious activities" among African-Americans, was also true of Afro-Cubans.³³

African-Americans increasingly saw Cuba through the prism of their own desire for freedom. By the mid-nineteenth century there were three ways that they imagined freedom: emigration to lands outside the United States and secure economic, political and social power; integration into existing American society on the basis of equality; or organization of a revolution to overthrow the system and create one in which they would become full citizens. Interestingly, these three possibilities not only framed North American mobilization strategies, but became the standard against which Black nationalists, intellectuals, and activists measured freedom or the lack of it in Cuba and the Diaspora. In some ways, these three ideals continue to inform African-American views of other multi-racial nations. But in the nineteenth century, with slavery ever looming and White racist violence escalating, the debates among Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, Henry Highland Garnet, Alexander Crummel, Sojourner Truth, and Henry McNeal Turner grew heated around which one of these objectives to collectively pursue. Cuba, like Africa and other territories in Americas, became a part of the discourse; these were either places to emigrate to, countries where integration based on equality was more or less likely, or territories in open revolt which served to arouse rebellious sensibilities in African-Americans.

While Cuba rose in the African-American mind in relation to all three visions, the island resonated most with the “territory in revolt” notion. In fact, uprisings on the island were becoming legendary. According to Louis Pérez, Jr.,

slave uprisings occurred throughout the early colonial period and as slave numbers increased so did the frequency of slave rebellions. During the eighteenth century, they increased also in size and scope. Three hundred slaves rebelled on one Havana sugar plantation in 1727. Four years later, another rebellion of slaves forced the closing of the copper mines of Mariel and Guines. In 1812 on sugar estates in Puerto Principe, Holguín, Bayamo and Trinidad; in 1826 in Guira, in 1830 on coffee fincas in Oriente and so on.³⁴

By the mid-nineteenth century, Cuban slave rebellions involved more “planning, coordination, and collaboration among slaves” than they had before and they became more “possessed of ideological content and political purpose.”³⁵ The sugar-producing area known as Matanzas, with its high concentration of slaves shook the Spanish plantation system to its core. Beginning in 1825, this western province ushered in a series of large-scale plantation revolts which destroyed over 35 estates and led to reprisals against hundreds of rebels. By 1845, rebellions in Matanzas had become so persistent that Spanish authorities as well as local Creoles (Cuban-born Spaniards) considered them part of a broad conspiracy towards revolution. In response to “La Escalera” — “the escalation” or “the ladder to revolt” — colonial officials brutally swept down, arrested, tortured and executed, in the most grisly ways, thousands of slaves and free people of color.³⁶ African-Americans experienced first joy, then horror at the sight of Cuba’s unyielding spirit and slavery’s terrible consequences and retribution.

The image of Cuba as “territory in revolt” was forged with La Escalera. While most historians look to the era of Cuba’s Ten Years War (1868-1878) as the beginning of African-American relations with Cuba, La Escalera forged a place for Cuba in the consciousness of African-Americans. One Cuban figure especially captured their imagination and symbolized “the ignominious crucible of slavery.”³⁷ Gabriel de la Concepción, a free person of color, and a well-respected poet and abolitionist, was executed in the Spanish tirade. Known as Plácido, he was portrayed as a gentle man who was murdered because of his “rare gifts” as a poet. His writings were later translated and eventually became available to African-Americans.³⁸ Memory of him waxed so important that tribute to him in African-American newspapers and journals continued from the mid-nineteenth century well into the 1950s. If one examines *Crisis*, the NAACP magazine, and *Opportunity*, the Urban League organ, for example, scarcely a decade went by without Plácido being remembered either in an essay on his life or in a literary critique of his poetry.³⁹

La Escalera also had a tremendous impact on Martin Robinson Delany, the man known as North America’s first Black nationalist, Pan-Africanist, and emigrationist.⁴⁰ During the 1840s, Delany was just beginning to form his ideas about slavery and racism. Due to rank exploitation in the south and second class existence in the north, he believed

it impossible for Blacks to ever be integrated into society on a basis of equality. In 1852 he published his famous *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, which laid out his support for Black emigration; in 1854 he spearheaded the National Emigration Convention.⁴¹ Delany began writing his fictional piece *Blake: or the Huts of America, A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States and Cuba* in 1859; the work was immediately serialized in the *Anglo-African Magazine* and then again in 1861-1862 in the new *Weekly Anglo-African*.⁴² In the novel, the central character Henry (Blake) travels throughout the United States and Cuba organizing a general slave insurrection. Delany employs a narrative spliced with poetry to develop the story.⁴³

Historians and literary critics have hailed *Blake* as one of Black America's first novels; they explore its importance to understanding slavery in both the United States and Cuba and reflect on Delany's ideas as they unfold through Henry and the other characters. Yet, there has been very little analysis of Cuba's importance in the plot. No one to my knowledge has posed the question: why did Delany include Cuba and not Brazil or Jamaica, for example? Moreover, why is Cuba central to the development of the insurrection? Henry, in fact, spends considerable time in Cuba where he receives encouragement from numerous rebels but most significantly from a "thoughtful poet of the revolution" named Plácido. Plácido agrees with Henry's ultimate objective to revolt and settle all Blacks in Africa.⁴⁴ Plácido is the only fully non-fictional character in the book and is both the carrier and recipient of some of Delany's most lavish poetry. In fact, Victor Ullman, early biographer of Delany, argues that it is the song/poem of Plácido which inaugurates the completed plans for insurrection and the mood of the rebels as they await the moment to strike. Clearly one of the most dramatic sections of the book, Ullman also contends that it is with this poem that all of Delany's "past hopes, frustrations, fears, and his own doubts of the future" are expressed.⁴⁵

The importance of Cuba to Delany — who named one of his children Plácido — must be understood within the context of a turbulent mid-century. Cuba was central to the maelstrom of slavery, manifest destiny, colonialism, and rising bourgeoisie. Spain continued to import Africans against increased British pressure to ban the slave trade but worried that its island was becoming too "Africanized."⁴⁶ Cuban Creole elites desired independence from Spain but feared they could not maintain slavery on their own.⁴⁷ Some Creoles wanted to annex themselves to the more commercial United States as a design to solve their dilemma, while some politicians in Washington viewed Cuba as "destined" to be a part of the United States. The administrations of James Polk and Franklin Pierce, in fact, both tried unsuccessfully to buy Cuba from Spain in order to satisfy planters' desires to expand slavery. A frustrated John A. Quitman, then governor of Mississippi, and Venezuelan/Cuban Narciso Lopez took matters into their own hands and organized filibustering ventures aimed at annexing Cuba in the 1850s. They were caught and arrested and an ambivalent U.S. government publicly stated that they would support Spain.⁴⁸ By that time, however, the United States had begun to supersede Spain and Britain as Cuba's primary trading partner.⁴⁹

Southern planters working for the expansion of western and southern frontiers

did not go unnoticed by African-Americans; neither did the United States' rising preeminence in Cuba's commercial trade. African-American support for the Cuban spirit of revolt was therefore not simply based on anti-slavery and racial ties, but also stemmed from national self-interest. That Cuba might become annexed to the United States probably partially explains the ease with which Delany includes the island in his novel. In fact, there are key passages where the south and Cuba seem part of the same system. Southerners continued to view Cuba with this possibility in mind even after the Civil War, but their designs were forestalled by Cuba's First War of Independence. In October 1868, Cuba planter Manuel de Cespedes launched "The Cry of Yara" by freeing and arming his slaves and organizing an army. Others in the eastern part of the island did the same. This beginning of the bloody Ten Years War eventually broke the back of slavery and made "pro-independence the dominant political ideology."⁵⁰

SOLIDARITY AND THE LIMITS OF NATIONALISM: CUBAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS

It should come as no surprise that support for Cuban independence became African-American's first act of international solidarity as free men and women. Unlike any episode since Haiti, Cuban freedom fighters aroused the "revolt" sensibilities in most African-Americans. Frederick Douglass wrote, "The first gleam of the sword of freedom and independence in Cuba secured my sympathy with the revolutionary cause."⁵¹ In his editorials he encouraged "Afro-American youth to surrender their citizenship to join their fortunes with those of their suffering brethren in Cuba."⁵² According to Johnnetta Cole, "from the very outbreak of the [war] the voice of Black America was among those of progressive peoples in the United States . . . proclaiming sympathy with the Cuban insurgents and demanding the recognition of Cuban belligerency."⁵³ Reverend Henry Highland Garnet and Samuel R. Scottron formed a Cuban Anti-Slavery Society and called a mass meeting at Coopers Union in New York in 1872 "to advance the cause of freedom." They collected over 5,000 signatures on a petition which they presented to President Grant.⁵⁴ Because Grant had not recognized the new Cuban Republic, the frustrated group

resolved, that we, therefore after four years' patient waiting deem it our duty and do hereby petition our government at Washington, the President and Congress of the United States to accord to the Cuban Patriots that favorable recognition that four years' gallant struggle for freedom justly entitles them to."⁵⁵

African-Americans noted another salient aspect of the Cuban effort: "the colored inhabitants battle side by side with the White, holding the rank of officers, and in numerous instances, colored officers [are] commandeering White troops."⁵⁶ From the very beginning, the units of soldiers known as "mambises" were integrated with Black and White and ex-slave and free. Two men of color — José Antonio Maceo and Máximo Gómez — who won the status of generals in the Cuban Liberation Army, became two of its sharpest military strategists and the "dominant figures in Cuba's drive for

independence.”⁵⁷ This thrilled African-Americans as they watched the two officers work in theater after theater. They realized Afro-Cubans were utilizing their intellect, resources and power to defeat the Spanish and slavery in ways prohibited to African-Americans during the United States Civil War. The multi-racial structure of the Cuban Liberation struggle resonated with African-Americans’ own desires to be welcomed into American society. For the first time, African-Americans began to romanticize Cuba as a place where full inclusion based on equality was likely.

The character of Cuba’s First War of Independence, however, has proven controversial. On the one hand, African-Americans were correct—there had been nothing like it. An army of rich and poor, Black and White fighting side by side for their mutual liberation was unique in the era of eugenics, rising social Darwinism, and polygenetic cranial studies. Contrasting the Cuban example of potential racial equality against the 1878 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which defined Blacks to be of lesser intellectual ability, African-Americans might easily have viewed Cuba as a racial paragon.⁵⁸ Likewise, historical and contemporary Cuban leaders have analyzed the war as an anti-racist prototype. José Martí drew on this interpretation in his effort to forge fraternity between the races when building Cuba’s second revolutionary movement.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Cuba’s historic class and race divisions plagued the Revolutionary Junta and its army from the very beginning. In his lengthy studies of this period, Philip Foner critiques such romantic interpretations as revisionist to argue forcefully that racism was a major reason for the failure of Cuba’s First War of Independence.⁶⁰

That the glass was both half empty and half full summons a critical probe of early Cuban nationalism. Although members of the army and Revolutionary Junta desired to build a Cuban nation, their visions of that nation were fundamentally different. While there existed a breadth of personal opinions about the direction of the movement, they tended to be framed by two opposing tendencies. On one side were the Creole elites who, while realizing that they could not achieve independence without ultimately abolishing slavery, wanted to maintain their wealth and privilege within any republican dispensation. Elites dominated the political leadership and pressured first President Cespedes to make no social reforms until after the Junta had succeeded at liberating the entire country. On the other side were Maceo, Gómez and the Black, Mulatto, and White mambises, who envisioned social reforms, and demanded that slavery be abolished immediately, freeing slaves as they liberated territory. The senior Gómez was known for his guerrilla tactics and scorched-earth policy; he ordered soldiers to set fire to sugar and tobacco estates and to disrupt commercial activity. His desire to break the back of the enemy by destroying its economic base caused great trepidation among elites.⁶¹

Throughout the struggle, conservatives and progressives competed for ideological hegemony. Five years into the war, elites feared the mambises to be in “their most promising position” and worried that the visions of Maceo and Gómez might triumph. When faced with the choice between social equality and Spanish rule, a large sector of elites opted for continued colonialism as they began to stoke the fires of Cuban racism.⁶² Because Maceo and Gómez were the army’s undisputed leaders, racists began to spread the tale that Maceo had a hidden agenda — he was secretly planning a race war.

According to rumor, he planned to liberate all the slaves, kill all the Whites, and establish a Black republic. Even those in the junta who did not believe this rumor succumbed to it in order to placate those that did. Maceo, a progressive nationalist, was dismayed by the nefarious attack. He wrote the provisional president of the Revolutionary government, Estrada Palma, in 1876 in his defense.⁶³ It fell on deaf ears; elites withdrew their economic support, and stirred up dissension among the ranks. On February 7, 1878, the Ten Years War came to an end with neither independence nor an end to slavery. Antonio Maceo refused to sign the Treaty of Zanjón in his now famous “Protest of Baragua.” S. R. Scotton, chair of the United States Cuban Anti-Slavery Society, wrote to Maceo with great obeisance: “None have occupied [a position] more noble [than you].”⁶⁴ Lacking ideological unity, the national struggle at that juncture imploded.

Whether African-Americans were aware of the depth of Cuban racism is not quite clear. Surely Douglass, Garnet, Delany and others spied it in the vitriolic treatment of Antonio Maceo.⁶⁵ Blacks in New Orleans must have experienced it first hand as they came into contact with the many elite Cuban émigrés who lived there.⁶⁶ However, African-Americans also knew of men such as José Martí and Cuban workers who were White but represented the more progressive Cubanidad.⁶⁷ Martí, especially, became known as a fighter for Cuban unity. In 1880 — at his first speech delivered in the United States — he addressed a packed hall in New York City; “to the discomfort of the wealthy aristocratic émigrés, but to the delight of the Black and White tobacco workers,” Martí boldly addressed the bitterness surrounding color.⁶⁸ In 1882, he wrote Maceo and acknowledged the deep-seated racism in their movement.⁶⁹ Significantly, in that same year he wrote a eulogy in the *New York Times* commemorating the life of Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, one of the most well-respected abolitionists and Black nationalists of the nineteenth century. He reported on the memorial service held for Garnet at Coopers Union Hall.⁷⁰ More telling than the editorial itself — which praised Garnet for his work to uplift his race — was the fact that Martí felt compelled to write and publish it.

In 1895, a new Cuban Revolution Party (PRC), led by Martí, launched Cuba’s next War of Independence. Unlike the Ten Years War it mustered a populist coalition of men and women of modest income whose ideological crux was progressive and nationalist. They called themselves Separatists. With 40 percent of the senior commissioned ranks of the army made up of people of color, African-Americans recognized it as a “Black man’s war.”⁷¹ Slavery by that time had been abolished in Cuba but independence and social justice had not been forthcoming. African-Americans wanted Cuba to join Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Liberia to become a nation under Black leadership. In fact, Antonio Maceo emerged again as a leader “around whom the aspiring young Negro may twine his brightest hopes for the future.”⁷² Historian Willard Gatewood in his substantial work on the Black press found it to be steadfast in its support for Cuba. He stated that “the revolt had scarcely gotten underway” when it began receiving plaudits from the Black community.⁷³ In addition, African-Americans’ own deteriorating status made them very prone to notions of Cuba as a racial paradise and to fantasies of emigrating there. There were increasing calls between 1895-1898 for Blacks to join the Cubans in the defeat of Spanish tyranny. A few urged the United States to

intervene—not to annex it as they were doing to Hawaii, but “to restore peace without compromising the liberty and independence of the Cuban people.”⁷⁴

The United States did intervene, not in response to Black demands, but for its own expansionist purposes. Once this became justified with the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine in Havana harbor in February of 1898, Black Americans, especially those with middle-class views represented in the press, began to shift the focus of their rhetoric. The primary question deliberated by March of 1898 was whether or not African-Americans should volunteer as soldiers; would it lead to Black American advancement and/or would it be good for Cuba? According to Gatewood, commentators became less concerned with Cubans than with the interest of African-American themselves. However, a general belief that fighting for Cuba was compatible with United States involvement did not force an immediate conflict of interest for most Black Americans. The government did decide to use Black volunteers as it had in all of its wars in the past. In June of 1898, all-Black regiments, were among the invasion force into Cuba.⁷⁵ Some remained there after the Spanish defeat and became part of the United States occupation force at the beginning of 1899.⁷⁶

Black responses to the Cuban-Spanish-American War were significant for a number of reasons. First, aside from the Indian wars, it was the first international United States conflict that Blacks would experience since securing their citizenship. With rising White violence and a refusal by the federal government to protect the rights of its Black citizens, the war sparked a series of clamorous debates within the African-American community. The contradiction of being Black and being American, which had been steeping since emancipation, got its first national airing as Black Americans grappled with dual issues of working towards equality at home and living up to their responsibilities as national citizens. Many prominent leaders such as Booker T. Washington believed Blacks should fight in the war; Washington suggested that Blacks could be just as patriotic as Whites. Supporters hoped Black participation in the military would create a better racial environment. Journalist T. Thomas Fortune for years had argued for a Black artillery unit in order to show “the Whites how to soldier.”⁷⁷ Anti-involvement proponents believed that Blacks had no responsibility to join any United States conflict because as one young Black midwesterner expressed: “I will not go to war. I have no country to fight for. I have not been given my rights.”⁷⁸ Others, such as George Dudley of the *American Citizen* of Kansas City, suggested that United States resources and so called humanitarianism would be better utilized in the protection of Black American rights.⁷⁹

A central theme running through the press debates was the issue of Cuba as a potential site for emigration. Blacks believed that they would be in a good position to emigrate once they had supported the struggle for Cuban independence. Black soldiers sent glowing reports to the Black press confirming the better style of racial relations enjoyed by Afro-Cubans. Also, Cuba was so physically near that it made relocating less expensive and therefore more likely than any resettlement in Africa. Stimulated by the rise of racism, diverse voices encouraging emigration rose in the years after the Spanish defeat in late 1898. There were individuals who emigrated on their own as well as large-

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scale schemes proposed. An Afro-American Cuban Emigration Society was established in 1898 with the hope of convincing Blacks to emigrate; Rev. W. L. Grant of Topeka unsuccessfully petitioned Congress to appropriate \$1,000,000 for his settlement ventures.⁸⁰ Such proposals for large-scale emigration were challenged by an aggregate of African-Americans just as they had been in the past. Some argued that the motives of the organizers were opportunistic. More critics expressed views similar to clergymen John E. White: “the Negro was an American with every right to live in the United States and destined to remain in the country of his birth.”⁸¹ And, as in the past, there were also a good number of White racists who supported Black emigration.⁸²

However, more fundamental contradictions were exposed with respect to the Cuban destination; by the end of 1899, Black Americans began receiving reports that Afro-Cubans did not wish to have them settle in their island.⁸³ While this had been an ongoing problem in Liberia, very few of these African-American emigrationists seemed to know or care.⁸⁴ In the case of Cuba, where there was more direct contact, the views of the resident public became known. While Cubans did not object to a small number of individuals settling on their island, Afro-Cubans appeared to oppose mass emigration. Black Americans seemed surprised and suggested two reasons for the response. One was that White Americans were spreading false rumors about African-Americans to which Afro-Cubans were vulnerable. The second was that Cubans were more nationalistic than they were race conscious and therefore viewed Black Americans in the same light as White Americans.⁸⁵ While both arguments may have some merit, there were more likely reasons behind Afro-Cuban concern. During the first two years after the Spanish defeat and while under U.S. occupation, immigration to the island had skyrocketed. Between 1898-1901 some 70,000 immigrants arrived in Cuba; most were White and unskilled and displaced Cuban peasants and workers.⁸⁶ Second, North American capital began penetrating at a dizzying pace, making peasants out of Afro-Cuban landowners and paupers out of peasants. Afro-Cubans had no idea which path Black Americans were trying to pursue. As another pool of laborers with whom they would have to compete, or as hungry capitalists who would take their land, Afro-Cubans were justifiably concerned. My preliminary work shows that the Black Americans who promoted these schemes never seriously reckoned with this or the fact that any mass emigration scheme had the potential to be colonialistic. Questions concerning whose land would be taken, whose culture would be hegemonic, and who would economically dominate were woefully lacking in discussions around proposed resettlement schemes.

African-Americans never settled en mass to Cuba, largely because most never desired to. Yet, those who did were ultimately disillusioned by growing racism in Cuba. While entrepreneurs were working their strategic position as race brothers and Americans to launch settlement schemes, the American government was working to thwart any realization of a “racial paradise.” The view held by Secretary of State Hamilton Fish in 1872 — Cubans were too racially mixed to be capable of self-government — continued to affect policy some 30 years later.⁸⁷ However, North Americans under the McKinley administration feared more than race; they recognized the progressive vision of the majority unleashed during the Cuba’s Second War of Independence. The United States

supported a minority of elite planters and the White commercial bourgeoisie prepared, as before, to trade national independence for continued privilege and wealth. The result was the 1902 Platt Amendment in which

Cubans achieved self-government without self determination and independence without sovereignty. As a result of the intervention, the state apparatus, including the lawmaking and law-enforcing agencies — legislative bodies, the courts, the armed forces — all the institutions necessary to give Cuban nationality definitive form and to establish the primacy of Cuban interests — came under U.S. control.⁸⁸

Estrada Palma, provisional president of the Ten Years War who had ignored Antonio Maceo's letter in 1876, was elected in 1902 to be Cuba's first republican president.

The Cuban-Spanish-American war was a crucible for African-Americans. Blacks sought to reconcile their "twoness" of being Black with being American. Many thought at that moment in history that they could commingle their own struggle for equality with that of their long-time allies, the Cubans, and prove their loyalty to the United States government. Likewise, Black Americans hoped for the realization of a racial paradise in Cuba. In reality, the struggle for Black equality and self-determination could not be successfully waged under the auspices of United States imperialism. Neither were racial paradises to be found under the umbrella of such adventures. Outside of a few Black men getting jobs and the psychological release attained through the firing of weapons on racists,⁸⁹ Black masses on both sides of the Caribbean achieved little. Some Americans, such as John Mitchell, an editor of the *Richmond Planet*, understood United States intentions before they intervened. Mitchell wrote scathing editorials condemning U.S. interest in the island, suggesting that it was using humanitarian justifications as subterfuge for political gains and capitalist greed. He further prophesied that the Cubans would find themselves jumping from the frying pan into the fire.⁹⁰

HEGEMONY AND RACE

The 1902 Platt Amendment signaled the end of one era and the beginning of another. For those in power it meant triumph. The long awaited desire of the United States to possess Cuba had finally come to pass; they managed to guarantee future economic penetration through political and social hegemony. Likewise, planters and the commercial elite in Cuba realized their vision of the Cuban republic against the socially transformative *independentismo* of the Separatist majority; they were, at the cost of real power, able to retain their privilege in the new republic. For Afro-Cubans and African-Americans, hard lessons about racism and nationalism were learned. Both populations had sought equality through participation; both were disappointed. With their entire communities in flux, Black veterans in the two countries faced increased degradation when they returned to their respective houses. Large numbers of African-Americans began to migrate North in search of opportunity and safety while Afro-Cubans joined

their established communities of color in the eastern province of Oriente for similar reasons.

The first years after the war were particularly discouraging for Afro-Cubans. Unlike African-Americans, the Afro-Cuban population en masse — three generations and countless thousands — had disproportionately supported Cuba's wars of liberation. During the 1890s they had been the backbone of the Cuban Revolutionary Party; they had given their money, lost their property, and sacrificed their lives to the struggle for the republic. They also had begun to create *Cuba Libre* in the eastern province where by 1899 Afro-Cubans made up nearly half the population and managed forty one percent of the land. Small and multiple land holdings and a diverse agricultural and commercial economy attracted both White and Black Cubans of modest income.⁹¹ Within three short years, however, their hopes were dashed and their gains annulled. A broad range of legislative and social techniques — educational and property qualifications, for example — were used to restrict Afro-Cuban participation in civil and state institutions. Just as important, Oriente was being ravaged by US capital. In 1902, veteran Generoso Campos Marquetti protested to Estrada Palma: "The truth is, Mr. President, this is not what we expected from the Revolution and things cannot continue like this."⁹²

But *things* did, a situation to which Afro-Cubans were not reconciled; they resisted on all fronts. Even before 1902, Afro-Cubans reacted to racist U.S. military personnel with hostility and sometimes gunfire.⁹³ By 1908 a small number of middle level veterans were totally disenchanted and founded the PIC, or Independent Party of Color. Under the leadership of Major Evaristo Estenoz and Pedro Ivonnet, the Party waged a public campaign against discrimination, Black inferiority, and social divisions between Mulattos and Blacks.⁹⁴ As Party rosters expanded, the specter of "race war" was again evoked by the Cuban elites.⁹⁵ The Cuban Congress used this threat as a justification to legally bar any party based on color, arguing that the PIC, not state policy, was racist.⁹⁶ Determined to repeal what became known as the *Morua law*, Party leaders issued a call for a limited armed protest. However, "the *independiente* protest set in motion a larger protest. The political spark ignited the social conflagration and the countryside was set ablaze."⁹⁷ Over 10,000 peasants in Oriente, pushed off their land mainly by United States sugar concerns, spontaneously joined the rebellion.⁹⁸ The Cuban elite was taken off-guard but they responded quickly to their deep-seated fear of Black revolt. The armed forces, backed by United States marines, began indiscriminately arresting and attacking persons of color.⁹⁹ Oriente, the region where Afro-Cubans had invested so much energy, became a killing field. In the words of one North American resident, "they have lopped off the heads of probably some six thousand Negroes in this province and the rest as a whole have had the fear of God drilled into their souls."¹⁰⁰ An American naval officer spoke of "the bodies left hanging to the trees." By July, it is estimated that some 4000 people were killed. Estenoz and Ivonnet were among them.

The first Cuban event since the Cuban-Spanish-American war to draw major attention from the Black press, the "Race War of 1912" was watched with horror by African-Americans.¹⁰¹ Press attention occurred for two reasons. One was the war's holocaust-like proportions which African-Americans largely attributed to United States

“color phobia.”¹⁰² To many African-Americans Cuba had been a racial paradise before United States intervention.¹⁰³ The second reason emerged from rumors circulating after the war about the original motives of the Independent Party of Color. There was speculation that the Party leadership had been in collusion with Liberal Party leader Miguel Gómez when they issued the call for the armed protest. According to this logic, Gómez and Estenoz conspired to threaten revolt in order to place Gómez in a position to repeal the Moderate Party’s *Morua Law*.¹⁰⁴ Estenoz, therefore, completely misread the situation and mislead innocent peasants into believing that the Party would be able to defend them. Interestingly, intellectuals writing in African-American journals debated this very issue. In the pages of the *Crisis*, Arturo Schomburg, noted New York-based Puerto Rican scholar-activist, praised Estenoz for taking “up the gage of battle for the rights of his dark fellow men.” Two months later James Clark challenged the Schomburg position, attacking Estenoz for his “unsatisfied ambition.” Clark lamented that so many Blacks had been “victims of [this] misguided reformer.”¹⁰⁵ As late as 1933, M. A. Pérez-Medina, in a book edited by Nancy Cunard, stressed that while “the Negroes were hunted down like diseased rats,” Estenoz had been a man of “ignoble character and an opportunist.”¹⁰⁶

The crux of the debates had less to do with Estenoz and Ivonnet than with the scholar/writer reconciling his or her own ideological position with fundamental issues raised by the entire episode: Did Afro-Cubans have the right to organize a political party along race lines? Is to do so basically progressive or reactionary? Do such political formations lead to racial unity or racial hostility? If Party founders were wrong, then was the *Morua Law* justified? Writings from the time reveal evolving ideological positions. In 1912, Arturo Schomburg supported Estenoz’s right to organize such a Party. He recalls that “Estenoz was born in the birthplace of revolutionary conspiracies, Santiago de Cuba,” and he situates the PIC as an extension of that revolutionary cause. He also likened the *Morua law* to the *Dred Scott* decision which made free slaves in the North subject to re-enslavement. Schomburg had been a member of the multi-racial Cuban Revolutionary Party and had evolved into a “race man.”¹⁰⁷ These were men and women who rejected segregation, accommodation, and capitulation. They believed that Black persons—as Blacks—had the right to fight for and defend their political, social and psychological liberation. Since liberation had not been forthcoming through emancipation and the Cuban War of Independence, the struggle needed to be continued.¹⁰⁸ James Clark, on the other hand, assumed a classic liberal position. He did not support the right of Afro-Cubans to organize a party for the people of color, arguing that the *Morua Law* was “designed to protect the interest” of the former. Pointing out that *Morua* was himself Black, Clark affirmed that the existence of Black parties would lead to all White parties. He then encouraged Cubans of color and class to support the election of “colored members” who were elected “purely on their own merits based on mixed constituencies.”¹⁰⁹

The debate between Clark and Schomburg proved portentous of debates to come. New ideological alignments, framed by the Garvey movement and powerful, Left parties, continued to debate the question of whether or not Blacks had the right to

organize all Black formations and whether to do so was necessarily reactionary or progressive. Interestingly, the views of “race men and women” as well as liberals were absorbed into both movements as they struggled for the best ways to mobilize against racism.

CONCLUSION

African-American solidarity with Cuba was anchored during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That history provides the basis for a better understanding of key issues facing contemporary Black American and Cuban relations. First, the racist and right wing elements of the Cuban-American population today do not represent the historic sector of Cubans whom African-Americans supported. Those Cubans in Miami are ideological descendants of the Cuban elites who vilified Antonio Maceo, derailed the Ten Years War, worked with United States imperialism and participated in the carnage of 1912. Little wonder, then, that African-Americans have been unable to identify with such a group. Second, the visions of Gómez, Maceo, Martí and the mambises were unleashed and garnered during the revolution of 1959; for the first time, Cuba’s progressive nationalists succeeded in defeating the ideology and power of United States hegemony and its Creole elites. The culmination of over 100 years of ideological struggle within Cuba explains the deep counter-revolutionary sentiment among many Cuban-Americans who believe it had been their right to control Cuba’s destiny. The third tendency — largely represented by the Independent Party of Color — to struggle *as Blacks* for equal representation in the society and against White supremacy in the culture, was not permitted to flourish within the context of the revolution. Only recently, as it became increasingly clear that racism had not been abolished, have those ideas gained greater polemical credibility and political currency.

Historic solidarity with Cuba also provides important lessons. African-Americans learned that the struggle against racism is not enhanced through participation in United States imperialist ventures. On the contrary, United States economic, social and political expansion into Cuba not only empowered racists on the island but emboldened racism within the United States. This has also proven true of United States relations with South Africa and with Israel. For instance, while David Duke and Jesse Helms found “their ideological home” in South Africa, a right-wing Israel support group — the Jewish Anti-Defamation League — has been implicated in spying on progressive Black Americans. Military leaders such as Colin Powell who argue that Black participation in the military undermines racism should be challenged by this history; and young men and women forced to seek employment in the military should be encouraged to struggle against policies that limit their opportunities to make a living wage. Given our rich ties with Cuba, Black America must not allow its domestic struggle for equality to be pitted against the island’s self-determination and progressive socialist vision.

There have been lessons for Cuban revolutionary leaders as well. To sustain its Afro-Cuban revolutionary core and maintain its support base among African-Americans, it has begun to critically address its failures as well as its successes in the fight against racism. Cuban revolutionaries have come to the realization that without open and

honest discussion it is the conservatives, who overtly address race, who may be left to write the history of Cuba's revolutionary struggle for equality. In fact, with the end of the Black boycott in Miami there have been increased overtures by the Cuban-American politicians in that city to win over Black community leaders. This is particularly problematic as the Cuban revolution is forced to focus more on domestic survival — resulting from the United States blockade and the demise of its socialist trading partners in Eastern Europe, than on winning African-American support. However, African-American solidarity with the Cuban revolution is rooted in a long tradition of solidarity and contact which cannot be overturned easily. But it is important for Black Americans to draw upon that tradition to construct a new counter internationalism to the more sophisticated international alignments and tactics of the western elites.

NOTES

- ¹ Louis Pérez, *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), xv.
- ² Cuba has not tried to block information coming from the United States. In fact, Cubans receive information about the United States from CNN television, Radio Martí, domestic and international news journals and very importantly through maintaining contact with family members. Even though much of United States news is biased in its reporting on African-Americans, many Cubans are able to keep up with national sports teams, entertainment figures and current political debates. For example, a summer 1990 edition of the *Juventud Rebelde*, a major youth magazine, had a front-page story on Michael Jackson's cosmetic surgery.
- ³ Willard Gatewood has written a number of books devoted to African-Americans and Cuba at the turn of the nineteenth century. See *Black Americans and The White Man's Burden* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975) and *Smoked Yankees and the Struggle for Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971). Also see Johnnetta Cole, "Afro-American Solidarity with Cuba," *The Black Scholar*, 8:8-10 (1977): 73-80; and Rosemary Mealy, *Fidel and Malcolm: Memories of a Meeting* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1993).
- ⁴ See Benigno Aguirre, "Differential Migration of Cuban Social Races: A Review and Interpretation of the Problem," *Latin American Research Review*, XI (1976): 104; and Felix Masud-Piloto, *With Open Arms: Cuban Migration to the United States* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowan and Littlefield, 1988).
- ⁵ Andrew Biliski, "Miami's Racial Fires: Arson and Rioting Mar Super Bowl Week," *McCleans* (January 30, 1989); Larry Rohter, "Miami Police Officer Acquitted in Racially Charged Slaying," *New York Times*, May 29, 1993; "An Immigration Policy That's Fair to All," *Business Week* (February 6, 1989); Robert R. DeVecchi, Joycelyn E. Williams, Kathryn Wrinn, and Edward Dew, "Revise U.S. Refugees Policy on Haiti and Cuba," *New York Times*, January 3, 1994. Steven Holmes, "Immigration Service Faces a Bias Suit by 550 Blacks," *New York Times*, February 27, 1994.
- ⁶ "The Four Arrows of Mandela," *U.S. News and World Report* (July 9, 1990).
- ⁷ See Nicole Lewis, "Miami Boycott University Yields Little Change," *Black Enterprise* (September 1991); and her piece two years later, "Empowerment Agreement Ends Miami Boycott," *Black Enterprise* (August 1993).
- ⁸ The Cuban American National Foundation sponsored Jonas Savimbi of the Angolan contra-movement UNITA during his tour of the United States in 1986. They also have supported the Mozambique National Resistance Movement, also known as RENAMO. For discussion of these activities see Jane Franklin, *The Cuban Revolution and the United States: A Chronological History* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1992), 205-208; Prexy Nesbitt, "U.S. Foreign Policy:

- Lessons from the Angola Conflict," *Africa Today* (1st and 2nd Quarter, 1992): 59; and the *Mozambique Support Network Newsletter*, III:1 (February 1990). The Cuban American National Foundation is also well known for its intimidation of individuals and institutions open to dialogue on United States policy towards Cuba. Its key leader, Jorge Mas Canosa, has been tied to violence and terrorism. For a discussion of his activities, see Larry Rohter, "A Rising Cuban American Leader: Statesman to Some, Bully to Others," *New York Times*, October 29, 1992; and George Garneau, "Threats as Anti-Castro Cubans Confront Miami Papers," *Editor and Publisher*, February 8, 1992.
- ⁹ Carlos Moore, *Castro, The Blacks and Africa* (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 1989).
 - ¹⁰ For critiques of Moore, see Lisa Brock and Otis Cunningham, "Race and the Cuban Revolution: A Critique of Carlos Moore's 'Castro, the Blacks and Africa'," *Cuban Studies*, 21 (1991): 171-186; Pedro Sarduy, "An Open Letter to Carlos Moore," *Cuba Update* (Summer 1990): 34-36 and Cheryl Harris, "House of Mirrors: Carlos Moore's Vision of Cuba, Race and Africa," *Cuba Update* (Summer 1990), 25-26.
 - ¹¹ CBC members Charles Rangel and Kweisi Mfume have been most vocal on lifting the Cuban embargo and have solicited information from Afro-Cubans about the situation in Cuba. In fact, Charles Rangel is a sponsor of the Free Trade with Cuba Act, House Bill 2229.
 - ¹² UNICEF, *Estado Mundial de la Infancia*, 1989; National Urban League, *State of Black America*, 1987. For a good discussion of social conditions in Cuba during the 1980s see the collection of essays in Sandor Halebsky and John M. Kirk, eds., *Twenty-Five Years of Revolution, 1959 to 1984* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985).
 - ¹³ There are many sources that talk about Cuban assistance to southern Africa. For solid statistics see Jorge Domingues, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). For a good discussion of the rationale behind Cuban's mission in the region see David Deutschman, *Changing the History of Africa* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1989).
 - ¹⁴ Afro-Cubans continue to be disproportionately represented among the economically marginalized sectors of the society as well. However, because there have been few race-based studies, it remains difficult to ascertain the full scope of economic disadvantage experienced by Afro-Cubans.
 - ¹⁵ There are many scholars who have written on this. For early reports on this problem, see Elizabeth Sutherland, *The Youngest Revolution: A Personal Report on Cuba* (New York: Dial Press 1969); David Booth, "Cuba, Color and the Revolution," *Science and Society*, XI:2, (Summer 1976). For a critical analysis of contemporary race in Cuba see Gail McGarraty, "Race, Culture and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba," in Sandor Halebsky and John Kirk, eds., *Cuba in Transition* (Boulder, Colorado: 1992) and Esther Mosak, "White Mirrors: Film and Television Workers Talk about Racial Representation," *Cuba Update* (November 1991): 28-30.
 - ¹⁶ Louis Pérez, Jr., "History, Historiography and Cuban Studies," in *Cuban Studies Since the Revolution*, Damián J. Fernández, ed. (Gainesville Florida: University Press of Florida, 1992), 59.
 - ¹⁷ Jorge Domingues in the "Introduction" to Moore's *Castro, the Blacks and Africa*, ix.
 - ¹⁸ Pérez, "History, Historiography and Cuban Studies," 59.
 - ¹⁹ Afro-Cuban participation in movements leading to the revolution are examined in Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968).
 - ²⁰ Cuba, of course is not alone in this mixture of liberalism and orthodox Marxism. It has been a classic problem among Left parties in the Americas. It was one of the factors that led to a split

in the United States Communist Party in 1991, forcing such longtime members as Angela Davis to leave that organization. Cuba did, however, in the 1980s establish rectification policies aimed at instituting race-based affirmative action after realizing that Blacks, women and youth were underrepresented in political institutions in the country.

- 21 In the 1960s, many prominent African-Americans visited Cuba and glowingly spoke of their support: Imiri Baraka, Angela Davis, Harry Belafonte, Stokely Carmichael, for example. For a discussion of some of those people see Manning Marable, "Race and Democracy in Cuba," *The Black Scholar*, 15:3 (May/June, 1984). Today, the Congressional Black Caucus' position and Jesse Jackson's many visits to Cuba are evidence of a tradition for Black Americans seeing Cuba differently than the government.
- 22 For a detailed and thorough examination of Cointelpro see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars* (Boston: South End Press, 1988).
- 23 For a very critical discussion of the impact of Nixon's strategy on key Black leaders, see Henry Winston, *Strategy for a Black Agenda* (New York: International Publishers, 1973).
- 24 For a good overall discussion of this see Prexy Nesbitt, "On The Cutting Edge: African-American Political Movements in the 1970s, A Preliminary Historical Review," *African Studies Association Meeting Papers*, 1990. For a view of how one African-American woman got involved in supporting UNITA, see Sharon Elise's interview of Chinosole in "Chinosole: That Precious Quality to Which We All Aspire/But is Difficult to Achieve; Freedom, *Wazo Weusi: A Journal of Black Thought*, 1:2/3 (Spring/Summer 1993): 59-99.
- 25 For good primary materials on the origins of the UNITA, see William Minter, *Operation Timber: Pages from the Savimbi Dossier* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1988).
- 26 Two of the most recent Cuban scholars examining Africanisms in Cuban culture are Rafael L. López Valdés and Leyda Oquendo Barrios. See López Valdés, *Componentes Africanos En El Etnos Cubano* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1985) and Oquendo Barrios, *El Fenómeno Tribal* (Havana: Editorial Academia, 1988).
- 27 Fernando Oyono, *Houseboy* (London: Heinemann, African Writers Series, 1966), 20.
- 28 Promoting an Afro-centrism which romanticizes the past and is not connected to an ideological and structural challenge, in fact, encourages and nurtures elite thought patterns. Clearly, it is necessary to strengthen non-European studies and pride among African-Americans, yet, these goals will never be met if not attached to broader struggles to save public education for instance and promote the ideal of multi-national education in general. Similarly, while there is nothing necessarily reactionary with the stated logic of supporting Black business — Black businessmen would attain capital and then re-invest in the Black community and Blacks need business acumen — it has a miniscule chance of offering solutions to the deep structural problems in the Black community. Further, given the racist nature of financial and real-estate institutions, the opportunities for Blacks to start businesses is minimal and those that do will most likely be beholden to White institutions. The objective result of such a strategy would be to create a small strata of Black business people — with limited capital — who would have a captured market in the Black community. But because they lack political, state, and ultimately economic power in the society as whole, they would be unable, even if they desired to, to change the lives of the majority of Blacks. Many who view Black business as a viable solution to our communal crisis point to the days of segregation. They argue: at that time we were forced to "Do for self" and "Buy Black," consequently we had more property and more power. However, we were also poor, victims of White violence, and disempowered in the broader society that we lived in. Do we really want to go back to that? Objectively, the road to Black business could lead to the creation of bantustans; Black business people would be given a small island where they can operate while those lacking power inside and outside the island accrue little if any benefit. For

- critical discussions of some of these issues see Robin Kelley's letter to the editor, *New York Times*, July 9, 1991; E. Frances White, "Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse and African-American Nationalism," *Journal of Women's History* (Spring, 1990): 73-97; and Sidney Lemelle, "The Politics of Cultural Existence: Pan Africanism, Historical Materialism and Afro-Centricity," *Race and Class*, 35 (July/September, 1993): 93-112.
- ²⁹ See Sterling Stuckey, *Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African-American Art in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). This is apparent throughout his discussion of nineteenth century Black nationalists but explicitly stated in a footnote on Paul Robeson and Cuba on p. 214. See the chapters on Pan Africanism in Bernard Magubane, *The Ties that Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1987).
- ³⁰ The reasons for this are many and too numerous to name here. The most recent emanates from the end of the Cold War, the implosion of socialism in Europe which stimulated a crisis in the left and the rise of a more unipolar world. Western elites and their financial institutions - such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — have more singular power than they have had in recent memory. Both structurally and ideologically, available spaces for progressive agendas, especially internationally-based ones, to flourish have been diminished. This narrowing of possibilities is felt in South Africa as they negotiate their future, in Cuba with its terrible current crisis and in the United States. Thus, while the blockade has effectively cut off masses of Black Americans from the Cuban population, contra-warfare, so-called Black-on-Black violence, organized misinformation and hegemonic minstrelling have assisted in confusing many average Black folk, especially in the United States, about international issues and about Cuba.
- ³¹ While Jessie Jackson, the Congressional Black Caucus, and other prominent Blacks continue to view their role in government as lobbying on behalf of Black peoples in the world, there is less mass mobilization on these projects. There is less connection between international issues and domestic ones such as poverty and police crime, for example.
- ³² Kenneth Kiple, "The Case Against a Nineteenth Century Cuba-Florida Slave Trade," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 29 (1971): 346-55. Kiple argues against Cuban-Florida connections after 1808 but in so doing examines the period before 1808 quite well. Also, one might examine an older article on Louisiana slave trade connections, "Foreign Slave Trade in Louisiana after 1808," *Louisiana History*, 1 (1960): 36-43.
- ³³ Herbert Aptheker, quoted in William Z. Foster, *The Negro People in American History* (New York: International Publishers, 1954), 101.
- ³⁴ Louis Pérez, Jr. *Between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press), 65.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.
- ³⁶ Philip Foner, *A History of Cuba and its Relations with the United States*, I, (New York, International Publishers, 1962), 214-228.
- ³⁷ Arturo Schomburg, "My Trip to Cuba in Quest of Negro Books," *Opportunity* (February 1933): 50.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 50
- ³⁹ For instance, José Clarana, "Plácido, Poet and Martyr," *Crisis* (1912): 82-83; Napoleon Rivers, "Plácido," *Opportunity* (March 1933); [anon.], "Sculpture of Teodoro Ramos Blanco: Notes on the Rhumba and Plácido," *Crisis* (1949).
- ⁴⁰ Sterling Stuckey has recently challenged this notion, arguing that David Walker, who wrote his famous *David Walker's Appeal* some twenty years before Delany began formulating his ideas, might be considered the first Black American nationalist. See Stuckey, *Going Through the Storm*, 88-81.
- ⁴¹ Martin Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the*

United States, New York: Arno Press, 1968. Five years later he led an expedition to the Niger valley in West Africa in hopes of settling African-Americans in "the land of their ancestry." However, he lacked the necessary resources and at times he proposed Central or South America. Delany did not approve of taking money from the government, such as was the case of Liberia which had been founded by the American Colonization Society. He never himself emigrated to Africa, although he spent considerable time in Canada, but his ideas were central to debates around the triptych of freedom — integration, emigration or revolt.

- ⁴² Victor Ullman, *Martin Delany, The Beginnings of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 200.
- ⁴³ The book was finally published as a whole in the 1970s. Martin Delany, *Blake or the Huts of America . . .*, Floyd J. Miller, ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
- ⁴⁴ Ronald Takaki, *Violence in the Black Imagination: Essays and Documents* (New York: G. P. Putman & Sons, 1972), 97.
- ⁴⁵ Ullman, *Martin Delany*, 207.
- ⁴⁶ C. Stanley Urban, "The Africanization Cuba Scare, 1853-1855," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 37 (February 1977), 29-45 and Aline Helg, "Race in Argentina and Cuba, 1880-1930, in Richard Graham, ed., *Theory, Politics, and Popular Reaction, The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 39.
- ⁴⁷ For overall discussions of this nineteenth century dilemma see Franklin Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970) and Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860-1899* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).
- ⁴⁸ Foner, *A History of Cuba*, II, 71-95.
- ⁴⁹ Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*, 44.
- ⁵⁰ Cole, "African-American Solidarity," 74.
- ⁵¹ Foner, *A History of Cuba*, II, 200.
- ⁵² Cole, "African-American Solidarity," 74.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Foner, *A History of Cuba*, II, 242.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 243.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 242.
- ⁵⁷ Philip Foner, *Antonio Maceo: The "Bronze Titan" of Cuba's Struggle for Independence* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 36.
- ⁵⁸ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, XVII (New York: Scribner's Son's, 1878).
- ⁵⁹ Martí's emphasis on racial unity is referred to in Ada Ferrer, "Social Aspects of Cuban Nationalism: Race, Slavery and the Guerra Chiquita, 1879-1880," *Cuban Studies*, 21 (1991): 39; Peter Turton, *José Martí: Architect of Cuba's Freedom* (London: Zed, 1986); and Christopher Abel and Missa Torrents, *José Martí: Revolutionary Democrat* (Raleigh: Duke University, 1986).
- ⁶⁰ Philip Foner, in his work, *Antonio Maceo: The "Bronze Titan" of Cuba's Struggle for Independence*, strongly critiques the Revolutionary Junta of the Ten Years War for their racism. He concludes that it, along with elitism, caused the failure of the movement. He also challenges statements attributed to Tomás Fernandes in an interview conducted and published by *Cuba Update* (Summer 1991). In the letter (November 1991), Foner argues that Fernandes was completely wrong when he stated that racial "barriers were abolished" during Cuba's Independence War in the 1890s.
- ⁶¹ There are quite a number of scholars who have referred to the domination of a White political elite during and after the Ten Years War. See Donna Wolf, "The Cuban 'Gente de Color' and

- the Independence Movement, 1879-1895," *Revista/Review Interamericana*, 5, (Fall 1975), 403-21; Ferrer, "Social Aspects of Cuban Nationalism"; and Patricia Weiss Fagen, "Antonio Maceo: Heroes, History and Historiography," *Latin American Research Review*, 11:3 (1976).
- ⁶² Rafael Duharte Jiménez, "The 19th Century Black Fear," in Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, eds., *Afro-Cuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writing on Race, Politics and Culture* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1993), 40.
- ⁶³ Letter cited in Foner, *Antonio Maceo*, 61-62.
- ⁶⁴ *La Verdad*, May 4, 1878.
- ⁶⁵ This probably became especially so after the Ten Years War when Antonio Maceo was poised to lead the effort now known as the "The Little War," which took place in 1879. Maceo was working with Coleccio García who was based in New York. García, however, yielded to racist pressure and did not permit Maceo to lead the invasion unit. Many scholars have addressed this issue. In addition to Foner's work on Maceo see Fernando Ortiz, *Martí y Las Razas* (Havana, 1953), Fagen, "Antonio Maceo: Heroes, History and Historiography"; and Ferrer, "Social Aspects of Cuban Nationalism."
- ⁶⁶ Gerald Poyo, "The Cuban Experience in the United States, 1865-1940," *Cuban Studies*, 21 (1991): 22.
- ⁶⁷ Susan D. Greenbaum, "Afro-Cubans in Exile: Tampa, Florida, 1886-1984," *Cuban Studies*, 15 (Winter 1985): 78. Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City, Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1987).
- ⁶⁸ Foner, *Antonio Maceo*, 114.
- ⁶⁹ The letter is printed in full in Foner, *Antonio Maceo*, 115.
- ⁷⁰ Martí's article is included in José Martí, *Inside the Monster, Writings on the United States and American Imperialism*, edited by Philip Foner (London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 67-70.
- ⁷¹ Pérez, *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment*, 25.
- ⁷² *Parsons Weekly Blade*, May 2, 1896, cited in Gatewood, *Black Americans*, 17.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁷⁴ *Omaha Enterprise*, May 19, 1897, cited in Gatewood, *Black Americans*, 19.
- ⁷⁵ Edward Johnson, *History of Negro Soldiers in the Spanish American War and Other Items of Interest* (Raleigh, N.C.: Capital Printing Co., Printers and Binders, 1899), 25.
- ⁷⁶ Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, 179-236.
- ⁷⁷ *New York Age*, December 23, 1889.
- ⁷⁸ [Des Moines] *Iowa State Bystander*, May 20, 1898.
- ⁷⁹ [Kansas City] *American Citizen*, January 14, 1898.
- ⁸⁰ Gatewood, *Black Americans*, 170.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 165.
- ⁸² Gatewood quotes an editorial from the Army and Navy Journal (June 11, 1898): 166, which argued that Blacks would do well to settle in Cuba. The editor argued that although still "crude and imperfect" themselves, Black Americans could nonetheless take civilization to Cuba.
- ⁸³ Gatewood refers especially to Afro-Cuban journalists. *Black Americans*, 171.
- ⁸⁴ This was discussed at some length at the Negro Conventions before emancipation. See Howard Bell, *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions 1830-1864* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969).
- ⁸⁵ Gatewood, *Black Americans*, 171-172.
- ⁸⁶ Pérez, *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment*, 77.
- ⁸⁷ See Allan Nevin's biography of Fish, *Hamilton Fish, the Inner History of the Grant Administration* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1936), cited in Foner, *A History of Cuba*, II, 202.
- ⁸⁸ Pérez, *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment*, 57-8.
- ⁸⁹ In his classic text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon examines the psychological aspects

- of violence in the Algerian revolution. *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Ballantine Press, 1973). Takaki addresses the issue in his *Violence in the Black Imagination*.
- ⁹⁰ Richmond Planet, April 16, 23, 1898; The anti-imperialist sentiment grew within the Black community as the United States intervened in the Philippines.
- ⁹¹ Louis Pérez, Jr. "Politics, Peasants, People of Color: The 1912 'Race War' in Cuba Reconsidered," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 66:3 (1986), 511-514.
- ⁹² Pérez, "Politics, Peasants, People of Color," 528.
- ⁹³ After the Americans left, Afro-Cubans held demonstrations, created their own veterans groups, went on strike against employers who were replacing them with foreign workers, and demanded proportional representation in the security forces, public education, the post office and the customs service. See Aline Helg, "Afro-Cuban Protest: The Partido Independiente de Color, 1908-1912," *Cuban Studies*, 21 (1991): 106. A letter written by Black chaplain C. T. Walker printed in the *Augusta Chronicle*, December 30, 1898, described conflicts between American and Cuban soldiers. Reprinted in Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, 207.
- ⁹⁴ Thomas Orum, "The Politics of Color: The Racial Dimension of Cuban Politics During the Early Republican Years, 1900-1912," unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (New York University, 1975), 201; Tomás Fernandes Robaina, *El Negro En Cuba, 1902-1958* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 1990), 65.
- ⁹⁵ Aline Helg, "Afro-Cuban Protest," 107.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.
- ⁹⁷ Pérez, "Politics, Peasants, People of Color," 533.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 510.
- ⁹⁹ Pérez, "Politics, Peasants, People of Color," 537.
- ¹⁰⁰ C.B. Goodrich to M. H. Lewis, July 20, 1912, cited in Pérez, "Politics, Peasants, People of Color," 537.
- ¹⁰¹ Commanding Officer, U.S.S. Petrel, to secretary of the Navy, July 17, 1912, cited in Pérez, "Politics, Peasants, People of Color," 537. Orum in "The Politics of Color," 255, cites numerous United States Navy and government documents to arrive at this figure. David Helwig, "The Afro-American Press and U.S. Involvement in Cuba," *Mid-America: An Historical Review*, 72:2 (April-July 1990): 143.
- ¹⁰² A term used in an article on United States racism in Cuba, *Indianapolis Freeman* (January 8, 1910).
- ¹⁰³ Helwig, "The Afro-American Press," 143.
- ¹⁰⁴ Orum, "The Politics of Color," 256.
- ¹⁰⁵ Arturo Schomburg, "General Evaristo Estenoz," *Crisis* (July 1912), cited in Elinor Des Verney Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, A Biography* (Detroit: The New York Public Library and Wayne State University Press, 1989), 109; James B. Clark, "The Cuban Revolution," *Crisis* (October 1912).
- ¹⁰⁶ M. A. Pérez-Medina, "The Situation of the Negro in Cuba," in Nancy Cunard, ed., *Negro Anthology, 1931-1933* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 481.
- ¹⁰⁷ Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg*.
- ¹⁰⁸ Arturo Schomburg, "General Everest Estenoz," *Crisis* (July 1912).
- ¹⁰⁹ James B. Clark, "The Cuban Revolution," *Crisis* (October 1912).