
Cuba: Race Matters

Author(s): Leroy A. Binns

Source: *Race, Gender & Class*, 2013, Vol. 20, No. 3/4 (2013), pp. 333-345

Published by: Jean Ait Belkhir, *Race, Gender & Class Journal*

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43496949>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/43496949?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Race, Gender & Class*

JSTOR

Race, Gender & Class: Volume 20, Number 3-4, 2013 (333-345)

Race, Gender & Class Website: www.rgc.uno.edu

CUBA: RACE MATTERS

Leroy A. Binns
The Union Institute

Abstract: The Cuban journey on race relations denotes an adventure driven by ideology. A doctrine of equals and the need for consensus building towards national unity called for the reversal of disenfranchisement commonly practiced prior to the revolution. To this end commendable public policy particularly in education, healthcare, housing and employment has affirmed a commitment to social integration of people of color yet the residue of bigotry still inflames the Cuban populace and stymies potential maturity among its people. Within lies a portrait of foreign configuration and associated effects on an island of mixed heritage and an agenda to undo a legacy of political and economic bondage in exchange for comradeship.

Keywords: politics; race; class

Leroy A. Binns, Ph.D. is an International Affairs specialist whose areas of expertise are East/West Relations & Caribbean and Latin American Affairs. He served within the capacity of adjunct lecturer in the Africana Studies Department at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and as an associate faculty member within the External Graduate Division at Central Michigan University. In addition he functions as an advisor on doctoral committees at the Union Institute and has published in Caribbean Quarterly, Social and Economic Studies and Socialism and Democracy.

Dr. Leroy A. Binns can be contacted at: labenz@dr.com

Questions of race and class in Cuba are indelibly entrenched in our social consciousness as remnants of years of foreign governance on the Spanish isle. Such impressions are largely attributed to the conquest of European adventurers who in a new world awaiting discovery betrayed local hospitality and institutionalized servitude as an endorsement of class distinctions.

As political establishments emerged they legitimized professions and a new relationship between the privileged and indigenous. Unlike an era of tranquility and mutual coexistence common to Indian settlers prior to the invasion of Western opportunists Cuban society experienced a socioeconomic purge that rendered its environment susceptible to colonial repression. The introduction of class stratification by extension of a plantation regime bolstered by unscrupulous economic activities of trade and commerce at the expense of a suppressed class significantly altered the lifestyle and composition of inhabitants on the island.

Deep in their memory was the experience of slavery, no doubt the most repressive human condition. But they also shared the recollection of bloodily crushed slave rebellions. Even more traumatic was the memory of the suppression of the alleged Conspiracy of la Escalera (1844) in which hundreds of slaves and free people of color were tortured to death, formally executed, imprisoned or banished during what was remembered as the Year of the Lash. (Helg, 1995)

Aline Helg

The structural transformation that ensued bore a regressive identity as the capitalistic gains and expectations of an unyielding oligarchy and its attachments to a systematic practice of racial discrimination sustained the status quo—the marginalization of Cubans of African and mixed decent. Such inhumane behavior nonetheless was the subject of intense scrutiny and shared the spotlight with historic figures and events that with the passage of time reshaped the economic and political landscape of Cuba.

Most appalling the steadfast actions of the ruling caste fortified an unforeseen challenge in varied forms. At every turn the refusal to reform codes of ethics in relation to rights and privileges of the underclass faced unrelenting resistance. Incidents of massacres of the black population in Aponte in 1812 and Las Escalera in 1844 served as platforms for the likes of Carlos de Cespedes and Jose Marti whose collective efforts incited the Ten Year war of 1868—1878, the abolition of slavery in 1886 and the campaign to liberation in 1898—the last in response to a continued system of foreign supremacy void of local participation.

The conversion which oversaw the changing of the guard from Madrid to Washington as appeasement to an uncontrollable society fell short on redemption. Controversy surrounding the removal of a successful non-white General Quintin Bandera but not white officers for lack of professionalism (in this case sexual

impropriety notably the harboring of a mistress) while considered by superiors a just response for disobedience, subordination, sedition and immorality, in the eyes of rebel sympathizers was nothing short of racism sugar coated with superficial proclamations of a deficiency in refinement and comportment worthy for portfolios of authority in peacetime. Such also rang true with the displacement of a veteran of the Ten Year War, the Protest of Baragua and the Western Invasion of 1895 - 1896 Silverio Sanchez Figueras.

Blatant disregard for human service is underscored by a sugar worker turn soldier Ricardo Batrell.

In the province of Matanzas where the only ones who waged war were the men of color as soon as there an Armistice there began to emerge from their hiding places the few white officials who had sustained themselves in the battlefields of the revolution loafing and without fighting. The ranks that belonged to those of us who had fought without respite they started distributing among those loafers. (Ferrer, 1999)

Nonetheless hypocrisy prevailed as the Americans welcomed Spanish soldiers who surrendered to the ranks of the Cuban army. They even allowed Spanish bureaucrats to remain in positions of power while insisting on proof of worthiness from the rebels for comparable assignments.

Despite some cultural cosmetic changes, policies of dominance meant politics as usual. Albeit the 20th century brought trappings of a domestic political machinery, its association with Washington was a constant reminder of a regrettable legacy rid of social advances. As capitalism took a stronghold with the increasing presence of American corporations on the island so did racism—an outlet for democratic isolation notably constitutional voting privileges afforded affluent white males. (Jorquera, 1998; Ferrer, 1999)

To counter the existing order and instigate the fraternal republic envisioned by Jose Marti thanks to veterans of the Cuban revolution specifically disenfranchised members of the officer corps like Evaristo Estenoz the Partido Independiente de Color founded in 1908 gained inroads by diluting support for the ruling liberal party. However initiating the 1912 revolt in the eastern province of Oriente that claimed the lives of over 3000 Cubans reaped the wrath of Washington and the island's president Jose Miguel Gomez. Both worked in tandem to crush the insurrection and utilized the Morua law to disband the party on the illusion of discrimination. Subservience synonymous with European immigration was also encouraged to "whiten" the country's demographic stock as was cronyism and graft at the highest echelon of local government throughout disruptive reigns of Tomas Estrada to Fulgencio Batista also magnified separatism on an uneven playing field.

Racial discrimination existed in a systematic form in exclusive social associations and in those places (e.g., fashionable hotels, restaurants and nightclubs) frequented by persons belonging to the upper-class stratum. Those successful Afro-Cubans established their own associations, avoiding open conflict by trying to integrate the exclusive white associations. (de la Fuente, 1998)

Carmelo Mesa-Lago

Mobilization of the country's destitute in locales such as the province of Oriente limited in political representation and social services forged a sense of uneasiness and instability to intolerable customs that fostered a blanket of discrimination and was partly accountable for a series of coups that beset the nation during the first half of the 20th century. Most memorable is the 1959 revolution in retaliation to an overarching economic dichotomy—a Cuba of seamless exclusion and elitism. In its stead the perpetuation of oppression as displayed by the lack or absence of education, health care and employment was initially substituted with a pledge of allegiance to the neglected—an estimated sum of over 30% of the country's population.

Unredeemed masses, to whom all, make promises and to whom all deceive; we mean the people who yearn for a better, more dignified, and a more just nation who are moved by ancestral aspirations of justice, who have suffered the injustice and mockery, generation after generation who long for great and wise changes in all aspects of life we support you. (Mesa-Lago, 1971)

Fidel Castro

The president of the National Federation of Societies for Colored People Juan Rene Bentacourt beamed with confidence in his candid remarks:

It is impossible that anyone should believe, seriously and in good faith that by ceasing to refer to blacks and whites the people will forget their existence and racial discrimination will thus be liquidated by this miraculous method. If our black brother is to be freed from the centuries old injustice that has endured than blacks and whites of good faith must be organized to this end, for only a social force, supported by a government of the generosity and prestige of the present one, can realize the heroic task of unleashing a new socioeconomic force.... We harbor no fears that Fidel may forget his black brothers or that he will stumble into the pitfall of non- productivity and chauvinistic attitude regarding the racial question, for he is moved by the best of intention and is fully cognizant of the nature of the issue. (Moore, 1991)

Reaction nevertheless varied as blacks the afflicted and active participants in a struggle for inclusivity were cautiously optimistic. After all the question remained; following decade of inhumane governance would this revolution achieve a society of racial harmony?

Once in office the Castro administration in the spirit of socialism prioritized an agenda of egalitarianism. Evidence of such is embodied in courageous rehabilitation of social relevance. A national literacy program was introduced and in reversal of privatization that endorsed the enrollment of 15% and 30% of white pupils in private primary and secondary respectively unrestricted access to schooling gained recognition through an expansive public school regime. As a result by 1961 Cuba enjoyed a literacy rate of 98% and an increase in enrollment of over 50% at pre-tertiary levels.

Simultaneously unparalleled admission was the experience at clinics and

hospital that were restructured to meet the basic needs of local citizens without deference to age, race or creed. The process of rectification likewise encompassed the acquisition of property to facilitate living arrangements and ensure occupations for the residents of color. (de la Fuente, 2001; Sawyer, 2006; Maybarduk, 1998)

In spite of an ability to abolish structural racism as confirmed by John Clytus in his autobiography "Black Man in Red Cuba" and deliver as promised an improved quality of life to the Cuban masses the revolutionary government's application of socialism for all and its alienation of the dominant class placed her at odds with her closest and most wealthy neighbor the United States. Moreover seizure of the sugar industry and American entities in the interests of the state were met with aversion and shortly thereafter a trade embargo. (Clytus, 1970)

Exposure to external pressure that created a premise for the Bay of Pigs invasion and a massive wave of migration of Cuba's elite to the shores of Miami left Havana confronting a new obstacle. The demand to train and sustain a workforce capable of industrial appreciation became the eminent issue for consideration.

True to her commitment and the teaching of Che Guevarra the rebirth of a nation continued in earnest as the quest for homogeneity expanded the pillars of communal pertinence. As the theme of ethnic assimilation intertwined with nationalistic overtones so did liberation on several fronts. Throughout the 1970s the provision of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions along with specialized centers for the disabled and talented complimented with free education, scholarship and a wide array of disciplines diversified academic and professional training in Cuba.

Healthcare shared a similar focus of inclusiveness and therefore during the same timeframe made accommodation for patients by providing regional service via specialized hospitals, health centers and polyclinics. As for minorities particularly blacks advancements in the provision of care enabled them the privilege of becoming one of the healthiest black populations in the Americas. Social reinforcements too incorporated job creation through state enterprises and government subsidies to modify standards of living. (Smith, 1986)

Meantime Castro sought to annul Yankee imperialism abroad and by extension catapult socialism through military intervention in war torn Angola and Nicaragua and material assistance to leftist governments in Jamaica and Grenada. Besides local embarrassment of the 1980 Mariel boatlift to Miami of some 25,000 blacks resulting from lingering issues of dissimilarity and in some instances verbal abuse and taunts by Cubans of Caucasian origin the international reviews were mixed. Administrations changed hands in the North American states by 1991 yet the Angolan struggle ferociously fought in the context of East/West rivalry highlighted the evils of apartheid that in the end contributed to its demise.

Daunted by domestic distraction Havana forged ahead in 1981 with overtures towards consumer freedom and the creation of an office of Afro-Cuban religion. That year was also noted for scholastic prosperity. The proportion of blacks and mulattoes who graduated high school transcended that of their white counterparts. In fact in a comparative assessment Cuba outranks Brazil and the United States in the reduction of social disparities at secondary and tertiary levels. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Percentage of High School or College Graduate Population Aged 25 or over by Race: Brazil, Cuba and the United States

	Whites	Blacks	Mulattoes	Differences W-B W-M	
Brazil (1987)					
High school	13.9	5.3	8.0	8.6	5.9
College	9.2	1.0	2.0	8.2	7.0
Cuba (1981)					
High school	9.9	11.2	9.6	-1.3	0.3
College	4.4	3.5	3.2	0.9	1.2
US (1987)					
High school	56.4	52.8	-	3.6	-
College	20.5	10.7	-	9.8	-

Sources: Cuba: Committee on State Statistics (CEE), Census on population and years 1981, The Republic of Cuba. 16 vols (Havana 1983) xvi: 2,67-70; Brazil and the United States: George Reaid Andrews, Racial Inequality in Brazil and the United States: A statistical Comparison. *Journal of Social History*, 1992, 26(2, Winter):229-63.

With upgraded health care delivery and associated support systems there was likewise consistency and a confirmation of leadership with regard to life expectancy as derived from 1981 consensus figures. While the gap between whites and colored in Brazil and the United States was 6.7 and 6.3 years respectively in Cuba it was only one year. (Moore, 1989; de la Fuente, 1998a)

A statistical analysis of the civil work force by race was likewise worthy of exaltation as was the distribution of managers in kind within government (See Tables 2 & 3).

Table 2: Civilian Labor Force by Race: Brazil, Cuba and the United States, 1980s

	Brazil			Cuba			United States	
	W	B	M	W	B	M	W	B
Professional	9.0	2.5	3.8	22.2	22.1	22.9	15.5	11.2
Administration	16.7	4.2	6.7	12.8	7.1	8.7	27.9	22.3
Sales	9.0	4.0	6.5	6.4	6.9	6.5	10.5	5.0
Non-agricultural	26.0	27.9	25.6	23.1	29.2	24.2	31.7	37.1
Service	10.7	22.6	13.0	7.3	9.4	8.6	11.4	22.3
Agriculture	22.7	31.5	38.6	18.2	12.9	18.3	2.8	2.0
Other/unknown	6.0	7.2	5.8	10.0	12.4	10.8	0.0	0.1

Index of dissimilarity	-	23.9	18.3	-	11.1	4.1	-	16.3
---------------------------	---	------	------	---	------	-----	---	------

Sources: Cuba: Committee on State Statistics (CEE) Census of the population and years 1981; La Population of Cuba According to the Color of their Skin (Havana 1985), 117-18. Brazil and the United States: George Reid Andrews, Racial Inequality in Brazil and the United States: A Statistical Comparison, Journal of Social History, 1992, 26(2, Winter):249-50.

Table 3: Managers in Government Establishments by Race 1987

Level	White	Black	Mulatto
Municipal	71.9	12.1	16.0
Provincial	73.8	10.9	15.3
National	72.7	12.7	14.6
Total	72.5	12.1	15.4
% of adult pop	66.1	12.0	21.9
Index of representation	110	101	70

Source: Committee on State Statistics (CEE), National Census of the Picture of the State. National Summary by the Management of Establishments 1987, (Havana, 1987), 5:126-129.

By 1986 strides were reflected with black representation in parliament and within the party apparatus only to be short lived. Records imply an increase of 25% in 1980 and 89.1% by 1986 but regression by 1991 to approximately 20% below 1986 figures as a product of strained Cuban/Russian relations.

In overall performance Cuba's accomplishments during the decade under retrospection superceded that of its competitors in the developing world. (See Table 4) However the prevailing notion of impartiality and an unraveling of the Cold War rivalry crystallized elements of polarization.

Table 4: Cuba in Motion

	1958	1988
Illiteracy	25%	2%
No of Students	811,345	3,500,000
No of teachers	22,595	300,000
No of universities	3	40
Infant mortality rate	60 deaths per 100	11 deaths per 1000
Life expectancy	57 years	75 years
Unemployment	25%	3.4%

Source: Racism in Cuba and the Failure of the American Left. AfroCuba Web, 1999.

In a 1992-93 study entitled "The Color of Love" Nadine Fernandez a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of California acknowledged increased mobility among blacks that she attributed to a growing acceptance of interracial unions. On the other hands she notes an underlying level of prejudice among generations young and old.

Parents and grandparents built their lives and families around the revolution integrating to a greater or lesser extent the revolution's struggle for racial, class

and sexual equality. Often parents and grandparents find themselves holding contradictory views on these issues—caught between a legacy of discrimination and revolutionary ideas of equality. (Fernandez, 1996)

Lending credence to the residual effects of bigotry is an additional perspective made public by surveys conducted in Havana and Santiago in 1994 by Dr Alejandro de la Fuente, a historian at University of South Florida and in Havana in 1995 by the Center of Anthropology. (See Table 5)

Table 5: *Cubans Viewpoint on Race Relations*

Years Conducted	Location of interviews	Conclusions
1994	Havana and Santiago	75% of respondents believe racism is blatant on the island.
1995	Havana	58% of whites considered blacks less intelligent.
1995	Havana	69% of whites claimed blacks lack values.
1995	Havana	69% of whites oppose interracial marriages.

Sources: Discoveries by Alejandro de la Fuente in 1994 and the Center for Anthropology, Havana, Cuba in 1995.

Such observations persist with effects of a new world order void of Soviet influence in the economic affairs of socialist Cuba. According to some estimates the loss of commercial partners in Eastern Europe which undoubtedly bore responsibility for a decline in gross domestic product by 40% between the years 1989 and 1993 also shared accountability for the implementation of a series of market oriented measures and an unintended black market.

The tentacles of a market economy namely the legalization of dollars, self-employment, foreign investment and private agricultural markets Cuba acknowledges with reservation. In the words of Carlos Lage the former Vice President of the Cuban Council of State

This will create differences among people, greater than what we have now and greater than what we are used to having since the revolution.... The inequality or privilege that can be created are realities we must allow.

While economic transitions fostered a climate for industrial development, the actions infringed on the advancement of a uniformed society. With a 1990 census categorizing 83% of Cuban Americans as white the disbursement of foreign remittances to the tune of \$700 to \$800 million per annum disproportionately benefits Caucasian recipients and therefore re-establishes a social divide in Cuba.

In addition escalating purchasing capabilities beyond the reach of the masses mostly blacks and mulattoes enables a privileged few the achievement of an advanced social status through the acquisition of goods and services and the realization of entrepreneurial ambitions with the emergence of a restricted private sector.

An unabated erosion of the country's social fabric has materialized at the will of foreign investments. This reliance has sanctioned new conditions of operations in favor of international enterprises while contradicting socialist ideals of humanity. A demand for capital coupled with Havana's inability to delineate parameters of employment has hindered integration at the workplace and unintentionally instilled an acceptance of false perceptions and characterizations of coloreds as unattractive and inept. (de la Fuente, 2008; Duharte & Santos, 1997)

Unfortunately the impact of those stereotypes originated in a "pre special period" era which depicts blacks as predisposed to deviant behavior on the ground of inferiority. Albeit unscientific, Havana's failure to alleviate poverty among the poorest strata of society is subject to debate. A release from the Ministry of Interior details an increase in the average annual sums of crime between 1976 - 1980 and 1981 - 1986. Further it specifically mentions a significantly higher rate of lawlessness in provinces consisting of large concentrations of black settlers with Granma accounting for 57%, Santiago de Cuba 29% and Guantanamo 50%. With relation to murder during the same period in question the report indicates an acceleration of 46% nationwide. (de la Fuente, 1998b)

The discourse on racial inequality is amplified as well by authors Edwin and Jo Hoffman who referenced the dominance of whites in senior positions within the Ministry of Health and as newscasters and talk show personnel. This unsettling reflection currently permeates the hotel industry in which coloreds are deemed unfit notwithstanding qualifications for "white collar" assignments.

In a striking revelation a manager of a tourism outfit concedes

I know a black women who tried to find work in tourism. She has a degree in economics, is a specialist in computing and speaks English, French and German. She went for the interview very well dressed but in the end she was not accepted. The person who interviewed her did not know how to handle the situation because he could not tell her, "We do not accept you because you are black." I think her knowledge should have counted.

Diminishing government control and limited sources of income have contributed to unrest in 1994 in central Havana that involved images of black demonstrators attacking police officers. Adding insult to injury this duration of scarcity has also culminated with the migration of coloreds from poverty stricken eastern provinces to Havana—a total of 50,000 in 1996 many of whom have joined the ranks of prostitution and thugs to achieve the coveted lifestyle of the empowered. (Hoffman & Hoffman, 1996)

At the turn of the century many young blacks are still disgusted with the fact that they are exempted from jobs at five star hotels and thus deprived of access to capital that contrives a dichotomy—a new elite of waitresses, doormen, tour guides

and cab drivers predominantly white. Frustration too festers among academics who have voiced concern with regard to a disproportionate number of blacks earning university degrees.

In light of debilitating circumstances a government that adopted the sacred position of national unity and dismissed open deliberations on race in avoidance of divisiveness is leading the charge for reform. Dating back to 1986 the Cuban leadership at the communist party's third congress confirmed the existence of racial indifference and implemented affirmative action as a solution. A visible response to an ongoing conversation and exhibitions of resentment involved the admission of young black activists to key positions. Such ascension includes Esteban Lazo and Pedro Saez as party leaders in Havana and Havana province respectively whereas public documentation indicates the existence of blacks with senior portfolios in Santiago de Cuba, Camaguey and elsewhere.

To its credit, comparable attempts by the Writer's Union and Cuban publications embracing better representation of blacks in the media have been rewarded with placements within print and visual media and an outflow of appreciation for domestic artists of color to cultivate cultural space at the Center for Development of Visual Arts and the Yoruba Cultural Center. Name recognition has also been granted via the official communist party newspaper *Granma* and a new center devoted to Afro-Cuban saints. Yet despite some semblance of progress a nagging realization is cited by Tomas Fernandez Robaina a senior researcher at Jose Marti National Library and leading authority on race relations.

There is a feeling to talk about race is to divide the unity that is necessary to face American imperialism. But unfortunately in many places blacks have more problems getting a job than white people. I am not telling you a secret. (Robinson, 2000)

The Hip Hop movement a configuration comprised of rappers, DJs, break dancers, graffiti artists, producers and cultural promoters is a trendsetter of the 1990s that organized annual festivals, a journal in 2003 and symposiums subsequent to 2005. In addition individual rappers and painters are relentlessly leading a charge for reformation by the deployment of expressive forms. For many despite limitations particularly access to venues, sophisticated equipment and financial means, social messages in songs (*Hermanos de Causa's Tengo*) and paintings (*Elio Rodriguez Valdes' Tropicalisima*) openly express resentment and resistance towards a status quo tainted with stereotypes and prejudice towards a large segment of society.

A body of knowledge disseminated by intellectuals and writers is central to the campaign. Perez Sarduy's *AfroCuba: An anthology of Cuban Writing on Race, Politics and Culture*, Teresa de Cardenas' *Letters to my Mother*, Nancy Morejon's *Poetica de los Altares* and Roglio Martinez Fure's *Eshu* are principal sources of awareness in opposition to ignorance. These contributions on the relevance of identity denounce ill conceived perceptions associated with delinquency, crime and drug abuse that too often relegate those of colored orientation and unorthodox aesthetics to a hellish environment referred to as Babylon by Rastafarians. The reality is summarized below by Victor a Rasta and victim of intolerance.

The people have been conditioned to believe that there is no racism here and that there are no races, just Cubans. This is all very beautiful as an idea but in reality things are different. If you are black in Cuba you are thought of as inferior and the darker you are the worse it is. You see there is this huge gap between what the state says and what it wants us to believe and what is really going on. No one says anything because everyone is afraid. One thing you do not do here is go against what the government says. So everyone just keeps up the lie and pretends there is no racism. The worst thing is that after so many years of pretending many people have actually started to believe in the lie itself.

Fast forwarding to 2009 reveals a snap shot of a national process embroiled in indigence, injustice and inequality. (See Tables 6 & 7)

Table 6: *The Fate of Afro-Cubans*

Status	Percentage
Hospitality workers	5%
The state's labor force	70%
The inmate population	80%
University enrollment	3%
Managerial positions	35%

Source: Cuba Facts 2009

Table 7: *Afro-Cubans in Government*

Status	Percentage
Poliburo	17%
Secretariat	4%
Council of State	35%
Cabinet	8%
National Assembly	36%
Provincial Assemblies	35%
Senior command of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR)	10%

Source: Cuba Facts 2009

A documentary entitled *Raza* directed by 36 year old film maker Eric Corvalan was the first of its kind to delve into a public debate on issues of race thus unleashing the disturbing realities of discrimination. While the subject is still taboo it incited input from a wide cross section of Cuban society in support of adherence to article 42 of the constitution. (de la Fuente, 2008; Hansing, 2006; Grogg, 2009)

Advocates the likes of Heriberto Feraudy head of the quasi Cuban Commission Against Racism and a former Cuban ambassador to 5 African states over 15 years and Esteban Morales a Havana economist and writer on race relations acknowledge change subsequent to the revolution and endorse Raul's call for an increase in blacks to top tier positions but are impatient with the current state of affairs. (Caribbean News Now, 2011)

The former has recommended the introduction of affirmative action which is in contradiction to the position of the Cuban regime that oftentimes claims racism

is a remnant of the past whereas the latter in a recent conference on race in Cuba at the Center for International Policy in Washington DC reiterated his usual message.

To avoid the topic of racism presents a serious risk for the solid unity of the Cuban nation because national unity must be achieved by the construction of consensus among civil society.” (Tamayo, 2011)

To many a boost of 10% in the number of blacks on the central committee in 2011 is overshadowed by proposals to slash the government’s payroll and additional rewards and encourage private enterprise. Unsurprisingly minorities stand less to benefit from remittances that would be the primary source of support for private ventures and would therefore be left destitute if removed from the public workforce. Such would have rippling effects on opportunities inclusive of better housing, education and healthcare. (Tamayo, 2011)

Thus far incremental adjustments embody possibilities with potential for progression in the future nonetheless the Castro regime is confronted with an ever growing private sector that dances to an autonomous beat. Without tipping the delicate scale of foreign exchange the government while accommodative must forge a charter with foreign entities promoting access to employment and security therein to all parties of interest. The success of such an endeavor could depend on a monitoring component jointly shared by the administration, corporations and independent appointees.

Throughout English speaking Caribbean countries the tourism industry among others thrived with the engagement of African descendants at all tiers of production. Why not Cuba which shares an identical colonial tradition? Unlike her neighbors she possesses a much larger and superior black educated workforce that could as demonstrated through world acclaimed social service delivery complement diversity and economic prosperity.

At a time when the Cuban establishment is contemplating the termination of 500,000 public sector employees a new question arises; How will such action affect race relations on the island? A continued display of proficiency among peoples of color in varied spheres of society is critical to dismantling divisions within its ranks. Cuba stands poised for greatness but must articulate a proclivity and a vision to sustain a place in history.

References

- Caribbean News Now*. (2011, June 3). Experts weigh in on questions of race in Cuba.
- Clytus, J. (1970). *Black man in Red Cuba*. Coral Gables, FL: Univ of Miami Press.
- Cuba Facts*. (2009). Afro-Cubans: “Powerless majority in their own country.” Issue 46, 3/09.
- de la Fuente, A. (1998a). Race, national discourse and politics in Cuba. *Latin American Perspectives*, 25:55.
- _____. (1998b). Recreating racism: Race and discrimination in Cuba’s special period. *The Caribbean Project*. Center for Latin American Studies, 203.
- _____. (2001). *All in all: Race, inequality and politics in 20th century Cuba*. Chapel

- Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- _____. (2008). The New Afro-Cuban Cultural Movement and the debate on race contemporary Cuba. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 40:697-702, 708.
- Duharte, R. & Santos, E. (1997). *The ghost of slavery: Racial prejudice in Cuba and Latin America*. Bonn: Pahl - Rugenstein.
- Fernandez, N. (1996). The color of love: Young interracial couples in Cuba. *Latin American Perspectives*, Winter:103.
- Ferrer, A. (1999). *Insurgent Cuba: Race, nation and revolution 1868 - 1898*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Grogg, P. (2009). It is time to address racism in Cuba. *Havana Times org*, 1/7.
- Hansing, K. (2006). *Rasta and music: The emergence and development of the Rastafari movement in socialist Cuba*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Helg, A. (1995). *Our right share: The Afro-Cuban struggle for equality 1886 - 1912*. Chapel Hill, NC: Univ of North Carolina Press.
- Hoffman, E. & Hoffman, Jo. (1993). Race relating in Cuba. *Green Left Weekly*, 6.
- Jorquera, R. (1998, March 11). Cuba's struggle against racism. *Green Left Weekly*, 2.
- Maybarduk, G. (1998). Conversation with a political and economic officer, United States interests section, Havana.
- Mesa-Lago, C. (1971). *Revolutionary change in Cuba*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Moore, C. (1989). *Castro, the Blacks and Africa*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California.
- Robinson, E. (2000, November). Cuba begins to answer its race question. *Washington Post*.
- Sawyer, M. (2006). *Racial politics in post- revolutionary Cuba*. NYC, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, A. (1986). *The ethnic origins of nations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Tamayo, J. (2011, June 3). Racism remains an issue in Cuba. *Miami Herald*.