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Owning the Revolution: Race, Revolution, and Politics from Havana to Miami, 1959–1963

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Looking back on the first few years after the Cuban revolution, Reynaldo Peñalver remembered the March, 1959 speech in which Fidel Castro first promised to end racial discrimination on the island. The sixty-eight year old Afro-Cuban recalled Castro's announcement that Cubans could dance with whomever they wanted as long as they danced with the revolution. That, he remembered, "was the end of the honeymoon [period] and the true start of the exodus."[1] Peñalver was referring to the 215,000 Cubans who left the country before 1963, choosing to go into political exile in the United States rather than support the nationalist revolution of the Twenty-sixth of July Movement (M 26-7) and its allies.[2] The reasons and motivations for the departure of these Cubans varied, and most scholars see their exit as a mixed reaction to economic and political events. Oral histories with black and *mulato* contemporaries, however, reveal that the exiles who left between 1959 and 1963 were overwhelmingly white and affluent Cubans who resented government plans to change society. As Peñalver's recollections suggest, the revolutionary government's measures to eliminate racial discrimination had a surprisingly potent impact for Cubans, regardless of skin color, whether they chose to stay on the island or leave for the United States.[3]

Cuba was still in the process of revolutionary change in the early 1960s when the first wave of exiles left the country. The nation had witnessed a series of political upheavals in the fifties, culminating in the overthrow of the dictatorship of President Fulgencio Batista on January 1, 1959. A coalition of diverse interests groups participated in defeating the unpopular U.S.-backed regime, with M 26-7 emerging as the leading organization. Castro's control was tenuous during the new government's first three years, and revolutionary leaders worked to stabilize their position by recruiting allies from the popular classes. Although Afro-Cubans composed nearly

one-third of the total population, their prospects for social mobilization during the Republic (1902-1958) had been limited.[4] Unlike the United States, Cuba had never legally sanctioned segregation. Yet informal systems rooted in nineteenth-century colonial and slave plantation practices dictated that black and white Cubans experienced very different realities. Cubans often attended separate and racially exclusive social clubs and recreational facilities. Educational opportunities were based on family prestige and the ability to pay the high costs of private and university schooling, leaving most Cubans of color attending poorly funded public schools, if they attended school at all. Despite Batista's appointment of some elite black and *mulato* Cubans to his cabinet, finally, most government placements, university posts, and supervisory positions in the country belonged to whites as well.[5] In March 1959, revolutionary leaders challenged these historic inequalities. To broaden their appeal to Afro-Cubans and respond to pressures from black and *mulato* intellectuals, the new leadership announced a campaign to eliminate racial discrimination, especially in relation to employment and education. This strategy opened a brief dialogue about racism among Cubans both on the island and in exile that coincided with the radicalization of the revolution.

Scholars explaining the multiple reasons Cubans went into exile often overlook the role of discourses about racial privilege.[6] Instead, they argue that the post-1959 government enacted a series of changes that fundamentally altered society to the point where many chose to leave even before the revolution's official commitment to a Marxist-Leninist ideology in April, 1961.[7] This scholarship highlights measures such as the Agrarian Reform and limits placed on rental prices, as well as early tensions with the United States, as factors distancing many middle- and upper-class Cubans from the new government. While each of these issues contributed to some Cubans' electing for exile, the explanation remains incomplete without an exploration of how anxieties over racial integration—especially fears about interracial intimacy—shaped the ways Cubans understood the 1959 revolution. This essay investigates this silence, building on Alejandro de la Fuente's observation that some whites "found it hard to adjust" to increased integration in the workplace, but had few opportunities to protest because the "revolution had created the dominant 'ideal'" that "revolutionaries could not be racists."[8] Exploring how various actors established this "ideal" by connecting racism and counterrevolution, this essay illuminates how and why Cubans interpreted and redeployed revolutionary racialized discourses both on the island and in exile. In so doing, it also uncovers the contradictions and consensus that often disappear in the imposed "gulf" between Havana and the south Florida city of Miami, where over half of the island's dissenters fled.[9]

Popular conceptions of Cubans living in Havana and Miami in the 1960s often resort to extremes: groups were either "revolutionary" or "counterrevolutionary," "racist" or "anti-racist." Yet these labels emerged from a particular historical moment and evolved from interactions among Cubans on the island and those in the

diaspora, structured as well by each group's relationship with the United States. This article tells a transnational history of these processes by highlighting how Cuban communities in Havana and Miami developed in opposition to each other in the decade after 1959. I build on Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof's insight that post-revolutionary Cubans inhabited a "transnational social field," and explore how doing so influenced Cuban discussions about race, on the island and in exile.[10] Cuban newspapers show that during the Cold War, just as U.S. officials had to manage race relations with an "international audience in mind," leaders in Cuba had to translate the social and political aspirations of the revolution for a transnational audience.[11] Revolutionary discourses focused on winning allies throughout the world and undermining critiques from exiles to offset the threat of armed intervention from the United States.[12] One way to do this was to highlight policies that benefitted Cubans of color, especially those policies that paralleled measures supported by contemporary global anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles. Meanwhile, exiles in Florida were influenced by Civil Rights and Cold War debates even as they carried particular memories of the island and its racial system with them. In the ninety miles between Havana and Miami, these debates and memories shifted to fit a new racial and national landscape as exiles deployed the rhetoric of anti-communism in their discursive struggle for Cuba and against Castro. The use of anti-communist rhetoric to contain Black civil rights claims was not new, having limited African American demands since just after World War II.[13] In many respects, being in Miami allowed exiles to create a new, heterotopic space—the Cuba they felt the revolution was destroying—in which certain privileged values could be re-constructed under the aegis of a government friendly to their cause.

Blacks and *mulatos* on the island were aware of the transnational power struggles occurring between island and exile leaderships, and responded, though historians tend to neglect both that understanding and the reactions it generated. Most of the literature on this period fails to explain why so few people of color went into exile during the first years of the revolution. Historian María Cristina García briefly suggests that the new leadership explicitly called critics who chose to leave "racists," to prevent a similar migration on the part of Afro-Cubans.[14] Labeling counterrevolutionary and exile groups racist not only kept some blacks and *mulatos* from leaving the island, however; it also provided people of African descent with a language for attacking lingering prejudicial practices in Cuba. Furthermore, establishing the link between counterrevolution and inequality in the early 1960s helped to build the enduring international reputation of the Cuban revolutionary government as anti-racist. A closer look at these debates over defining the revolution uncovers the ways in which the controversy was shaped by global historical processes, while simultaneously shaping the specific, local experiences of Cubans such as Reynaldo Peñalver.

March, 1959: Cuba's Plan to End Racial Discrimination

The state-sponsored campaign to eliminate racial discrimination began officially in March, 1959, in response to demands from Afro-Cuban groups that racial justice be included among other revolutionary projects.[15] Cuban history and interpretations of the past played a significant role in this discourse as revolutionary leaders, intellectuals, and citizens struggled to define post-Batista Cuba. The new government mobilized the legacies of Martí and Maceo to construct the revolution as the fulfillment of an interrupted historical legacy, to press for integration, and to demonstrate Afro-Cuban abilities. This strategy reveals the continued salience, in 1959, of the two independence heroes as fathers of the nation—so much so that Castro and other revolutionaries sought to portray themselves as the legitimate heirs of these icons. The *mulato* general Maceo, in particular, was a cultural signifier demonstrating the potential for Afro-Cuban inclusion in the nation because his legacy invoked a specific positive memory among Cubans, as we will see below.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating national discourses about race was a version that blamed the 1898 U.S. intervention for the failure of racial democracy in the republic. This tactic, a "new" version of the Cuban past, erased the historical role white Cubans played in limiting black and *mulato* social mobility in the twentieth century. By claiming that the most recent group of liberators shared the same ideas as long-canonized national heroes, revolutionary leaders also provided legitimacy for the project of confronting racism on the island.

Castro announced the most detailed plan for ending racial discrimination during a massive public rally on a Sunday evening in March, 1959. To thunderous applause, the young leader of the revolution described plans to educate black and white children together, build integrated recreational centers, and raise all Cubans as brothers.[16] Despite the applause, some white Cubans feared that Castro was encouraging racial mixing in the most intimate areas of life. Opponents asked, "What does Fidel want, that the white girls from the Yacht Club, go dancing with the blacks and the *mulatos* from the Club Atenas?"[17] In response to the rumors spread across the island that the new leaders intended black men to invade elite social clubs and dance with white women, revolutionary leaders and their supporters couched anti-discrimination policies in the language of social class and social justice.[18] They insisted on labor opportunities for Afro-Cubans, a less threatening form of integration for critics worried about social spheres. Castro emphasized labor, leaving the social question aside: "And I ask what difference is there between one injustice and another injustice, what difference is there between the *campesino* [farmer] without land, and the *negro* who is not given the opportunity to work, don't they both die equally of hunger, the *negro* who can't work and the *campesino* without land? And why does the revolution have the obligation to resolve the other injustices and not the obligation to resolve this one?"[19]

Later, in a widely broadcasted roundtable discussion, Castro vehemently denied that he was trying to force blacks and whites to dance with each other. He claimed that his talk the previous Sunday sought to address "the most grievous discrimination of them all, the discrimination keeping blacks from getting a job."[20] Both in these public speeches and in the Cuban press, revolutionary leaders established the campaign against racial discrimination as a fight for economic justice. In doing so, they diffused the emotions that race relations raised for many Cubans. By subsuming racial tensions into a matter of class, Cuban intellectuals and politicians tried to make whites more sympathetic to Afro-Cubans' plight, while allowing blacks to feel that their concerns were a key aspect of revolutionary doctrine.

Cold War and Civil Rights struggles allowed Cuban leaders to compare their progress against racial discrimination to U.S. failures to improve conditions for African Americans. Revolutionary leaders publically invited African-American tourists to the island, where they could experience "first class treatment—as a first class citizen." In a related gesture of solidarity during a visit to the United Nations, Cuban leaders stayed in a black hotel in Harlem.[21] The frequent appearance of images and editorials condemning lynching in the U.S. South also encouraged Cubans of color to appreciate that the revolution disavowed such behavior, even though lynching had not been a common component of anti-black violence in Cuba.[22] These gestures to the inconsistencies of North American democracy gave revolutionary leaders a moral weapon against the U.S. and a focal point for solidifying Afro-Cuban support. Calling attention to racial violence in the United States distanced the new government from the exile community in Miami, who, despite living in the midst of the Civil Rights movement in Florida, rarely mentioned any support for African American equality. Editorials in the exile newspaper *Patria*, for instance, labeled Castro's stay at the African American hotel in 1960 the "Harlem Show," claiming that the revolutionary leader's decision was "obviously an act to discredit and humiliate the United States in its own territory."[23]

Revolutionary discourses about race, however, also included certain contradictions that undermined their explicit anti-racist stance. Cuban authorities publically prescribed and valued only certain types of acceptable black contributions to the nation. Blacks were encouraged to participate in the revolution as loyal and grateful citizens. In a televised interview, Castro noted that some critics claimed that, "blacks had become *insoportable*" (unbearable, intolerable) since the announcement of plans to tackle racial discrimination. Instead of disagreeing with the label, the young leader responded, "blacks should be more respectful than before because they understood that the revolution was working to eliminate discrimination."[24] Even as statements such as these attempted to ease the anxieties of upper-class Cubans over radical social changes, they also reinforced racial hierarchies by asking Cubans of color to be grateful for integration. Similarly, the frequent repetition of headlines such as, "Not Blacks, but Citizens," and comments claiming to transform "*negritos* into Cuban children" demonstrate the strategic intentions of the new government.

They hoped to open a discussion about racism, "achieve" the elimination of discrimination by reforming blacks and *mulatos*, and then close these national conversations by declaring, "we are all Cubans."[25]

Afro-Cubans recognized these contradictions and negotiated these challenges in various ways. Some Afro-Cubans were hesitant to accept the interference by a mostly white government in their daily lives. In the Havana neighborhood of Las Yaguas, one of the slum areas targeted for reform and relocation, for example, some residents rejected the paternalistic attitudes of white revolutionary leaders who frowned not only on their poverty, but also their lifestyles and values.[26] Other blacks and *mulatos*, however, mobilized revolutionary racialized discourses to press for additional opportunities. After visits by African-American tourists, for example, Cubans of color expressed frustration at being denied entrance to the very tourist centers the government had heralded as perfect vacation destinations for black Americans. Afro-Cuban writer Nicolás Guillén addressed this contradiction. "It would be unfair to say that we are like in 1912 [Race War]," he wrote, "But the other extreme is equally false, that which . . . we have heard more than once recently, that racial discrimination does not exist 'anymore' in Cuba."[27] For Cubans such as Guillén, there was a clear discrepancy between the rhetoric proclaimed to and for African American visitors and the lived experiences of people of color on the island.

These contradictions disrupt the notion of a completely anti-racist post-1959 Cuban government. If anything, the racial stance assumed by revolutionary leaders struck a complicated balance between providing blacks and *mulatos* with tangible opportunities in the realm of education, health care, and employment, and limiting the ways blacks could participate in the nation. Cuban leaders encouraged blacks to join the revolution as faithful and passive citizens and were mystified when Afro-Cubans failed to accept this inactive role. In the case of black participants in the 1961 Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) invasion, transcripts of the interrogations tell a story of a puzzled and angry Castro demanding to know why an Afro-Cuban would attempt to reinstall a government that had supported racial discrimination:

Castro:	You have the audacity to . . . land here on the beaches of Playa Girón to fight the Revolution, but you were not allowed on the beaches for recreation. Nevertheless, you came together with that gentleman who never cared whether or not you were let into the club to bathe, as if the seawater could be stained by your skin color!
Black prisoner:	The fact is that I did not come to Cuba out of considerations of whether or not I could be allowed on the beach . . .
Castro:	Very well, that is not the point . . . [28]

Here, national discourses highlighted that white leaders expected black clients to be appreciative of revolutionary integrationist policies, while misunderstanding that Cubans of color might have their own independent political ideas. Such attitudes frustrated both Afro-Cubans and African Americans. Among these were intellectuals such as Juan Betancourt, Carlos Moore, and Robert F. Williams, who interpreted such interactions as evidence of an underlying belief in black inferiority on the part of white leaders. Ultimately, constructing the campaign to eliminate racial discrimination around the tropes of parent/child or state/client relationships meant that the campaign would end well shy of its lofty goal, with the leadership nonetheless able to proclaim it a success. Despite these paradoxes, Cuban leaders did offer Afro-Cubans certain tangible results such as national literacy campaigns, added employment opportunities, and access to previously private (white) spaces. These reforms reinforced prevailing narratives of the revolutionary state as anti-racist.

Racial Anxieties and Resistance to Integration

Despite the government's cautious language in the campaign against racial discrimination, some Cubans were threatened by the opening of private beaches, the integration of social clubs, and the nationalization of private schools. They criticized government integration projects vehemently. Political scientist Richard R. Fagen correctly emphasizes the important role played by the perceived difference between the new and the old Cuba in the decision of some exiles to leave the island: "The rejection of this new way of life was profoundly affected by prior experiences and by allegiance to the old way of life. *Comparisons* as well as *deprivations* are at the core of exile perceptions and motivations."[29] Revolutionary policies promoting racial integration in schools and the workplace contributed to the view held by some middle- and upper-class Cubans that the emerging "new" Cuba was radically different from the "old," ultimately pushing some Cubans into exile.

Prior to 1959, most well-to-do Cubans sent their children to private institutions for schooling. These establishments educated predominantly white, middle- and upper-middle-class students, with the exception of the occasional wealthy *mulato*. Opening educational centers to all Cubans was one of the radical social changes implemented by the new government, beginning in 1959. Marta, a white woman from the well-to-do neighborhood of Vedado, was then a seventh-grader at Ruston Academy, an elite institution for the children of North American and Cuban businessmen, diplomats, and government officials.[30] As she remembered, "I spent my whole life in this American school and there was not a single black or *mulato*." After the revolution, she recounted, children began to be absent from school, more and more everyday. She quickly learned that this meant that their families had left for the United States in opposition to the revolution. The Ministry of Education nationalized Ruston in 1961, along with other private educational facilities, and began to require that all Cuban children to go to public schools. Marta said that for her this

was like leaving a "cocoon." "My old school was beautiful. I only had twenty-four students in my class. But, after, in my new school, there were seventy students in one class and lots of blacks and *mulatos*. Many people left Cuba because they did not want to mix with them." Despite rumors that Castro was communist and anti-Catholic, Marta's parents remained on the island because of their support of the revolution and their reluctance to begin a new life in the United States. She admits that it was difficult to interact with people from different racial and social backgrounds in her new school and in other revolutionary organizations.[31] Her story underscores the anxieties experienced by some Cubans during the early years of the revolution. Racial integration in the realm of education was problematic to Cubans such as Marta's peers. This discomfort led a number of Cubans to criticize the opportunities provided to people of African descent and ultimately to leave the island.

In Santa Clara, in January, 1959, two social clubs, one white and one black, planned to host their annual parties to commemorate the birth of Martí. This they would do in separate locations—a tradition of informal segregation stemming from the nineteenth century. As a sign of the social changes, however, revolutionary governor Calixto Sánchez intervened, proclaiming that that the two groups should celebrate together. He then invited the black social club to the Liceo, where the white group had planned to meet. According to the Afro-Cuban newspaper *Adelante*, the governor's actions were met with "happiness by some, shock by others, and the revulsion of many."[32] Haitian author René Depestre was in exile in Havana during the early part of 1959 and noted similar reactions to Castro's speech on ending racial discrimination: "I remember that the speech was very well received by the majority of white revolutionaries . . . but all of the bourgeois whites, most of the white petite bourgeoisie (and the comfortable *mulatos*) . . . panicked as if an atomic bomb were coming."[33] Like the horror expressed at the possibility of interracial dancing, these reactions reveal early resistance to revolutionary plans to create a new and integrated Cuba. While Cubans of all colors and classes had interacted previously in certain situations, the idea of sharing "private" social spaces (beaches, clubs, recreational facilities, etc.) with working-class blacks was disconcerting to some whites and *mulatos*.

Occasionally the rejection of anti-racist revolutionary policies was framed in time-worn discourses of excessive black male sexuality versus white female chastity. These suggested that white women were helpless victims incapable of defending themselves, while marking black men as sexually aggressive opportunists, eager to exploit revolutionary plans to offer Afro-Cubans new employment and education opportunities. One example of this hysteria was reflected in concerns expressed by the opposition group Unidad Revolucionario (UR). According to UR, white women refused to be treated by black doctors because of their concerns that Afro-Cuban men would "use revolutionary doctrine as an excuse for becoming more and more familiar and bold."[34] The fears that Castro wanted black and white Cubans to dance

together emphasized precisely these anxieties over white women coming into certain types of intimate social contact with black men.[35]

White Cubans were not alone in their adverse responses to revolutionary plans to integrate the island. Haitian observer Depestre noted that Castro's racial politics did not only cause panic among some white dissenters, but also alarmed economically comfortable *mulatos*.[36] One area of discord involved the future of black and *mulato* social clubs. As the new government began to integrate and abolish elite white societies and recreational facilities, it faced the question of what to do with similar organizations for people of African descent. These mutual aid societies had existed since the late-nineteenth century and served as spaces for middle- and upper-class Afro-Cubans not only to gather and network, but also to push for social and political change. Some club members supported their organizations' dissolution. Afro-Cuban journalists Roger Fumero and Manuel Cuéllar Vizcaíno argued that given the revolution's plans to eliminate racial discrimination and create integrated facilities for all Cubans, there was no longer a need for black clubs.[37] Others disagreed, insisting that Afro-Cuban societies were ideal venues for assisting new government plans to create a racially inclusive Cuba.[38] Eventually, the new government decided to eliminate black social clubs along with white ones. This decision failed to acknowledge that black and *mulato* clubs served different purposes than traditionally white ones and arose out of distinct historical experiences. Not dealing openly with the reasons Afro-Cuban clubs might still have been necessary was a missed opportunity for revolutionary leaders to listen to—rather than silence—the voices of Cubans of color. Closing black social clubs alienated some elite Afro-Cubans and fueled counter-government sentiments among blacks and *mulatos* who disagreed with the condescending nature of a new state that acted as if it knew what was most appropriate for Cubans of color.

Afro-Cuban lawyer Juan Betancourt, director of the Federation of Black Societies, criticized the closure of historically black clubs and the publicized integration of select white spaces as a ploy to deceive Afro-Cubans into believing that they had received advantages from the revolution. After leaving the island for exile in 1961, Betancourt argued that instead of taking pride in "being allowed to patronize previously 'all-white' places," black Cubans should ask why the leaders of the revolutionary government were mostly white.[39] As late as 2010, Berta, a middle-class black woman from a small town outside of Havana, was still unhappy over the 1960s' closing of black societies. Comparing photographs of the local black club her parents had attended before the revolution to images of that same club after its "destruction" in the 1960s, she lamented that dismantling the clubs had left a vacuum in her neighborhood.[40] Other Cubans described the integration of the white clubs as *congri*, a Cuban rice dish prepared with a small amount of black beans, to critique a partial integration that added only a few dots of black.[41] The conflict over Afro-Cuban social clubs, as well as the concern among some middle-and upper-class people of color about the lack of blacks and *mulatos* in high-level government

positions highlights fractures in black support for the supposedly pro-black revolutionary government. Some people of African descent wanted the government to fulfill its promises of equity, but not at the expense of their racial subjectivity. At times, this meant supporting programs that allowed equal access to employment opportunities, while at other moments this meant opposing the closure of Afro-Cuban social facilities. Most Cubans who chose to stay on the island negotiated the rapidly changing society day by day and found themselves more supportive than critical of government policies overall. But for others, including Betancourt or the families who fled Ruston Academy, dissenting opinions over racial politics could be decisive. They also often incurred a toxic label: counterrevolutionary.

Racism as Counterrevolution

As the revolution progressed, national discourses sought to distinguish between "true" revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries. Historian Marifeli Pérez-Stable notes that during the 1960s, "the revolution polarized Cuba and disallowed neutrality. *Con Cuba o contra Cuba* was the battle cry."[42] Though often overlooked by scholars, a central component of this conversation was whether Cubans agreed with the campaign to eliminate racial discrimination. According to national discourses, revolutionaries supported plans to rid the island of racial inequity, while counterrevolutionaries did not.[43] Being labeled a "counterrevolutionary" carried considerable consequences. This was a significant shift, for while pre-1959 ideologies of "racelessness" and the legacy of the wars of independence might have led some Cubans to call the perpetuators of racial inequality "un-patriotic," this label had few tangible penalties. Enthusiasm for the 1959 revolution and for Cuban sovereignty, however, meant that those who were seen as opposed to the revolution faced pressures to conform, remain silent, or leave the island. Further, the concept applied to both white and black Cubans. As one author noted, discriminatory practices "are, in the language of the moment, also counterrevolutionary practices. We have to continue as if we had an enemy in every racist, white or black."[44] Afro-Cubans leaders who seemed particularly interested in their individual advancement were labeled "opportunistic" or "counterproductive."[45]

Cuban leaders linked racism to counterrevolution to unify supporters and charge opposition groups with failure to accompany the new national project into the present day. Castro asserted publicly, "if on top of the division between rich and poor, we divide ourselves between black and white . . . we will fragment into a million pieces, and the oppressors will defeat us and we will return to the past."[46] An Afro-Cuban newspaper similarly condemned racial discrimination by calling establishments that refused to serve blacks and *mulatos* as places where the "sentiment of slave discrimination" still lived.[47] Clearly there *was* fragmentation, and some businesses *did* discriminate; these statements revealed that the island's legacy of racial tension was still capable of dividing its people. Revolutionary leaders sought to diminish this

possibility by maintaining that whoever succumbed to past ideas was an enemy of the revolution. A *mulato* representative of the revolutionary army, Jorge Risquet, accused critics of "using Machiavellian principals of 'Divide and Conquer' to destroy the revolution by dividing Cubans based on skin color." Calling these critics counterrevolutionaries, he stated that the "revolution does not have a color, except the olive green color of the revolutionary army."[48] In each of these references Cubans publicly labeled counterrevolutionaries as oppressors, slave owners, and racists. This language was meant to discredit dissenters while suggesting to Afro-Cubans that the new government would protect their interests. Within such discursive parameters, it became impossible to disagree with certain revolutionary policies without being labeled a racist. Similarly, it was also unfitting to be a revolutionary leader or supporter and to continue to support (at least publicly) privileges based on skin color.

The case of Amaury Fraginals, the leader of the electrical worker's union, illustrates this point. In February of 1960, a controversy erupted when Cubaneleco, the private club associated with the electrical union, refused to allow Afro-Cubans entrance into its recreational facilities. Cubans vocally opposed this situation, using the language of the moment to paint Fraginals and the group's other leaders as racist counterrevolutionaries. One editorial accused the union of "not supporting the revolution" because it continued to discriminate against Afro-Cubans.[49] Another charged Fraginals with being "out of compliance" with the new goals of Cuba and committing "treason" against the revolution.[50] A single word, "discriminator," accompanied a photograph of the union leader to emphasize his rejection of the campaign to end racial inequality.[51] Ten months later, Fraginals was accused of plotting against the government and participating in bombings of critical electrical facilities. He and his associates fled to Miami to avoid imprisonment.[52]

Discourses linking racism to counterrevolution allowed Afro-Cubans to pressure local authorities to make additional reforms. In the central province of Villa Clara, members of the Socialist Party (PSP) claimed that counterrevolutionaries were continuing the colonial custom of having whites and blacks walk on different sides of the park (*el paseo*). In a letter to local authorities, the two men said that they planned to "unmask these counterrevolutionaries . . . as enemies of the revolution, and that they wanted to encourage the [town] Commissioners not to march backwards in their noble and just cause of building a new park."[53] This situation highlights the reach of racialized revolutionary discourses into the Cuban mainland; it also marks the new possibility for citizens to use revolutionary language and tropes publicly to critique those who continued to practice racial discrimination.

Even as emerging narratives about acceptable revolutionary behavior developed, disjunctures between national rhetoric and local practices, including acts of leaders affiliated with the new government, undermined the state's anti-racist claims. Around the same time as the Fraginals Cubaneleco controversy, young editors in the student newspaper *Combate 13 de Marzo* expressed anger over the

disappearance of a new *telenovela* (television soap opera) in which black and white artists collaborated. The author of the editorial blamed the cancellation of the program on "the caprices of counterrevolutionaries and reactionaries," and implied that only enemies of the project to end discrimination would terminate a show that fostered racial cooperation and broadcast its benefits.[54] Similarly, Afro-Cuban poet Georgina Herrera remembered that racism continued during the first years of the revolution at the radio station *Radio Progreso*, where she worked. On one occasion, the directors of the station worried that she and three colleagues were plotting a conspiracy because they were planning to air a show about the Caribbean poet Aimé Césaire and all of them were of African descent. After a tense meeting with the directors, the controversial radio story, following the integrated soap opera, was cancelled. "A group of blacks were not able to get together to do art and celebrate a black figure, but the whites, they could," Herrera remembered.[55]

The notion of racist activities as counterrevolutionary created a complex relationship between many Afro-Cuban observers and the new government. Revolutionary discourses provided the space to speak publicly about segregated practices such as divisions in provincial parks, but if "revolutionaries" cancelled a popular television program or innovative radio segment it was difficult to voice critique because upper-level leaders' revolutionary commitment was supposed to be unquestionable. In these cases, blacks and *mulatos* were expected to be "respectful" and withhold critique of lingering ambiguities.

Nevertheless, during the first three years of the revolution, many Cubans came to see racial discrimination and segregation as counterrevolutionary. The sources suggest that once national discourses put public racism into the category of counterrevolution, the issue became a salient marker for the radicalization of the revolution. Moreover, once racism came to be accepted as a counterrevolutionary offense, the term "racist" was used to undercut dissenters. The choice of the word "racist" reveals the intensity of racialized revolutionary discourses and the young leadership's commitment, at least publicly, to racial equality.

Discourses about Racial Discrimination in Exile

As other scholars have noted, Cubans went into exile for a variety of complex and diverse reasons, many of which were connected to the idea that the island and culture they knew and loved were being threatened by the revolution. A majority of this opposition moved to South Florida—a region of the United States with its own pressing racial struggles.[56] To say that racial conflicts composed a part of the transnational history of why some Cubans moved to the United States and how a particular type of politics developed in Miami does not discount other factors such as anti-communism or fear of radical change. Exploring how exiled Cubans participated in national debates over the definition of the revolution and the role racial politics should play in that concept, does, however, add another dimension to a story that is

often told only in terms of economic concerns and explains why so many people in the contemporary moment imagine the Cuban revolution as anti-racist and the exile community as racist.

Deciding to leave the island of their birth was not an easy decision for any Cuban. And while immigration to the United States had been a pattern in Cuba since the late nineteenth century, most families moving north in response to Castro's revolution imagined that their relocation would be temporary.[57] One sign of this was that exiled Cubans in the early 1960s frequently responded to events occurring in Cuba and issued commentary on a variety of revolutionary actions. Although these exchanges rarely consisted of bodies travelling back and forth between Havana and Miami, contentious debates over who owned the revolution reveal how Cuban ideologies and concepts transcended national boundaries. Rather than seeing themselves as counterrevolutionary or racist, Cubans in the United States often imagined that they were the "true" revolutionaries. The most obvious area of dispute between the two communities was over the economic policies of the new government, although exile discussions of racial discrimination highlighted the ways that conflict also stemmed from diverging views of what Cuba was and should be. Notably, exiles dismissed the existence of racial problems in Cuba and claimed that Castro had invented them to solidify his power. Despite these efforts, the overall silence among Cubans in Miami about the needs of Afro-Cubans, their inaction regarding social justice struggles in the United States, and their favored status with the U.S. government led them to lose the discursive battle in Cuba and ultimately any claim to anti-racist politics.

Fewer than three percent of the Cubans who immigrated to Miami were black or *mulato*.[58] As a result, the exile community was not compelled to acknowledge the demands of Afro-Cubans or work to integrate blacks and *mulatos* into their social spaces. The population demographics in the Miami neighborhoods in which Cubans settled allowed the exile community to remain silent in regards to the campaign to eliminate racial privileges occurring on the island. By recreating an enclave community composed of mostly white, middle and upper class residents, Cubans in south Florida constructed an idealized space where racial and class discrimination was an aberration of the distant past. In this space, they could entertain nostalgic memories of Cuba because they did not have to experience the realities some working class, black, and *mulato* Cubans lived on the island.

That nostalgia was reflected in absence of substantive discourse on race in the exile press. The initial platform of the Movimiento de Recuperación Democratica (MRR), founded in 1959, outlined the organization's goals, such as restoring democracy to Cuba, fair Agrarian Reform, and freedom of the press. Notably absent from the document was any direct reference to the need for racial equality.[59] Similarly, Unidad Revolucionario, a clandestine counter-government group publishing in both Havana and Miami, demanded freedom of religion, travel, and work, without mentioning the need to equalize opportunity among Cubans of differing skin

colors.[60] Rather than addressing racial issues, the leaders of these groups focused on fighting what they perceived as communist activities on the island and emphasized the need to restore democracy and other rights that they saw as being withheld by the revolutionary leadership.

Like critics of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, Miami Cubans framed calls for racial reforms in Cuba as communist.[61] By calling for the restoration of "democracy" to the island without mentioning the need to disrupt existing class and racial privileges in Cuba, exile discourses sought to define the goals of the revolution narrowly. For Cubans in Miami, the revolution had little to do with ending racial discrimination, opening private schools and beaches, or dismantling exclusive social clubs. Rather, exile discourses highlighted the need to restore freedom of the press and hold elections, changes that seemed to offer anti-Castro groups the best opportunity to regain control of the island. As historian Pérez-Stable notes, "their sudden appreciation of democracy too clearly belied their primary concern that the new Cuba would not attend to their interests."[62] By focusing their critiques of the revolutionary leadership on its failure to hold elections, exiles—like Civil Rights critics in the United States—showed their willingness to mobilize pro-democracy, anti-communist discourses at the expense of a racial justice project.

Conversations in exile at times paralleled those on the island in that both constantly referenced national heroes from the nineteenth-century wars for independence to legitimize plans for a new Cuba. The significance of Martí and Maceo to so many Cubans and the legacy of racial harmony coming out of independence struggles meant that leaders on the island and in exile had to engage with these ideas in defining the revolution. The predominantly white exile community, however, did not conclude that the founding fathers of the republic demanded the dismantling of racial inequality. Using popular quotations from speeches by Martí, exiled Cuban leaders planned to return and build an island "with all and for the good of all," free of the class and racial conflicts they perceived as *created* by Castro and his supporters.[63] In fact, some exile writers accused Castro of "offending Martí," and others, similarly, charged, "although the new government might dishonor Maceo's memory, we will honor it appropriately."[64] On the anniversary of Maceo's death, the editors of *Bohemia Libre* complained that the independence fighter must be "rolling in his grave" as a result of the communist infiltration in Cuba.[65] A scathing criticism of revolutionary *Comandante* Juan Almeida, a prominent Afro-Cuban in the new leadership, accused the commander of wrongly "thinking [that] he was the Maceo of today." Calling Almeida Castro's "puppet" and "clown," reporter José Correa Espino refused comparisons made in Cuba between the revolution's popular *mulato* leader and the beloved "bronze titan" of the nineteenth century.[66]

Exile charges that the revolutionary government had betrayed national ideologies reveal the continued salience of the legacies of Martí and Maceo. Both pro-revolution and counter-government groups on and off the island fought for

ownership over the memories of the two men hailed as the founding fathers of the nation. In doing so, they participated in a transnational debate over the meaning of "racelessness" and the interpretation of Cuban history. In Cuba, the revolution believed that providing tangible opportunities for working class blacks and *mulatos* through national social reforms best fulfilled the promises Martí and Maceo symbolized. Exiles argued that only democratic governance and race-blind policies in which "we are all Cubans" could satisfy the dreams of nineteenth-century patriots. It is notable that both groups were influenced and limited by the same historical discourses about racelessness. They differed over implementation and accused each other of betraying shared goals, but ultimately each position remained wedded to a raceless Cuba. The distinction lay in the process of getting there. Revolutionary discourses wanted to create a new Cuba through social reforms that would solve racism with a more equitable distribution of resources. Exile leaders romanticized a pre-Castro island where the unpleasantness of racial and social inequalities was not discussed.

The stance on racial discrimination held by the anti-Castro community in exile was visible to Afro-Cubans. Exiled Afro-Cuban Betancourt described the organizations in Miami as "short sighted" groups, composed of "white Cubans, members of the upper and middle class" who "do not exhibit the slightest interest in the fate of the Cuban Negro." Noting that black and *mulato* Cubans were "never mentioned in their pronouncements," he noted sharply that "none of the exile groups have committed themselves to a non-discrimination program should they get power."[67] This black Cuban launched his critique of white exile groups while living in the United States, but notably not in Miami, providing insight into the politics of race and place for Cuban exiles. Afro-Cubans who disagreed with the new government were less likely to move to the United States, a country known for its own racial tensions, but even fewer went to the South, reflecting the perception that there was little space for concerns about equality within the Miami exile community. Like Betancourt, who moved his family to New York instead of Miami, the few Cubans of color who came to the United States before 1963 commonly relocated to the North both because of an awareness of the exile community's silence on racial issues and the prevalent segregation in the South.[68] Cuban revolutionary discourses claiming ownership over plans to end racial discrimination, coupled with language depicting opposition groups as racists, helped to create this image of Miami's Little Havana, especially among black and *mulato* Cubans. The absence of meaningful discussion on racial equality within a large part of the Miami community did little to change this view, reinforcing the new government's claim that Miami exiles were unconcerned with racism and classism in Cuba.

Linkages between Castro, Communism, and Race in Exile

Miami Cuban's loving nostalgia for their island home conflicted with the revolutionary government's portrait of exiles' disdain and rejection of the "Pearl of the Antilles." Further contrast was the exiles' portrayal of Cuba before M 26-7 and Castro's rise to power as a racial paradise, a component of a larger campaign by the exile community to show that the situation in Cuba after 1959 was worse than it had been before. In the discursive battle waged across the Straits of Florida, both the history and the future of Cuba were at stake. Leaders in exile romanticized pre-Castro Cuba as a place where all citizens interacted in a friendly atmosphere, casting the new government as betrayer of the nation.

Cubans living in exile responded to the revolutionary government's public campaign to end racial discrimination by arguing that the 1959 revolution invented tensions between racial groups and classes.[69] Some groups claimed that Castro had created a nation of "poor against rich, and blacks against whites." Others said that pre-Castro Cuba had once been "a country known for its happiness and generosity," but was "now steeped in hate."[70] These arguments fed the (still widely-accepted) narrative that racial tensions did not exist before Castro came to power. An oral history of an elderly group of exile Cubans, many born at the turn of the twentieth century, expressed this popular perspective that the island experienced racial unity during the fifty years prior to the revolution. These observers remembered a racially integrated and harmonious island where "relations between whites and blacks in Cuba were very cordial" and "racism did not exist because many people of color had white friends." While the interviewees admitted that black and white Cubans had attended separate social clubs and walked on different sides of the park, each of them, including an Afro-Cuban grandfather, maintained that racism did not exist on the island before they left and that blacks were appreciated and respected.[71] Tacit in these reminiscences was nostalgia for a time when Afro-Cubans knew their place and were not "*insoportable*" (unbearable, intolerable) as they became after 1959.

A 1960 exile editorial titled "The Myth of the Classes" argued that Castro transformed after 1959 from the leader of the "bourgeoisie" to the "redeemer of the proletariat and the friend of the blacks."[72] Rather than a positive portrayal of Castro as friendly, this editorial actually highlighted the new leader's supposed choice of one group (blacks) over another (whites). Similarly, the political cartoon, "Blood of the Free Press," from an October 1960 edition of *7 Días del Diario de la Marina en el exilio,* showed a darkly-shaded Castro attacking a surprised white woman whose dress bore the name of the Havana newspaper, *Diario de la Marina* (see Figure 1). The caption, "the 'liberation' movement continues" is a sarcastic jab at what the editors saw as the revolution's attack on freedom of expression.[73] But even more than an attack on the revolution's censorship policies, this cartoon illustrates how Castro's body became conflated with his anti-racist rhetoric. For some exiles, the young leader had so defined himself as the "redeemer and friend of the blacks" that they started to

represent him as black—and with all the gendered and sexual overtones of the most toxic racist tropes of the day.

Figure 1. "Sangre de prensa libre"

Facha, "Sangre de prensa libre" (Blood of the free press), 7 *Días del Diario de la Marina en el exilio* (Miami), October 1, 1960. Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, Florida.

Although these were the most prevalent attitudes in the Miami community, at times a few exiles acknowledged directly that blacks and *mulatos* had been treated unfairly, and promised that a better future lay ahead in Cuba once Castro was deposed. An editorial published in *Bohemia Libre* pledged that, "after the disappearance of the red terror . . . we are not going to permit the rise of the white terror."[74] Others argued that rather than oppose Juan Almeida because he was black, Cubans needed to criticize him for being a communist.[75] In this way, some exiles conceded that racial prejudices existed, but countered that after the defeat of communism, leaders in Miami would be open to talking about these issues. Still, these gestures were presented almost always as secondary to the primary goal of overthrowing the Castro government and its communist supporters. In the exile community, the familiar notion prevailed that it was not yet the appropriate time to address the situation of Cubans of African descent. The May 1960 political cartoon, "Street Talk," highlights this idea (see Figure 2). In the sketch, a caricature of a black Cuban discusses politics with a white Cuban, saying, "Look doc, the bad guy here is not the white, nor is it the black . . . It is the red."[76] While problematic even in its depiction of Afro-Cubans, this cartoon underscores the move frequently made in the exile press to turn away from racism and toward communism as the "bad guy" plaguing the island. This emphasis on anti-communism at the expense of racial equality limited the exile community's ability to reach out to Afro-Cubans or African Americans and reinforced the belief that Miami Cubans were unconcerned with ending racial discrimination.

Figure 2. "Diálogo callejero"

"Diálogo Callejero" (Street Talk), *Patria: el periódico de Martí, sin Martí* (Miami), May 10, 1960. Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, Florida.

DIALOGO CALLEJERO
—Mire, docto, el malo aquí no es el blanco, ni es el negro.
—¿Y quien es?
—El "rojo" . . .

People of color in Cuba, as well as some Afro-Cubans in the United States, came to interpret this rhetoric as a denial of their ongoing struggle for equal opportunity. Betancourt notes that "those who affirm that the condemnation of the ills of the Negro and the demand for their elimination divides Cubans and creates racial problems are either naïve or unconsciously anti-Negro."[77] The prevailing "not yet" attitude among the Miami leadership estranged many blacks and *mulatos,* like Betancourt, who felt it revealed hidden resistance to ending racial discrimination. For him and other Afro-Cubans it was unacceptable to postpone addressing racial inequalities until after the establishment of a non-communist Cuba.

Cuban exile attitudes toward African Americans did little to bridge racial divides. Revolutionary leaders had been successful, initially, in attracting African American support to the new government, and exiles won back few friends. They were more likely to alienate U.S. blacks who encountered their privileged position in the South Florida racial hierarchy. True, some residents of the city were among those who welcomed the Cuban exiles and took pride in being able to play a role in the Cold War fight against communism.[78] But over time Miamians, especially blacks, encountered exiles' racism, came to resent the federal resources provided disproportionally to exiles over native working-class groups, and felt that they were losing jobs to incoming Cubans.[79] The revolutionary government encouraged further animus. As coverage about the arrival of Cubans displaced headlines about Civil Rights in Miami, Castro's administration openly denounced racial violence in the United States and invited African Americans to visit the island as a part of special tourist delegations.[80] The disjuncture between the exiles' disassociation with U.S. blacks and Castro's recruitment of African Americans signaled a fracture in the two Cuban groups' concepts of revolution.

As the recipients of nearly four times more financial aid than African Americans, Cuban exiles benefitted from their status as Cold War refugees and from the fact that nearly all of the early arrivals were middle or upper class, white professionals. When African Americans complained that Cuban exiles were taking jobs and resources from working-class U.S. citizens, Cubans denied these accusations and claimed that they were fighting for the same rights as any other upwardly-mobile group in the city. However, exiles could not deny their association with the U.S. government. As the beneficiaries of nearly 158 million dollars in refugee aid between 1961 and 1966, Cubans in Miami were partnered with the U.S. government in ways that revolutionary leaders never would be.[81] Ultimately, it is not surprising that the Cuban exile community did not attack the racial hierarchies of U.S. South given that exiles gained materially from sponsorship by the U.S. government. So while Cuban discourses on the island might have exaggerated racial violence in the United States to discourage Afro-Cuban migration and highlight the revolution's integration policies, their attention to these areas exceeded the lofty nods to racelessness heralded by the exile community. Together this rhetoric contributed to the narrative

that those who elected to go into exile were the white racists Reynaldo Peñalver remembered.

Conclusions

Accepted notions of the Cuban revolution as anti-racist and the exile community/U.S. government (the two are almost always linked) as racist have endured for over fifty years and remain a part of twenty-first century political discourses. When African American representatives from the Congressional Black Caucus traveled to the island to meet with Raúl and Fidel Castro in April 2009 they built on historical relationships between Cubans and U.S. blacks, but they also became participants in the ongoing debate over which country had achieved racial equality.[82] Controversy over the appropriateness of their visit and what it represented for U.S.-Cuban relations spread as writers for various newspapers and blogs supported, questioned, and attacked the meeting between the two groups.[83] In an implicit comparison with Cuba, Fidel Castro reported that a U.S. Congress member openly admitted: "despite Obama's electoral victory, the American society continues to be racist."[84] Representatives Emanuel Cleaver and Barbara Lee immediately denied making any such statement, but, this did not prevent critics from claiming that the CBC was "smitten with Castro" and ignoring his government's "ostracism of blacks."[85] The words of the Congressmen might have been misinterpreted, but it is still telling to encounter this dispute over which country was more or less racist. Even in present-day disagreements between Cuba and the United States, the experiences of Afro-Cubans are often mobilized to critique or praise one government over the other. This exchange points to some of the same contradictions found in the early conversations in the 1960s, namely that leaders in both national spaces invoked the nameless, faceless figures of Cubans of color, not individual voices, as markers for political battles between the two countries. A transnational history of racial discourses from Havana to Miami reveals how these competing vocabularies of race and racelessness emerged as the two communities developed in opposition to each other.

In Havana, the revolutionary government began a brief but public campaign to eliminate racial discrimination between 1959 and 1961. A central component of this plan included defining racism as counterrevolutionary and establishing the ideal that revolutionaries could not be racist. Integrating previously white-only spaces, such as private schools, beaches, and recreational facilities also played a significant role in the new government's efforts to incorporate Cubans of color into the revolution. The prevalence of paternalistic attitudes, the closing of Afro-Cuban social clubs without an appreciation of their role in previous fights for racial equality, and the expectation of gratitude from black and *mulato* Cubans undermined the revolution's anti-racist claims. Nevertheless, the new government's racial discourses provided some tangible opportunities and languages for blacks and *mulatos* to challenge situations when national programs failed to achieve their integrationist goals.

Not all Cubans were comfortable with these changes. The evidence suggests that for some white and middle- to upper-class Cubans, revolutionary racial programs threatened traditional social hierarchies and created anxieties over racial mixing. These fears influenced Cuban decisions to go into exile and aided in the creation of a particular exile politics as Cubans carried their apprehensions about the revolution with them to South Florida. In Miami, Cubans sought to create a heterotopic space that embraced the aspects of pre-revolutionary Cuba that they loved, valued and remembered. Within the context of the Cold War, this meant appropriating anti-communist language even before Cuba's official declaration of Marxist-Leninism and distancing themselves from African-American Civil Rights struggles. But, it also meant redefining Cuban history to erase previous racial tensions and inequality. With claims that Castro had invented racial divisions and was befouling Martí's vision of racelessness, exiles invoked a romanticized past to legitimize their mostly white, U.S.-supported enclave. Their ideas, however, could not compete with the popular campaign to combat racial discrimination occurring on the island. Few Afro-Cubans went into exile during these early years, and those who did complained of being alienated from the leading groups in Miami.

Yet for all the ways that racial politics contributed to the emerging break between the two communities in the 1960s, a transnational history of conversations about race from Havana to Miami also reveals certain similarities. Both groups fought for ownership of the concept of revolution and struggled to re-define Cuban history to fit their goals and needs. In Cuba, that meant blaming the U.S. intervention in 1898 for bringing racism to the island, whereas in Miami, Castro was the racist villain. Such divisions did not apply only to conflicts over race and racism. The two communities frequently used similar notions in debates over economic and political policies, thereby participating in a moral battle over the ownership of a revolutionary vision of Cuba. Despite these differences, Cuban leaders in Havana and Miami eventually came to the same conclusion about racial politics. By the end of 1961, the revolutionary government, like the exile community, silenced conversations about race and racism in favor of "unity." The declaration of the socialist character of the revolution in April 1961 and the need to defend Cuba against another U.S. attack after the Bay of Pigs invasion pushed the divisive question of racial integration out of headlines in Havana. Mirroring the exiles' choice to foreground anti-communist goals over anti-racist programs, the revolutionary government transferred the campaign for racial equality off the island and onto global anti-colonial struggles. Ultimately, taking a close look at transnational racial discourses reveals how debates between revolutionary and exile leaders imposed what has come to be an accepted "gulf" between the two communities. In many ways, however, in both places the ensuing silence about racial equality and the pretense to know what was best for Afro-Cubans suggests more similarities than differences across the ninety miles separating the island and Key West.

Notes

[1] Reynaldo Peñalver Moral, "Under the Streetlamp: A Journalist's Story," in Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, eds., *Afro-Cuban Voices: On Race and Identity in Contemporary Cuba* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000), 48.

[2] Richard R. Fagen, *Cubans in Exile: Disaffection and the Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), 17.

[3] In this paper, the terms "African-descended," "people of color," "Afro-Cuban," "*mulato*," and "black" will be used interchangeably to discuss the descendants of Africans living in Cuba. This choice parallels the terms employed in the primary documents, where the words *"negro," "mulato," "raza de color,"* and *"gente de color"* are seen most frequently.

[4] In Cuba, tension between different racial groups has a long and painful history. As one of the last colonies in the Americas to abolish slavery, the island has struggled to unite its large African and European descended populations into one nation. The unifying rhetoric of the wars of independence (1895-1898) succeeded in forging an integrated fighting force to defeat Spain, but ultimately failed to establish equality in the new republic. After independence many Cubans embraced the patriotic words of white nationalist José Martí and *mulato* general Antonio Maceo**,** and firmly imagined their country as one "without blacks, or whites, only Cubans." This claim, most often articulated as the myth of "racelessness," permeates nearly every discussion of race on the island. However, like many other newly independent Latin American countries, Cuba struggled to implement nineteenth century promises in the Republic. For additional information on the formation and legacy of the "raceless" ideology during the wars of independence see Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Fernando Ortiz, "Martí and the Race Problem," *Phylon* 3, no. 3 (1942): 253-76; Ramón de Armas, "José Martí: La verdadera y única abolición de la esclavitud," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 43 (1986): 333-351; José Martí, *La cuestión racial* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1959); Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cubans Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[5] Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[6] Numerous scholars agree that most Cubans welcomed the anti-Batista revolution and initially supported the new leadership. As 1959 progressed, however, more Cubans became dissatisfied with the radical social and economic changes enacted by the new government. For additional information on the anti-Batista coalition and the political and economic changes occurring after 1959 see Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 62-63; Thomas Boswell and James R. Curtis, *The Cuban American Experience: Culture, Images, and Perspectives* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984), 19.

[7] Lisandro Pérez, "Cubans in the United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487 (September 1986): 129.

[8] De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 278. Similarly, in *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California-Los Angeles, 1988), 58, Carlos Moore finds that "toward the end of 1959 Castro began to refer to the 'Negro question' to discredit his enemies" in relation to the trial and imprisonment of revolutionary leader *Comandante* Huber Matos. Like de la Fuente, Moore's analysis begins to explore this connection between racism and counterrevolution, but reveals little about how the revolution constructed this link or how it was interpreted by Cubans living on and leaving the island in the early 1960s.

[9] María Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1, 15. In *Havana USA*, García explains how over half of the Cuban exiles who left the country in the first wave of emigration before 1963 settled in South Florida. She notes that others went to Mexico, Spain, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico because they were leery of living in the United States, but that the majority went to Miami because of historic connections to the city including having previous vacation experiences in Miami Beach, owning property in the area, appreciating the similar climate, or appreciating the tracks laid down by the 30,000 Cubans who already lived in Miami before 1959.

[10] Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), xi-xvii.

[11] Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12; see also Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001). Dudziak and Borstelmann explore the ways international criticism about racial violence in the United States, especially from newly independent African countries and communists in the Soviet Union, forced U.S. leaders to make limited concessions to black Americans.

[12] U.S. leaders and Cuban anti-Castro groups saw the new revolutionary government as radical and labeled them as communist even before they took power. However, the

official declaration of socialism in Cuba did not occur until April, 1961. Before that most scholars agree that it was a nationalist, but not necessarily communist government.

[13] The opposing tactic, the anti-racist demand for "human rights," was also not new, and was often rejected by U.S. cold warriors as associated with the Soviet Union; see Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

[14] García, *Havana USA*, 44. García includes only one paragraph about these issues.

[15] De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 261.

[16] "Un millón de trabajadores: Más unidos que nunca!" *Revolución*, March 23, 1959, 24.

[17] Guillén, "Una revisión entre otras," *Noticias de Hoy*, March 29, 1959, 1.

[18] "Esta revolución no se hizo para conservar privilegios ni para acobardarse ante nadie en particular, ni para venderse a nadie en particular," *Noticias de Hoy*, March 26, 1959, 1. This article is printed in *Revolución* as well.

[19] "El espíritu renovador va a superar al tradicionalista," *Revolución,* March 26, 1959, 2.

[20] "'Esta revolución no se hizo para conservar privilegios ni para acobardarse ante nadie en particular, ni para venderse a nadie en particular,' dijó Fidel Castro en la TV," *Noticias de Hoy*, March 26, 1959, 1.

[21] For advertisements in the African American press sponsored by the National Cuban Tourist Institute (INIT) see *Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1960, 45. For articles describing the Cuban delegation's stay in the Hotel Theresa in Harlem see, "La batalla de Harlem," *Noticias de Hoy*, October 1, 1960, 1; "Fidel ganó dos batallas: La de la ONU y la de Harlem," *Verde Olivo 1:30*, October 8, 1960, 4, and "Primerias Victorias," *El Mundo*, September 20, 1960, A-8.

[22] See "Untitled," *Lunes de Revolución,* October 3, 1960, 16, for an example of a political cartoon illustrating a Castro-like character "lynching" a Ku Klux Klan member with his beard.

[23] "Harlem Show de Show en 'Tecnicolor,'" *Patria: el periódico de Martí, sin Martí* (Miami) September 20, 1960, 4; "'Declara' a Fidel el Show de la ONU," *Patria: el periódico de Martí, sin Martí* (Miami) September 27, 1960, 4.

[24] "Esta revolución no se hizo," *Noticias de Hoy*, March 26, 1959, 1.

[25] Hernández Artigas, "!Negros No. . . Ciudadanos!" *Revolución*, January 20, 1959, 16; Advertisement, *Revolución*, April 2, 1959, 16.

[26] For examples see the following collections of oral histories, "Lázaro Benedí Rodríguez" found in Oscar Lewis et al., *Four Men: Living the Revolution, An Oral History of Contemporary Cuba* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 48, 87; Douglas

Butterworth, *The People of Buena Ventura: Relocation of Slum Dwellers in Postrevolutionary Cuba* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 62.

[27] Nicolás Guillén, "Discriminación y literatura," *Noticias de Hoy*, April 19, 1960, 2. The original quotation in Spanish is especially interesting because of the quotation marks emphasizing "anymore" or "*ya.*"

[28] *Playa Girón: Derrota del imperialismo, vol. 4* (Havana: Ediciones R, 1962), 455-59.

[29] Fagen, *Cubans in Exile*, 14. See Fagen, 16-28, for demographic information about the Cubans who went into exile between 1959 and 1963. He finds that 23.5% of the refugees in Miami graduated from high school, compared to only 5% of Cubans in the country. Cubans who left for Miami also earned about four times the amount of the income of residents on the island. Overall, he rejects the idea that the early exiles were a heterogeneous "cross-section" of the Cuban population.

[30] For additional reading on Ruston Academy see James D. Baker, *Ruston: From Dreams to Reality* (Miami: Ruston-Baker Educational Institution, 2007).

[31] As told to author in an interview in Havana, Cuba (May 2007).

[32] "En Cuba no debe existir la discriminación," *Adelante*, February 16, 1959, 1.

[33] René Depestre, "Carta a Cuba sobre el imperialismo de la mala fe" *Casa de las Américas* no. 34 (January-February 1966), 96.

[34] Unidad Revolucionario, "Letter to American Students" (Miami: Schneer Printing Corp., 1963), 23.

[35] Expressing fears about white women's positionality was one way that critics called attention to the revolution's investment in blacks. Other popular sayings were more direct. According to Afro-Cuban author Pedro Pérez Sarduy, a common slogan of the era was, "Neither black nor red." He argues that this refrain was a familiar aspect of a "white backlash against major redistributive measures" in the early 1960s. By calling for "neither a black nor red" Cuba, critics linked blackness to communism and expressed fears of a new government led by members of either group. See Pedro Pérez Sarduy and Jean Stubbs, eds., *AfroCuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writing on Race, Politics and Culture* (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Ocean Press, 1993), 9.

[36] Depestre, "Carta a Cuba," 96.

[37] De la Fuente, *A Nation For All*, 281-282.

[38] Ibid, 281. See also Moore, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa*, 48.

[39] Juan Betancourt, "Castro and the Cuban Negro," *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* 68, no. 5 (May 1961), 272.

[40] Interview with author (May 2010).

[41] Lillian Guerra, "Self-Styled Revolutionaries: Forgotten Struggles for Social Change and the Problem of Unintended Dissidence" unpublished paper presented at Williams College, March 11, 2010.

[42] Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution,* 77.

[43] "Esta revolución no se hizo," *Noticias de Hoy*, March 26, 1959, 1.

[44] "Punto 2," *Combate 13 de Marzo*, January 20, 1960, 8.

[45] "Fidel Castro invitado por el Comité de Integración," *Noticias de Hoy*, April 2, 1959, 1. And while few people of African descent were identified as racist, the story of Afro-Cuban dissident Carlos Moore reveals how some black Cubans faced persecution for calling attention to racial discrimination in ways that went beyond official parameters. After confronting revolutionary leaders for failing to eliminate racial discrimination despite international claims to have done so, Moore was interrogated and jailed before escaping into exile in 1963. For more information see, Carlos Moore, *Pichón, A Memoir: Race and Revolution in Castro's Cuba* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008).

[46] "Esta revolución no se hizo," *Noticias de Hoy*, March 26, 1959, 1.

[47] "En Cuba no debe existir la discriminación," *Adelante*, February 16, 1959, 4.

[48] Sadie Caballero, "Fué una poderoso demostración de unidad el mitin de anoche," *Sucro* (Santiago), April 24, 1959, 1.

[49] "Discriminación eléctrica," *Combate 13 de Marzo*, February 2, 1960, 4.

[50] "Renuncian líderes de los eléctricos," *Combate 13 de Marzo*, February 5, 1960, 10.

[51] "Discriminación eléctrica," *Combate 13 de Marzo*, March 23, 1960, 4.

[52] "Gran asamblea de la CTC," *Revolución*, December 15, 1960, 1. The immediate charges that forced Fraginals and his partners into exile were investigations of sabotage, but arguments connecting the union leaders to racist activities, made almost ten months earlier, contributed to the perception that they were counterrevolutionaries.

[53] "Contra la discriminación en Cruces se manifiesta el PSP," *Noticias de Hoy*, April 1, 1959, 1.

[54] "Novela integracionista," *Combate 13 de Marzo*, February 4, 1960, 4.

[55] Daisy Rubiera Castillo and Georgina Herrera, *Golpeando la memoria: Testimonio de una poeta cubana afrodescendiente* (Havana: Ediciones Unión, 2005), 99.

[56] García, *Havana USA*, 15. In the early 1960s, Miami was already a global city with a more complex, albeit equally entrenched, racial order than other southern cities. The commonness of Latin American tourists visiting the city meant that stores and restaurants in Miami Beach often served both black and white customers before the end

of legal segregation. Despite these cracks in racial separation, which were sometimes mobilized by Civil Rights activists to demonstrate the ridiculousness of Jim Crow, violence against African Americans and forced divisions among ethnic groups were common when Cubans arrived after 1959. For further reading on racial tensions in Miami during the 1960s, see Melanie Shell-Wise, *Coming to Miami: A Social History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009); Shelia L. Croucher, *Imagining Miami: Ethnic Politics in a Postmodern World* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997).

[57] Lisandro Pérez, "Cubans in the United States," 127-129.

[58] Mark Sawyer, *Racial Politics in Post-Revolutionary Cuba* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 157.

[59] "Plataforma inicial del MRR," 7 *Días del Diario de la Marina en el exilio* (Miami), October 1, 1960, 12.

[60] Unidad Revolucionario, "Letter to American Students," 5.

[61] Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*, 5.

[62] Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 75.

[63] Virgilio Campaneria, "Letter from Prison," *Trinchera: Órgano Oficial del Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil yr. 1 no. 18* (Havana-clandestine) n.d., 3.

[64] Radio Swan, "Lo dijo El Mundo," *El Mundo: Editado en el exilio* (Miami) November 30, 1960, A-4; "7 de diciembre," *El Mundo: Editado en el exilio* (Miami) December 7, 1960, A-1.

[65] "Asi se forjo la democracia en América," *Bohemia Libre 52, no. 9* (Caracas, Venezuela) December 4, 1960, 88-89. *Bohemia Libre* was published in Caracas, Venezuela; however, it was distributed and read in Miami as well.

[66] José Correa Espino, "Cartas a El Mundo: Almeida cree que es Maceo," *El Mundo: Editado en el exilio* (Miami), October 5, 1960, A-4.

[67] Betancourt, "Castro and the Cuban Negro," 24.

[68] Sawyer, *Racial Politics,* 157.

[69] "Cubanos-Rusos en Estados Unidos," *Patria* (Miami) June 21, 1960, 3.

[70] "Un documento para la historia" *Bohemia Libre* (Caracas, Venezuela) 52, no. 9 (December 4, 196): 59.

[71] José B. Fernández, *Los abuelos: Historia oral cubana* (Ediciones Universal: Miami, FL, 1987), 95-96.

[72] Álvaro Santiago, "El mito de las clases," *El Mundo: Editado en exilio* (Miami), November 30, 1960, A-4.

[73] Facha, "Sangre de prensa libre," *7 Días del Diario de la Marina en el exilio* (Miami), October 1, 1960, 3.

[74] "Todos somos soldados con meritos iguales," *Bohemia Libre* (Caracas, Venezuela) 1, no. 3 (October 23, 1960): 48.

[75] "El hecho y los hechos," *Comandos* Miami) 1, no. 6 (October 1960): 3.

[76] "Diálogo Callejero," *Patria: el periódico de Martí, sin Martí* (Miami) May 10, 1960, 2.

[77] Betancourt, "Castro and the Cuban Negro," 247.

[78] Croucher, *Imagining Miami*, 64.

[79] Scholars continue to debate the accuracy of the claim that Cubans stole employment opportunities from African Americans. The common perception that this was the case, however, coupled with the distance exiles put between themselves and Americans in general, and U.S. blacks in particular, increased tensions between the two groups. For additional reading on black displacement after Cuban emigration, see John Egerton, "Cubans in Miami: A Third Dimension in Racial and Cultural Relations," (Race Relations Information Center Nashville, Tennessee, 1969), 15; Croucher, *Imagining Miami*; Guillermo J. Grenier and Alex Stepick III, eds., *Miami Now: Immigration, Ethnicity, and Social Change* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992).

[80] Shell-Wise notes in *Coming to Miami,* 170, that at a time when Civil Rights news was the "major headline" in other cities, the Miami press focused on Cuba and the incoming exiles.

[81] Chanelle Rose, "Neither Southern nor Northern: Miami, Florida, and the Black Freedom Struggle in America's Vacation Paradise, 1896-1968," University of Miami Ph.D. thesis, 2008, chapters 8, 11.

[82] Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[83] For articles attacking the CBC for meeting with the Castros and ignoring racism in Cuba see, "Lawmakers in Cuba," *Miami Herald*, April 10, 2009, A16. Humberto Fontova, "Congressional Black Caucus Smitten with Castro," *American Thinker*, April 9, 2009.

[84] Fidel Castro, "The Seven Congress Members Who Are Visiting Us," *Granma Digital International*, April 6, 2009.

[85] Sarah Parker and Brianna Keilar, "Congressman Denies Castro's Racist Claim," *CNN Political Ticker*, April 8, 2009, http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2009/04/08/congressman-denies-castros-racist-claim/.

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