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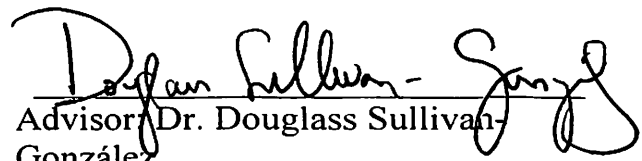
A Study of the Effects of Race Politics in Fidel Castro's Cuba

By
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A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion
of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies
Croft Institute for International Studies
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College
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University, Mississippi
Spring 2008

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Table of Contents

1 Acknowledgements	1
2 Introduction	2
3 Cuba Before Castro: How the Race Question Developed	4
4 Race Policy from 1959-1989	18
5 Race Policy During The Special Period	41
6 Conclusions	49
7 Works Cited	53

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a few people specifically for their tireless help and encouragement in this project. First, I can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that I would never have made it to this point without the constant (and forceful when necessary) encouragement of my parents. They have refused to let me do anything less than my best and for that I will be forever grateful. Next, I can truly say that working with Dr. Douglass Sullivan-González has been an absolute joy.

I chose my topic and his leadership through a class I took from him that I never would have thought could lead here. DSG, I am fairly certain you are the only person on our campus that could have put up with me as long as you did and with the patience you showed me. Our conversations will never be forgotten. I would like to thank my two readers, Dr. O'Neil and Dr. Dinius, for your direction and for making me truly work hard. I almost feel as though I owe an apology to my friends here at school as they were forced to suffer through my endless whining and refusals to play without the slightest understanding of what I was doing. They are, without a doubt, some of the most loyal friends I will ever have. Lastly, I would like to thank Mr. Ramon Colás for his unbelievable encouragement and for his heart for the Cuban people.

Introduction

This paper was developed out of an interest in the Cuban experience described by some as the “social miracle.” The goal is to determine the scope of the effects the revolutionary government has had on the racial landscape of Cuba since 1959. My original hypothesis was that though many of the revolutionary government’s race policies have clearly had successes in some sectors of the economy, I believed that some policies actually allowed or even caused racial differences to remain present in the Cuban society. Under Marxist ideology race and color should disappear as distinguishing factors in a society once economic and social equality have been achieved, but as will be demonstrated, economic and social equality was never completely achieved and some policies directly tied to race were maintained.

Therefore, in order to adequately understand the shifts in the Cuban social landscape, I have decided to closely examine three distinct periods of Cuban history. The first period will begin with the first encounters of race on the Cuban island when the first slaves were brought to work sugarcane fields. The timeline will be followed all the way through the winning of independence from Spain, through the U.S. occupation, and then up to Castro’s rise to power. Due to the length of the time period the focus will be on the events which most affected the perceptions of racial identity in Cuba. It is very important to understand the racial landscape of the country when Castro took power in order to objectively study the effects his government have had on the society. In order to see these changes a strong understanding of the continuity of ideas relating to race must be maintained throughout the study. Many of the attitudes relating to race have been in existence for the entire history of the country and it would be unfair to suggest that Castro’s policies should have been immediately capable of eradicating racism due to its

depth in the Cuban society. This depth has been created by four hundred years of exposure to racial differences.

The second period will include the period from when Castro took power on January 1, 1959 to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. The focus of this chapter will be to study Castro's original reactions to the race question and look at the specific policies he and his leadership adopted to allow the economy to create a race-less society. The chapter will give a balanced view of the progress of the Castro administration in dealing with race, as well as a look at his remarkable use of foreign policy to broadcast the successes of the Cuban miracle and to export it to the world. The first thirty years of the Castro administration were by far his most successful in completing the goals of creating a classless and race-less society, but these successes were also contrasted by various digressions on policy or rhetoric in order to maintain a consolidated support base.

The last section will focus on what is called the Special Period which refers to the economic crisis that ensued due to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. This goal of the third section is to determine if Castro's "race-less" society could maintain the same levels of equality during a time of economic hardship. A special attention to the distribution of jobs and dollars due to the opening of the tourist industry should reveal the depth of the racial issue and the areas where, no matter what progress has been made, there still remains a strong sense of racial distinction on the island. Furthermore, recent census data as well as certain state policies aimed at controlling the flow of immigration within the country should provide evidence for an ironic attention to race in a society where it is claimed that race no longer exists. It is important to study this period to see how far Castro and his administration can carry their policies during a time of high pressure from the struggling economy.

Chapter 1

Cuba Before Castro: How the Race Question Developed

In order to develop a full understanding of the Cuban climate when Castro came to power it is important to understand how the Cubans developed their sense of racial identity. Castro developed his race policy based on the successes and failures of colonial and national models of identity that had grown out of the context of slavery and the fight for independence. The “raceless” Cuba that Castro envisioned was not, in fact, an original idea. Since the Cuban independence wars, the nationalistic tendency towards a unified Cuban race had been idealized in political rhetoric. The great divide between white and black Cuba had been drawn since the first Africans were brought to the island. For all of Cuban history after this initial encounter, the race question became central to Cuban politics and economics and affected almost every aspect of Cuban life. A study of the depth of the race issue on the island is crucial for an understanding of the extent to which Castro was able to eliminate race in Cuba through his socialist economic policies.

Black and white Cubans began to develop their senses of racial identity immediately upon arrival of the first African slaves as early as the sixteenth century.¹ The race question, which can be defined as “the attempt, usually by whites of various political affiliations, to ascribe the role that Cubans of African descent and their culture will play in a Cuban nation,”² did not become a central factor in the Cuban social landscape, though, until the nineteenth century. This phenomenon occurred due to the fact that the number of Africans was so low that it had little or no impact on the social makeup of the country. Therefore, the three periods that seem most important to explore include the expansion of the sugar industry in the nineteenth

¹ Pérez, Louis A. Jr. Slaves, Sugar, & Colonial Society: Travel Accounts of Cuba, 1801-1899. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1992. xv.

² Sawyer, Mark Q. Racial Politics in Post-Revolutionary Cuba. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 38.

century, the wars for independence, and the first half of the twentieth century leading up to the Revolution and Castro's rise to power. These three periods dramatically shaped Cuban identity by placing the two groups into new political, social, and economic roles that changed the way they saw themselves and the other. These events set the stage for the Castro regime and determined almost every aspect of his decision-making and politics.

The Reign of King Sugar

The arrival of the first Africans marked a major turning point in the political, economic, and social development of the country. This original encounter between the Spanish and Creole elites and the African slaves became the basis for all thought on racial identity for the next three decades of the country's history. The oppressed, submissive position of the African contrasted by the white, elite European created a very clear picture of the way in which the two groups would perceive each other and relate to each other in the new Spanish colony. These encounters were not quickly forgotten and set the stage for a long struggle to define what it meant to be Cuban.

For the first two centuries in which slaves were recorded on the island they maintained a much different position than that of the famous *cañero* that worked in the sugar fields. The original slaves were used to a much greater extent in the mansion households of the urban aristocracy. These slaves had a much different lifestyle than the rural sugarcane workers. The families of the aristocratic colonizers kept slaves around the house much more similarly to the Europeans, in which they kept the slaves well-fed, clean, and dressed in their households. Many times the slaves were almost considered family members and would take on the family name.³ This original dynamic could have been indicative of the future of race relations in Cuba in which

³ Pérez. Slaves. xv.

the Afro-Cubans are included (even given the same name), but they still remain subordinate to whites. For the first two hundred years in which slaves were on the island, there was a very low number of Afro-Cubans compared to the late nineteenth century and the present. The number was almost negligible as a factor in Cuban society, especially when compared to other Latin American nations. At the end of the seventeenth century, for example there were only 40,000 African descendents on the island, compared to over 400,000 in the Afro-Haitian population at the time.⁴

That number would dramatically change over the next two hundred years as Cuba quickly became a classic Latin American monoculture (single crop dependence) based on sugar exports.⁵ The setting was perfect for Cuba to become a major sugar producer. In 1791, a major slave uprising in St. Domingue (present-day Haiti) caused the Haitian sugar production to almost disappear completely. Until the Haitian crash, it had been one of the largest producers of sugar, coffee and cacao in the world. The world market was laid out in Cuba's favor begging for a major increase of sugar production as its supplies were low and prices were high. Cuban sugar estates began rapidly increasing in size and number as they grew from 529 in 1792 to 1,000 in 1827, and skyrocketed to 2,430 in 1862. The production of sugar grew from 19,000 tons in 1792 to 446,000 tons in 1861.⁶ The number of slaves grew with the increase in sugar plantations. Census data lists a growth from 39,000 slaves in 1794 to 436,000 in 1841. A total of more than 600,000 slaves were brought to the island in the nineteenth century alone.⁷ In fact, during the

⁴ Keen, Benjamin and Keith Haynes. A History of Latin America. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company 2004. 206.

⁵ Keen and Haynes. 206.

⁶ Pérez. Slaves. xv.

⁷ Saney, Isaac. Cuba: A Revolution in Motion. New York: Zed Books Ltd 2004. 96.

twenty years between 1841 and 1861, there was a majority African population on the island.⁸

Thus, “King Sugar was enthroned ‘dripping with the blood of Africans.’”⁹ This massive influx of Africans to the island brought with it the first major contact with the race question the island would face.

The slave years in Cuba were important in shaping the history of the roles of whites and blacks on the island. The actual plantation owners lived far from their estates in Havana, Santiago, or Matanzas where they could find large mansions.¹⁰ The estate was actually run by an overseer and the slaves. This general hierarchy creates an interesting foreshadowing to the way class relations are aligned in Cuba today. A small group of aristocratic Spanish proprietors owned the land and controlled sugar production, thus they controlled the entire island. The beginnings of the effects of the sugar economy on the race situation were already becoming apparent.

Furthermore, the way in which slaves were treated and acted on the plantations is very important in shaping the Afro-Cuban identity. A British traveler recounted the story of a visit to a Cuban sugar plantation where he found three Africans in stocks. He was told that the two men were being punished for the crime of vagrancy and the young boy had stolen eggs. The boy had been sent from another estate to be punished by the overseer of the larger estate. The three had been in stocks every night for two months in a damp, cold corner in the dead of winter with only their shirts as coverings against the temperature. Furthermore, slaves were underfed and highly overworked. On most plantations slaves would only be allowed to sleep for four hours during the harvest season and only received two meals a day consisting of *tasajo* (beef jerky) for one

⁸ Pérez. *Slaves*, xv.

⁹ Saney. 96.

¹⁰ Pérez. *Slaves*, 43.

meal and six plantains and some Indian corn for the second.¹¹ Through the process of slavery, the slave's mind is shaped to see the white Cuban as the oppressor and master, but he was also the provider of what little was given to the slave.

Another important element of the race question that developed during these years was a certain element of fear among the white power base towards the growing African population. "The image of savage spirits loomed large in the Creole imagination."¹² This fear came as a result of stories of slave revolts in other Caribbean nations such as Haiti as well as various smaller slave revolts in Cuba itself. These smaller revolts occurred as early as 1533, a revolt in which captured rebels were decapitated and had their heads put on display as common practice to threaten against future revolts. The revolts, though, continued throughout the nineteenth century, the most famous of which included one led by a woman named Carlota in 1843 whose name was used in honor as the name of the 1975 Cuban Operation Carlota into Angola. The second of the most famous revolts occurred in 1844 in which rumors that slaves, free blacks, and a few whites were plotting a coup to create a republic founded on equality for all. The rumors were squelched by a mass arrest by Spanish authorities of over four thousand in which hundreds were killed in a repression that came to be known as *La Escalera* (the ladder) because rebels were tied to ladders and beaten until they talked.¹³ Therefore, the periods in which Africans were in the majority of the population were particularly terrifying to the Spanish powers that be. Also, any form of African unification was seen as very threatening to the Spanish control. Africans were forced to denounce any type of African religion and claim Christianity. In response, though, the Africans

¹¹ Pérez. *Slaves*. 48-49.

¹² Pérez, Louis A. Jr. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press 1999. 89.

¹³ Saney. 97.

secretly used the Christian symbols and saints as symbolic versions of their own gods and symbols. These “African-derived religions became a profound unifying influence, preserving and transmitting culture and traditions that have remained vibrant to the present, leaving a profound imprint on Cuba.”¹⁴

Saney’s use of the term “imprint” is an excellent description of the affects the presence of the Africans and the cultures that accompanied them. Even while the Spanish authorities were outlawing African religions in order to protect and maintain a purely European culture, the Africans were taking the Catholic symbols given to them and using them for symbols of their own religion. The mixture that was created was purely Cuban built out of historic context and geographical place. The development of a completely new culture had begun right under the watchful eye of the Spanish authorities and it was a culture that was a result of this new mixture of races that had been created and as a result manifested itself on the island.

Defining Independence through the Independence Wars

The Cuban wars for independence generated the second major change in the status of Africans in the Cuban society. The wars created a new nationalism within Cuba that had to be defined as a free Spain in Cuba or a free Cuba. Furthermore, there was the issue of how Afro-Cubans would fit into a new Cuba. There was an interesting set of goals aligned to set the stage for the independence struggles. The white Cubans began to experience uneasiness towards Spanish authority and due to increased travel began to see the successes of free democratic institutions especially within the United States.¹⁵ The Afro-Cubans began to look for ways to use the nationalist movement to work towards their own goals of freedom and equality in order

¹⁴ Saney. 96-97.

¹⁵ Pérez, Jr. On Becoming Cuban. 89.

to ensure their place in the new social order that would rise from independence.¹⁶ This fight proved to be an interesting one historically for Afro-Cubans due to the close relation between their goals for freedom and social equality that could be approached through an overarching national agenda.¹⁷ This combination of goals allowed black and white Cubans to fight the same war on the same team, even if for different goals which would lead to a much larger role for black people on the Cuban stage.

This combined fighting began as early as the very first Cuban insurrection when Carlos Manuel Céspedes freed and armed the slaves on his plantation and brought them to join in the fight for Cuban independence on October 10, 1868. Céspedes and his followers fought under his political manifesto, the *Grito de Yara*, in which he stated, “We only want to be free and equal, as the Creator intended all mankind to be...we believe that all men were created equal” and he also was in favor of “the gradual, indemnified emancipation of slaves.” Shortly after the formation of his team of followers, he and his army camped at the Maceo farm owned by a free black man and his mulatta wife. They contributed one of Afro-Cuba’s greatest heroes in history in their son, Antonio Maceo, the “Bronze Titan” of Cuban independence.¹⁸

So, for the first time in Cuban history, an Afro-Cuban was becoming widely recognized and was playing a role on a much larger scale than any black in the history of the island. Also, blacks were fighting as equals alongside whites in the battles constituting over 70% of the Cuban army in each of the three major independence wars.¹⁹ This participation and inclusion of Afro-Cubans in the independence struggles is crucial to the understanding of the race question’s

¹⁶ Helg, Aline. Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press 1995 15.

¹⁷ Helg. 4.

¹⁸ Dosal, Paul J. Cuba Libre: A Brief History of Cuba. Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, In. 2006.

¹⁹ Sawyer. 39.

application to the wars for independence. The important factor is that the Creole elites knew that they must have the support of black Cuba in order to win the wars for independence and were therefore welcoming to their military participation, but they were much less enthusiastic about the future of free Afro-Cubans in an independent Cuba.²⁰

Therefore, the white elites welcomed the Zanjón Pact after the Ten Years War. The pact was not much more than a cease-fire and amnesty that included a few promises for social and economic reforms. The pact was not at all substantial enough for Martí and his followers who continued to fight for a year after the Ten Years War. Finally, six years after the first war for independence, slavery was formally abolished by the Spanish government.²¹ This new freedom for Afro-Cuba created a massive change in the identity picture and military leaders, politicians, and writers all began trying to best define a Cuban nation that consisted of two races.

The most famous author to emerge from the period was, of course, José Martí. Martí developed a concept of a raceless Cuba. His goal was to “unite all Cubans regardless of class or race.”²² Upon seeing the effects of abolition and watching the growing support for Antonio Maceo, many white Cubans began to fear that they might have rather remained a Spanish Cuba than risk turning into an African one. Martí’s ideas towards a united Cuba also foreshadow the future of political race rhetoric in Cuba. His concept of nation building is basically that, “blacks could be admitted into the formulation of nation on terms of equality as defined by whites.”²³ The elimination of race to Martí, it seems, was highly contingent upon the elimination of any Black Nationalism or unity for the sake of black unity. One of his more famous quotes that is

²⁰ Sawyer. 39.

²¹ Saney. 98.

²² Saney. 98.

²³ Sawyer. 40.

referenced in almost all literature on the matter reads, “The black man who proclaims his race, even if mistakenly as a way to proclaim spiritual identity with all races, justifies and provokes white racism.”²⁴ This concept of the black man never “proclaiming his race” is repeated constantly in the race dialogue white Cuba. The idea stems from a belief that if race is denied, then eventually, “Afro-Cubans would disappear through whitening in the new Cuba, and would be genetically and culturally incorporated into a white and modern nation.”²⁵

This discourse would continue to be followed throughout the second war for independence.

Quickly gaining notoriety again in what came to be called the Cry of Baraguá, Maceo and his army marched from the Oriente province where there was a much greater concentration of Afro-Cubans towards the white-dominated west of the country winning many battles along the way. His renown grew quickly on the island as well as in the United States. His ability to mobilize support, especially in the black community, began to greatly concern the white power base. Salvador Cisneros, a white president of the civilian government was worried that Maceo had plans to eventually take over the country. He said Maceo, “considers himself as the unique chief, not only of Oriente but perhaps of all of Cuba. Oh human miseries and ambitions!”²⁶ It was less important to Cisneros (and most of the aristocracy) that Maceo was winning battles and was more worried about losing control of the country to the savage Africans that were becoming so alarmingly popular.

A new respect was required for the rise of the African population, even if nothing more than a verbal one, as a powerful force, but whites maintained their powerful hold on the top of the ladder. This position allowed them to make whatever verbal concessions necessary, but still

²⁴ Pérez Jr. *On Becoming Cuban*. 91.

²⁵ Sawyer. 41.

²⁶ Helg. 74.

stifle the black voice by arguments against cultural diversity because “white” was really the only allowable culture. Pérez makes an outstanding point that is also referenced by Sawyer, “Cuba could not, under these circumstances, but default to racial categories, organized around assumptions of racial hierarchies in which white assumed a racelessness as it enjoyed a privilege of whiteness, while Cubans of color were obliged to obtain ‘equality’.”²⁷ The scene was set in which the white elites began to verbally include “all races” in the Cuban nation while setting policies and creating literature and propaganda that supported a much more exclusive *Cubanidad*.

The Republican Period

The last period of time that affected Cuban race relations before Castro is the period between the end of the second war for independence and Castro’s rise to power. Three key segments of the period include the US occupation, the implementation of Morúa law and Castro’s revolution. Though this period does not have exactly the same power as the older history in shaping the major perceptions of race in Cuba, it does have the greatest proximity to the period in which Castro was in power and influenced the climate in which he found the country when he took power.

The US occupation took a heavy toll on the progress that had been made through the independence wars. The US propaganda had portrayed the two wars, especially the second, as being led by savage, racist black insurgents. In a story regarding Maceo’s death in the second war, “*Harper’s Weekly* felt ‘assured that the death of Maceo was favorable to the revolution because it averted the danger of a race war.’²⁸ The new US officials took it upon themselves to

²⁷ Pérez. 91 and Sawyer. 40.

²⁸ Sawyer. 42-43.

rid the country of all of the dangerous rebels that had fought so bravely for its independence. It set up the Rural Guard, remarkably devoid of Afro-Cubans through a system of merit based on property ownership and literacy, whose job it was to “eliminate banditry and put down the agitators who began to grow restive at the presence of the Americans.”²⁹

Also, the provincial governor and his staff were very effective in manipulating the black leaders from the independence wars into lesser positions in which they would have little to no influence and be much less of a threat. The white leadership was then to rule in whichever way it chose because it had brought the most powerful voices they could identify under its own personal control. This control was further maintained by the limitation of suffrage to only adult males who owned at least \$250 worth of property. The Secretary of War of the time, Elihu Root, claimed that, “limited suffrage [effectively excluded] so great a proportion of the elements which have brought ruin to Haiti and San Domingo.”³⁰

The US government officials continued to enforce repressive measures aimed at breaking down any kind of unification that was occurring among Afro-Cubans. These measures were carried out in the form of taking away anything that pertained to African culture. The Rural Guard as well as the police forces within the cities was encouraged to remove anything that was used in any form of *Santeria* (an African religious system), *brujería* (witchcraft), and *nañiguismo* (participation in secret societies).³¹ All of these measures were in response to the beliefs and directions of the racial liberal, Fernando Ortiz. Ortiz believed and widely propagated that all separation between the races was a result of culture and that every race could graduate to that of the Anglo-Saxon through cultivation and teaching. The “black primitivism explained

²⁹ Keen and Haynes. 427.

³⁰ Keen and Haynes. 428.

³¹ Helg. 112.

black and white criminality in Cuba: Criminality was a result of the primitive African, who was altogether incapable of moral discernment.”³²

But, as segregation continued in the educational and social arena, the black Cuban community began looking outside of Cuba for answers to their need for representation. Rafael Serra, a friend of Martí’s from his exile in New York, encouraged Afro-Cubans to build organizations with the goal of moving forward. These ideas became a reality in the form of the Partido Independiente de Color. Evaristo Estenoz formed the political party advocating free education, state control of private schools, abolition of the death penalty, reform of the criminal justice system, and an end to the ban on nonwhite immigration. In response, the legislature created an electoral amendment called the Morúa Law in 1911, that made black political parties illegal, in order to justify a massive arrest of 200 PIC members.

The party turned militant as a result, and planned a massive protest in the Oriente Province in 1912. The Cuban government quickly and harshly destroyed the protest. Police and militias made up of white citizens organized for the sole purpose of breaking up the protests killed more than 4,000 Afro-Cubans in the repression. The actions were applauded by a few white Cuban press organizations some even supporting the organization of secret militant groups like the Ku Klux Klan. The response was greatly divided between both white and black politicians. The black congressman, for whom the Morúa law had been named, signed a declaration proclaiming that there was no racial discrimination in Cuba.³³

Again, the repressive actions of the whites were justified through claims that the organization was anti-Cuban and racist. The new racial equality message, in effect, licensed

³² Sawyer. 44.

³³ Sawyer. 45-46.

whites to do almost anything they deemed necessary to maintain power because, “the myth served to brand as racist any attempts by blacks to organize separately to protest racial discrimination.”³⁴ The laws and the propaganda was written in such a way so that there was no way that blacks could gain any ground because whites could always claim in some way that they were acting against the raceless Cuban principles. Thus, the concept of the whites continuing to be given the luxury of remaining white and the blacks being forced to learn to be white in order to hold up the raceless society maintained its stranglehold on the country’s social stage.

In the years leading up to Castro’s rise to power, there is interesting evidence of a repetition of the way in which Afro-Cubans first were given the chance to participate in Cuban society. The whites had become tired of a poorly governed economy and the blacks latched onto the general direction of white public opinion to advance their own cause. Juan Almeida, a black Cuban, who still maintains a position in Castro’s inner circle stated, “I joined primarily because I felt the need to do something for my people, my country, and thereby eliminate this damned racial discrimination.”³⁵ Again also, interestingly enough, Castro utilizes the black power force to achieve his personal goals to take power and then becomes very quiet on the race issue upon arriving in office. “Castro and his followers attempted to treat blacks as clients of the revolution and to contain their growing power and influence, maintaining the regime’s image as a champion of blacks without causing fear and alienation among whites.”³⁶ Castro was so intent upon playing into the politics of both groups that some parts of his movement even utilized racist

³⁴ Helg. 106.

³⁵ Sawyer. 53.

³⁶ Sawyer. 53.

caricatures of Batista, a mulatto, to build white support for the revolution. These cartoons called Batista “el mulatto malo” and “the black beast.”³⁷

The revolution was not entirely difficult for Castro. He was able to come in at a time in which the white elites had grown weary of Batista and his failing economic policies. He was further able to exploit the ways in which Batista had failed the Afro-Cubans and promise an economy in which equality would be the key to its success. These most recent occurrences coupled with the troubled racial history of Cuba created an environment for radical change to take place, but it would not be an easy change or an immediate change. “The regime of Fidel Castro forged a racial ideology that was based upon the pre-existing Cuban attitudes toward race, the practical circumstances of the moment, and a new vision for Cuba, combining old attitudes with a new state ideology: Marxism.”³⁸

³⁷ De la Fuente, Alejandro. A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth Century Cuba. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001. 253.

³⁸ Sawyer. 49.

Chapter 2

Race Policy from 1959-1989

Many social scientists have found that racism is clearly manifested differently from one country to the next. Racial ideologies are created and affected by many factors including history, politics, class structure, and culture that combine to form individual perceptions of race and create very distinct ideologies about how to combat racial discrimination. For instance, it is widely believed among North American evidence-based theories that one of the sole reasons for the continuation of racist mentalities lies in the continuation of segregated residential areas. Whereas, in Brazil, segregated residences are only evidence of class differences and therefore do not actually make race the independent factor.³⁹ In the U.S. model, the issue has been approached through a capitalist “meritocracy” approach in which the hardest-working or the most intelligent members of society are rewarded. This concept has shown flaws, though, in the ways in which merit is determined such as test scores for college entrance. These scores often reflect intellectual ability much less than they reflect an individual’s ability to pay for test preparation or better education. On the other hand, a much more socialist approach would be a quota system. The first response from a more liberal capitalist to the quota system is that the necessary competition for jobs is eliminated allowing a persistence of racial thinking due to the perceptions of “hand-out” jobs. This system is more quickly accepted in Brazil in which it is believed that social networks created by class are more often determinants of access to jobs or education. Thus, it is more accepted to institute quota systems to ensure that classes with less access to necessary social networks and outlets have equal opportunities.⁴⁰ This Brazilian

³⁹ Telles, Edward. Race in Another America. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004. 2-3.

⁴⁰ Telles. 260.

ideology is much more similar to Castro's and has been referred to at times as "Latin American Exceptionalism" in which it is believed that racism is merely a product of attribution of differences to race rather than to their actual cause which is believed to be class differences. This is attributed to the Latin American nations' higher levels of race mixing through intermarriage and an acceptance of ethnicity as a continuum ranging from the "whitest" white to the "blackest" black rather than the "one drop rule" accepted in the U.S. Due to this much less definable nature of racial categories in Latin America, the tendency has been to turn to a class-based solution as it is believed to be a much more salient factor.⁴¹ These exceptionalists would argue that racism does not exist in a society where race mixing is occurring and that the only possible problems are created through class differences. This ideology has generally become accepted by those claiming Latin American nations such as Brazil as racial democracies, bereft of the kind of racism present in the U.S. and only struggling from inequality created by class.⁴²

Fidel Castro's rise to power brought with it the greatest changes in race policy and race relations in the history of Cuba. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, his arrival on the Cuban scene was marked by a very segregated racial picture:

"Racial barriers were particularly visible in areas of social life, in which open racial segregation was not uncommon. Blacks and mulattoes were discriminated against in luxury hotels, restaurants, cabarets, bars, beaches, and social clubs. Their children could not attend the best private schools even if they had the financial means to afford them. Segregation was also evident in some public spaces such as the central parks of several towns across the island. Blackness remained a formidable barrier against social ascent and mobility, particularly in the higher strata of society."⁴³

⁴¹ Sawyer. 21.

⁴² Sawyer. 22.

⁴³ De la Fuente. 260.

In the same way that the original revolutionaries in the 19th century used the racial landscape in their favor, it would turn out to be a picture that he could manipulate to serve in many ways to be an ally on many different fronts. Castro's race policy showed great fluidity as he made a very calculated determination of what would bring him the greatest amount of support from the greatest number of people. Through strong oration and publication coupled with highly generalized policies, Castro was able to say almost whatever he wanted about the status of the race situation in Cuba. Therefore, the first section of this chapter will focus on Castro introducing his ideas on race through a series of speeches. The second part will demonstrate a focus on using the "Cuban miracle" to show superiority over enemy nations who, according to the revolutionary government, were still failing in their own pursuits of racial equality. The last section will focus on the peak of Castro's successes as well as a look at the 1981 census data to determine if it implies the same successes by comparing ethnicity percentages of the population in education and labor.

Through the first months of his ascent to power Castro worked very hard to maintain a general silence on the race issue while still claiming a desire to create a singular "Cubanness." He did not, though, immediately explain what that singularity would look like or how it would be achieved. This silence would become a hallmark of many of Castro's policies as the divisive race issue was avoided in times when consolidating power was most needed. In fact, there would be another three months until he even mentioned the race situation publicly. Finally, on March 22, 1959, Castro made his first statements regarding race in Cuba and his plans to unify the races of the country. "One of the battles which must be increasingly and daily emphasized—is that which will end racial discrimination in labor....Of all the forms of racial discrimination,

the worst is that which limits Cuban Negroes' access to workplaces."⁴⁴ He went on to state that racial prejudices were manifested in two ways in Cuba:

"The one practiced in cultural and recreational resorts and that practiced in workplaces....Whereas the first limits entry into certain circles, the second is a thousand times more cruel, for it limits access to the centers where one earns a living; it limits the possibilities of satisfying personal needs."⁴⁵

Furthermore, he explained that the root of the prejudices lay in the fact that schools remained segregated:

"....Negroes and whites have been educated separately. Yet, in the small public schools Negroes and Whites are not separate. In the small public schools Whites and Negroes learn to live together as brothers. If they are together at school, they can be so afterwards in the recreational centers and everywhere else. But if they are educated separately and the aristocracy does educate its children apart from the Negro—it is logical that later on Negroes and Whites cannot attend the same cultural and recreational centers together. What is to be done? *Simply* to unify our public schools....so that later the white man and the black man will be in a position to earn their living together at the same workplaces."⁴⁶

Castro believed that by pronouncing that there would be no more public segregation or discrimination against anyone on racial grounds that he could end all racial prejudices that were still maintained in the country:

"[It should not] be necessary to legislate against an absolute prejudice. What we need is to curse and condemn such men who, because of ancient vices and prejudices, show no scruples in discriminating against and ill-treating Cubans because of their lighter or darker hue....It's unnecessary to decree legal sanctions or draft a law to support a campaign for the consumption by Cubans of national products. By the same token, we are going to put an end to racial discrimination in workplaces by launching a campaign against such an odious and repulsive system. The slogan will be: "Opportunity to work to all Cubans, without discrimination of race or sex."....Thus, step by step, we will be forging a new fatherland."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Castro, Fidel. Speech 22 March 1959. In René Depestre. Por La Revolución, Por La Poesía. "Carta de Cuba el Imperialismo de la mala fé." Havana: Instituto del Libro 1969. 92.

⁴⁵ Castro, Fidel. Speech 22 March 1959.

⁴⁶ Castro, Fidel. Speech 22 March 1959

⁴⁷ Castro, Fidel. Speech 22 March 1959

This “new fatherland” would prove to be much more difficult to “forge” than he had ever imagined. He had now publicly announced that a racial discrimination actually existed and that he believed it could be ended through a few quick measures and a general belief across Cuba that every Cuban was now equal. It is important to note the reasons he stated that the discrimination existed and the ways in which he claims it could be remedied. He stated that there is discrimination in the workplace, in social arenas, and in public schools. It is interesting that he did not mention that there were any existing racial problems within the governmental structure. This diversion will be addressed later. Through a very aggressive approach to, what could be called, “zero balancing” everyone in the country by creating a classless and equal playing field, Castro believed, or at least claimed to believe, that there would be no way that racial prejudices could be maintained.

He began by working through the areas that could most easily be influenced by government intervention. These were the beaches and social clubs of the country in which racial discrimination was maintained through charging high membership fees and restricting access to private beach areas. Castro again completed an impressive balancing act by stating that “the people” would have access to “the sand and the sea only.”⁴⁸ In this manner, he was able to avoid dealing with integrating the elite social clubs immediately and still allow the “have-nots” greater access to the best beaches in Cuba.

This model of policy seems to become more and more prevalent in Castro’s declarations as he worked to develop a society in which he could claim that there was no longer white or black...only Cubans. Furthermore, this erasing of color must be done in a way that allowed blacks to maintain the idea of “the revolution is for us,” and for the whites to remain confident

⁴⁸ De la Fuente. 269.

that their place at the top of at least the class hierarchy was not going to be shaken. This part of Castro's policy was much more challenging for him. After his speeches about opening the clubs to "the people," there began what one would describe as "a general uproar" from the well to do neighborhoods of Havana, Santa Clara and Camagüey. "The counter-revolution....disseminated the rumor that Fidel Castro had invited black men to invade the country's aristocratic sanctuaries to dance and revel with the vestal virgins who, up to that moment, had managed to avoid the terrible contact with black skin."⁴⁹ This uproar was accompanied by a number of whites leaving the country because Castro had made the blacks "impossible" as many of them stated.⁵⁰

Furthermore, the uproar was not relegated to white counter-revolutionaries. In fact, some mulattoes who stood in strong support of the revolution found themselves ironically against integrative measures. "Well-to-do mulattoes who had earned a pass into whiteness in Cuba's socio-racial hierarchy through education, "decency" and income perceived the crumbling of racial barriers as a threat to their precarious social position."⁵¹ Castro's project was indeed struggling to find a foothold of much needed support to undertake such a major project. He would have to respond with another flick of his charismatic magical wand to pull support back into his corner.

On March 25, 1959, only three days after his original statements, Castro quickly cleared up any doubts that whites may have had about the future of their position in society. Through a television press conference Castro further explained what he meant to do through his race policies. He began by condemning any forms of racism and racist behavior. His tone, though, seems to point to a much different attitude when he addresses blacks later in the speech saying:

⁴⁹ De la Fuente. 264

⁵⁰ De la Fuente. 264

⁵¹ De la Fuente. 265

“There is fear that by taking up the defense of the Negro the latter will become a threat to the rest of Cubans and that Negroes will no longer be respectful. I say that such fears are false because I know Cubans. I know how they react when told the truth and I know how they react when it comes to justice. I am perfectly sure that more than ever—precisely because with greater honesty than ever before their call for justice is being defended—Cuban Negroes will be even more respectful than ever. They are conscious that not to be so would give the enemies of the Revolution cause to attack them. They will be more respectful in order not to give any pretext to those who are saturated with prejudices. They will be even more respectful so as not to give the least pretext to anyone to combat our task, our revolutionary task on their behalf. Negroes will be more respectful than they have ever been, because they will want to give no pretext whatsoever to hinder the work that the Revolution is doing to create a greater fraternity and understanding among Cubans.”⁵²

Though strongly favoring racial desegregation, Castro had taken a tone that Moore went as far as to criticize as “white liberal paternalism.” His statements were seemingly altruistic, but his methods and tone unfortunately implied a much different attitude toward race. “It was out of the question for Blacks themselves to define the content of their own oppression, or define the terms of their ethnic emancipation.”⁵³ There seems to be a strong disconnect between those in power and those being “fought for” that is remarkably paternalistic in nature. Carlos Moore quotes David Booth as having understood the situation when he stated:

“In those two speeches in the early months of 1959 Fidel Castro not only identified the aspirations of his movement in relation to domestic racial discrimination but also established the limits beyond which it could go. Henceforth, he referred to the color problem in his speeches only in passing and implying that, with the campaign to end racism in workplaces and social centers completed, there was little if anything that remained to be done.”⁵⁴

Thus, a flurry of discussion on race had erupted in Cuba and would lead to some of the most focused debate and writing that had taken place on the subject in the nation’s history. Many political and social groups began to join in Castro’s campaign against racism in a massive

⁵² *Revolución*. 26 March 1959. 2. Quoted in Carlos Moore. 25.

⁵³ Moore. 28

⁵⁴ Moore 28.

popular effort. A group was created called the Movement of National Integration that would work across the country through smaller assemblies in provinces, municipalities, and workplaces. Afro-Cuban clubs such as the Provincial Federation of Societies organized talks by white government officials in their meeting places to discuss racial discrimination and unemployment. Many Groups such as the communist Partido Socialista Popular, the Socialist Youth, the Masons, schoolteachers' groups, the Catholic Workers Youth, and others began to make public announcements and publish materials supporting Castro's plans. Castro's officials even commissioned a group of psychiatrists to study the psychological dimensions of the problem and publish their findings.⁵⁵

The goals of the revolution focusing on race were not limited to Castro. Some of his highest ranking advisors began to make speeches across the country. Raúl Castro and Che Guevara made speeches to worker's rallies saying, "Our revolution will wage the final battle against the ill-fated prejudice of racial discrimination" and that "Slavery did not end in Cuba until January 1, 1959." By July of 1959, Castro went as far as to state that through "intelligent measures" Cuba was "approaching a process of abolition of racial prejudices."⁵⁶

Over the next three years Castro began to dramatically change the landscape of the Cuban society. After integrating the beaches he went after the elite social clubs. Some of these clubs were openly discriminatory, others discriminatory by maintaining membership fees that were impossible for lower class (mainly black) members of society to pay. A great example of Castro's desegregation of social clubs is evidenced in his treatment of the Havana Biltmore. The club had many wealthy foreign members and even carried a foreign name. Castro sent a strong

⁵⁵ De la Fuente. 267.

⁵⁶ De la Fuente. 267-268.

signal pointing to his intentions for the revolution by expropriating the club and naming it a *círculo social obrero* and created a new quota system for members in which, by the 1960s, 55 percent of members were earning less than \$100 a month. He had created a place that served “the workers” with the lowest incomes. He demanded that the same be done across the country and 13 *círculos* were created by October 1961.

His masking of the expropriations of the clubs as merely to serve the lower income groups was not so effective, though, when the regime began to move past some of the most expensive clubs and also began working through many of the worker’s clubs. Cubanelco, a club that belonged to the electrical workers, was highly segregated regardless of the fact that it was in no way made up of elites. This distinction points to evidence of the racial issue transcending class relations. An “Integration Committee” was formed within the electrical workers’ union whose goal it was to break down this segregation under the argument that, “It is not fair, that those who face death together at the top of the electric posts cannot have leisure together in a club that belongs to all.” The club members responded very quickly by suggesting that a new club be built that would create a place for black workers to have leisure time, and still maintain the color line. The response from Afro-Cuba workers as well as journalists was in no way favorable. In a matter of months the club was expropriated by the state and soon became another workers social circle.⁵⁷

Castro still believed strongly, though, that the greatest need for integration lay in the workforce and educational institutions. He launched a massive literacy campaign aimed at raising Cuban literacy rates overall, but the impact was felt most strongly by the black population as it made up the lowest and most undereducated classes. There was a massive push to lower

⁵⁷ De la Fuente. 272-273.

rents across the country to quickly redistribute housing in the country. Castro went as far as to suggest moving the capital from Havana to Santiago de Cuba which was a majority Afro-Cuban city.⁵⁸

The march towards a racially free Cuba was pressing forward and its next step would take it into Cuban businesses. The process was not nearly as simple as simply redesigning park landscapes to remove the racially defined areas. The state began creating employment opportunities that had never been available to Afro-Cubans in the past. Now there were positions available in banks, retail stores, and cigarette factories that Blacks had never held. Furthermore, in some industries, the state did not have to intervene at all as some of them began to create new policy requiring quotas of Black hires.⁵⁹

In other sectors of the economy the regime's goals required much greater intervention. There were not only structural issues due to the fact that there was now a huge demand for jobs without a giant increase in the job market, but there were historical issues as well. Many businesses had developed hiring systems in which greater priority was given to sons and relatives. This system allowed a much greater control over the types of hires a company was making. There were "job seeker" lists that would almost never include blacks in order to maintain a segregated workforce. Blacks would rarely even apply for these jobs as they knew that they would almost never be hired. The government found a way around directly requiring quota systems for hiring. Instead, it devised a system in which all hires were handled through the Ministry of Labor.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Sawyer. 57.

⁵⁹ De la Fuente. 273.

⁶⁰ De la Fuente. 274.

The government created the Organic Law of the Ministry of Labor in January 1960 requiring all hiring to be done through the Ministry of Labor. Thus, all jobs could be given with “justice and equality.” Through the new system, the ministry conducted censuses to determine the number, skills, place of residence, family income, and needs of the unemployed. Next, a national list of job seekers was created with each job seeker receiving a randomly assigned number. There were no hires allowed outside of the ministry’s discretion or that were not from the national job seeker registry. The official line was that “This way, the Revolutionary Government will eliminate completely all sorts of discrimination in certain labor sectors.” One writer commented, “Take an example... The proprietor from a barbershop in a lush hotel like the Havana Libre... would never have considered hiring a colored barber before the revolution. But the decision is no longer his.”⁶¹

Cuba had never looked as it did now. There was an entirely different atmosphere in which blacks and whites were educated, worked, and held leisure time together. There now existed the “ideal of brotherhood” in which no true Communist could be a racist. The government and its followers proclaimed the racially free Cuba and denounced the “white, pro-Yankee, antinational bourgeoisie that had fled the country.” There was such a strong belief in the ideal that the Second Declaration of Cuba issued in 1962 claimed that the revolution had “eradicated discrimination because of race or sex” in Cuba. Castro maintained that all racial discrimination had been destroyed along with all class privileges.⁶²

Castro and his government believed that their goals at home were complete and that it was time to begin spreading the Cuban dream to the rest of the world. He surprised the U.S.

⁶¹ De la Fuente. 274.

⁶² De la Fuente. 278-279.

government by announcing that he would be attending the U.N.'s General Assembly in September 1960. Its response was to limit the delegation to Manhattan and house them in the Sherbourne Hotel which was reportedly run by a hostile management. Furthermore, a small flurry of media activity produced stories of the delegation plucking chickens and cooking on camp stoves in their hotel rooms. Castro decided to take the treatment an opportunity for a strong and memorable response. Upon suggestion of two of his leading advisors, he moved his entire delegation to Harlem reportedly saying, “¡Vamos a darle un grán golpe a los Americanos!” (We will deal the Americans a strong blow!).⁶³

Castro had created the perfect opportunity to make a public appearance from the “people’s” side of town and use it as a platform to discuss Cuban gains in race relations while pointing out the failures of the U.S. Immediately Castro had made friends with black America by making such a bold statement in such an intense period for race relations in the U.S. The move was highly publicized by the propaganda machines in Cuba as they told the story of the “Cuban Miracle” and its spectacle in the U.S. Some news papers reports stories of New York police attacking blacks outside of Castro’s Hotel Theresea in Harlem as they shouted “We want Castro.”⁶⁴ Raúl Castro directed the Cuban people’s attention to the fact that Fidel, who had opened hotels for all was kicked out of a hotel in the U.S. and only found help from the black population. He gave a speech connecting all facets of Cuban foreign policy between Africa, the U.S. and Afro-Cuba saying:

“The Cuban nation knows that among its people there flows a fraternity based on blood kinship and identity with those who are their brothers and who are fighting European colonialism and imperialism in revolutionary Africa. The people of Cuba today unite in grateful solidarity with the entire American people whose

⁶³ Moore. 79.

⁶⁴ Moore. 79-80.

friendship they want to develop, but especially with our twenty million black American brethren who are the most exploited and humiliated of all. To them go out our friendship and solidarity.”⁶⁵

Castro remained hidden in the hotel for an entire day in order to allow time for his next move to arrive. A call was put in to Havana to send Maj. Juan Almeda Bosque a black chief of the army. He was quickly sent to New York and ushered directly to Castro’s side to join the previously all-white delegation. Upon his arrival, Castro walked onto his balcony waving to the masses below with his arm around Almeida. The crowd erupted. Castro then suggested that Almeida mingle with the crowds. The next day, the Cuban newspapers ran the headline, “Thousands of Americans Cheered Almeida While He Walked Around Harlem.”⁶⁶ Castro had created the one of the greatest propaganda moments of his career. He would later be visited in Harlem by Nikita Khrushchev and other non-aligned members pointing towards the goals of his next few years in power.

These goals became evident through his presence in Africa. He gave a five hour speech to the General Assembly on September 26 detailing his plans for Cuba and connecting its plight with that of Algeria and the Congo. Lastly, he announced that Cuba was on the side of the Algerian people and the Negroes of the Union of South Africa:

“The Africa we see represented here by leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Sékou Touré, the Africa of Nasser’s Arab world [is] the true Africa, the oppressed continent, the exploited continent, the continent which was the birthplace of millions of slaves, this Africa whose past is so full of anguish. To this Africa we have a duty: we must save it from the danger of destruction.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Castro, Raúl. Quoted in Carlos Moore. 80.

⁶⁶ Moore. 81.

⁶⁷ Castro, Fidel. Speech to the Fifteenth Session of the U.N. General Assembly. 26 Sept. 1960. Quoted in Carlos Moore. 90.

Thus, Fidel had fully displayed his goals and his methods for reaching them. He would continue to defame the U.S. using references to his successes concerning race in Cuba and pointing to the U.S. failures. At the same time, the ideologies that he had shown towards Afro-Cubans were to be directed towards the black continent itself. He jumped into both pursuits quickly and with all the flair that he had become so famous for.

The black nationalist movement in the U.S. provided a great deal of ammunition for his anti-American campaigns. As the massive Civil Rights movements began to unfold in the United States, Castro became more and more interested in how he might benefit by a United States torn apart by racial struggle. He began to involve himself in as many ways as possible in the black nationalist movement. Throughout the most tense periods of the U.S. situation, a few radicals from the black nationalist movement sought asylum in Cuba.⁶⁸ Castro welcomed them with open arms. The greatest publicity of these interactions came through the Black Panthers' connections with Castro and their growing fascination with socialism.

Major players in the Black Panthers movement such as Huey Newton and Angela Davis travelled to Cuba to see the "social miracle" that had taken place there.⁶⁹ They returned to the U.S. invigorated with a new hope for socialism and its ability to change the racial landscape of a country. Others, though, such as Stokely Carmichael and Robert Williams were less convinced. Upon deciding to live in China rather than Cuba, Williams wrote an internationally distributed newsletter claiming, that power in Cuba was controlled by a "white petit bourgeoisie." His statements came five years after he had first arrived in Cuba in exile and called it, "The mirror of

⁶⁸ Sawyer. 80.

⁶⁹ Sawyer. 86.

the future.”⁷⁰ Carmichael went to Cuba expecting to see the “miracle” and returned disenchanted with socialism arguing that, “Communism is not an ideology fitted for black people, period....the ideologies of communism and socialism speak to class struggle....[Neither] communism nor socialism...speak to the problem of racism.”⁷¹ “Angela Davis, though, made a very strong response to Carmichael’s speech after attending saying, “His speech was all the more disturbing because I knew that he had been in Cuba the preceding summer and had been warmly received wherever he went. I knew for a fact that Cuba had unequivocally demonstrated to him that socialism alone could liberate black people.”⁷²

Though Castro did receive a strong blow from the statements of a few of the exiles, overall, their presence in the country was an outstanding tool. Castro was able to point all attention at the situation in the United States and away from the situation in Cuba. He had generally closed the case on race in Cuba after his reforms in 1962 so the U.S. situation could not have come at a better time. The ways in which he shunned the race discussions about his own country, though, are some of the most discussed policies that he ever employed. Castro did whatever possible to maintain that the problem did not stem from race, but from class. Thus, he believed that his policies that would create an equal class situation would erase any visible existence of race other than skin color. Therefore, he began to count any discussion of race or racial discrimination as counterrevolutionary and did everything possible to eradicate any discussion of that nature. These ideas drew a very strong correlation with those of the original Cuban revolutionaries discussed earlier such as José Martí who had claimed that there was no

⁷⁰ Moore. 255.

⁷¹ Carmichael, Stokely. “A Declaration of War.” Speech at the Oakland Auditorium (California). 17 Feb. 1968. Quoted in Carlos Moore. 261.

⁷² Davis, Angela. Angela Davis: An Autobiography. (New York: Random House. 1974). Quoted in Mark Sawyer. 96.

white or black only Cuban. The policy creates a very difficult situation in which there is no way to make any sort of racial discrimination claim.

The excited discussion and debate of the 1959-1962 period abruptly ended as any discussion of race began to disappear from the public sphere. An interview conducted in 1968 with an Afro-Cuban stated, "The problem in Cuba is that there is a taboo on talking about racism, because officially it does not exist anymore."⁷³ By 1961 Castro and his team had fully deemed their revolution a "socialist" revolution and therefore had to maintain the attitude that there were no longer racial differences. These attitudes were expected to just disappear through the zero balancing of the economy in which, generally, all job opportunities and incomes would become equal. There still remained a group of Afro-Cuban intellectuals that desired to continue to write about the racial situation in Cuba, but there was no longer a forum to do so as all media was now state-controlled. Furthermore, all racially defined organizations such as the National Federation of Societies (a political awareness group) and the Afro-Cuban club Atenas and many other expressions of black culture were slowly removed from the society. The Afro-Cuban societies were dismantled through a series of motions carried out under the pretext of a sort of audit designed to remove groups that were not following procedures pertaining to tax and filing. These groups were broken down by sweeping governmental action against many organizations such as civic or mutual aid societies. The revolutionary government closed over 170 of these organizations that were deemed contrary to the direction of the revolution publishing the organizations' names in the *Combate 13 de Marzo* newspaper in September 1961.⁷⁴

⁷³ De la Fuente. 279.

⁷⁴ De la Fuente. 280.

Thus, a closing of the Cuban side of racial battles and an opening of attention towards the U.S. struggle revealed an interesting irony in the government's ideas on race policy. This irony would be evident in even more ways as the 1980s approached and then even greater during the economic crisis of the 1990s. The 1980s were opened with a surprising move on the part of the government as census data including racial data was produced. These data were the first to be published since Castro had taken power because the 1970 data did not include ethnicity numbers. This is not to say that the 1970 questionnaire did not include questions regarding race, though. The data was just never published. All other data collected from the 1970 census was published except the race data. In fact, Lourdes Casal, a black Cuban scholar, reported going to the National Archives of Cuba in 1970 and finding that all data collected on race in the 1970 census had disappeared.⁷⁵

Thus, the 1970 data remains a complete mystery and, interestingly enough, the 1981 census data revealed another mystery. This time, the data collected on race was included. The numbers regarding education and the labor market show a great progress in equalizing the racial landscape. There is even evidence in which the portion of black population that had graduated high school was even higher than that of the white percentage. The data is remarkable in that it gives evidence that the disparities between white and black portions are never more than 1.5%, a number that is very respectable even among much more developed nations:

⁷⁵ Moore. 360.

1981 Census Data⁷⁶

Territory, Skin Color	Entire Country	Percent Total	Urban	Percent Total	Rural	Percent Total
Total	9,723, 605	100%	6, 712, 030	100%	3, 011, 575	100%
White	6, 415, 468	66%	4, 394, 600	65%	2, 020, 868	67%
Mulatto	2,125, 418	22%	1, 394, 184	21%	731, 234	24%
Black	1, 168, 695	12%	913, 434	14%	255, 261	8%

Percent of Population Aged 25 or Over Having Completed High School or College in 1981⁷⁷

	Whites	Blacks	Mulattoes
High School	9.9	11.2	9.6
College	4.4	3.5	3.2

The total percentages of the population, though, have been scrutinized with great interest by a large body of researchers. It seems like there is very little consensus as to the actual number. Each study has returned very different responses ranging from a total Afro-Cuban descent of around 33.9% (the actual 1981 census data)⁷⁸ to numbers as high as 70% (the 1983 French yearbook *Quid*).⁷⁹ The revolutionary government has even made some remarks of its own regarding the numbers that bring them even further into question. In an interview with foreign journalists that was not published in Cuba, Fidel even stated, “African blood flows in the veins of half of Cuba’s population.”⁸⁰ Another of Castro’s advisors Walterio Carbonnell confirmed the statement estimating that the Cuban Blacks made up at least 50% of the

⁷⁶ Cuba. Censo de Población y Viviendas 1981. República de Cuba 1981. 16:12.

⁷⁷ Cuba. Censo. 67-70. Quoted in De la Fuente. 310-311.

⁷⁸ Cuba. Censo. 16:12.

⁷⁹ Moore. 362.

⁸⁰ Moore. 359.

population also stating that within Castro's inner circle it was believed that Cuba had a "colored" majority. He explained that this belief was generally decided to be a taboo that was not discussed.⁸¹ The contradictions in the numbers lead to many questions, but the manner stated in the Cuban Census of enumerating the ethnicity is even more circumspect.

The enumerators did use one of the two required techniques for counting ethnicity by choosing to allow the counter to determine the race of each person counted saying, "El enumerador tenía las instrucciones de anotar sin hacer la pregunta a las personas presentes durante la entrevista."⁸² (The enumerator had instructions to note [the race] without asking the persons present during the interview.) The problem with this method of enumerating is that it does not allow those interviewed to counter the perception of his or her race. This kind of data collection is especially troublesome in Latin America due to the broad levels of miscegenation that make race very difficult to define. Presumably, in order to combat this problem the government also included the line, "Las categorías se referían al concepto que entiende comúnmente la población y no reflejan realmente razas o color."⁸³ (The categories referred to the population's commonly understood concept and do not really reflect race or color). It is hard to begin to guess what the census bureau had in mind by stating that the numbers did not reflect races or color. It does lead to various assumptions about what the revolution wanted portrayed. The numbers regarding participation in the labor force only line up with acceptable representation of the population if the numbers of the population are what the census says they are.

⁸¹ Moore. 359.

⁸² Cuba. Censo 1981. XXXVIII.

⁸³ Cuba. Censo 1981. XXXVIII.

The credibility of Latin American census data has been studied by Latin American historians for decades. The difficulty in studying the data is always attributed to the race continuum that remains prevalent in most Latin American societies. It has been very difficult to make comparisons across countries and many times even within countries due to the constant changing of the manner in which race data is collected. “The criteria employed have differed from census to census, but it is obvious that cultural and social characteristics by and large have played a much greater role than the phenotype of the individual.”⁸⁴ This information is helpful in understanding the statement that the numbers “do not really reflect race or color.” Race data, therefore, has not been studied as evidence of changing phenotypes or genetic compositions, but rather the changes in the ethnic groups created by shifting concepts of race and its impact on political policies. These forms of study have been applied across Latin America to study the effects of policy changes on indigenous populations in much of Central America and on the black/white question in Brazil. The importance applied to the data is in the comparison of different ethnic groups to the rest of the population, but also generally understands that some changes are created through acculturation which continues to be a contributing factor through miscegenation.⁸⁵ These studies all seem to remain accurate when applied to the Cuban situation. There are certainly deductions that can be made through attention to race data, but the accuracy of the data will always remain in question as long as there is no clear way to define race and that, as evidenced by myriad scholars still remains a highly elusive term.

If one was to follow the numbers from many of the third party estimates of the Cuban ethnicity percentages, the picture would show a gross underrepresentation in many fields of the

⁸⁴ Mörner, Magnus. “Historical Research on Race Relations in Latin America.” Race and Class in Latin America. Ed by Magnus Mörner. New York & London: Columbia University Press 1970. 201.

⁸⁵ Mörner. 202-203.

society. There must have been some indicators apparent to Castro and his leadership that the situation was not taken care of because after almost a 25 year silence on the issue, he re-opened the issue of race in the Third Congress for the Communist Party of Cuba in 1986. Castro stated that, leadership should “duly reflect the ethnic composition of our people” and that the promotion of blacks, “must not be left to chance.”⁸⁶ He then asked that new affirmative action type policies be enacted to bring in more Afro-Cubans, women, and youth into the party.⁸⁷ Thus, Castro had begun to once again accept that there was an undeniable black presence in the country and that a direct equalization of the economy was not going to create the kind of broad representation in all fields of the society that he had hoped for. He had also abandoned his original “no hay raza” stance by directly pointing to the absence of Afro-Cuban representation in the upper echelons of the Cuban government. Thus, Castro demonstrates a veritable shift in his ideology. He has realized that a strict adherence to silence on racial issues has not been fully successful and shows that he is not above tempering his policy to pursue greater success.

These policy changes did see some progress as a shift occurred in the black representation in the Cuban parliament. In 1986, the total representation of Afro-Cubans jumped a remarkable 89.1% to an all-time high of 35.5%. According to the census data taken five years earlier, the representation was well above the total percentage of the Afro-Cuban population.⁸⁸ Again though, it is important to remember that those numbers have been highly criticized. Also, by 1991, during what is referred to as the “Special Period” which will be discussed later, the

⁸⁶ Castro, Fidel. Main Report: Third Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Havana: Editorial Política 80. Quoted in Isaac Saney. Cuba: A Revolution in Motion. Black Point and New York: Fernwood and Zed Publishing 2004. 106.

⁸⁷ Saney. 106.

⁸⁸ Sawyer. 71.

number fell back to 20% below its height from five years before.⁸⁹ These shifts in representation become more and more evident as the economic crisis grew and will be looked at in depth in the next chapter.

The government was not the only place that the representation of race seemed a little inconsistent. There are many reports of an overabundance of Afro-Cubans represented in the prisons as well as in the poorest housing areas. One of the main reasons for the prison situation has been attributed to a statement in the Cuban penal code of 1979. This code includes a clause relating to individuals with a “social proclivity” to commit crimes. This clause allowed anyone with behavior “manifestly against the norms of socialist morality” to be jailed. Therefore, police were able to arrest anyone they deemed “socially dangerous.” The problems with this measure are obvious, but they are even more troubling when one looks to the number of individuals jailed under the *peligrosidad* law. A 1987 study commissioned by the Cuban attorney general showed that Afro-Cubans had made up 78% of the 643 “social danger” cases submitted to the Havana City courts between May and December of 1986.⁹⁰

These small but highly contradictory statements and policies become more and more evident as the revolutionary government’s grip on the Cuban economy begins to falter during the Special Period. Much like the U.S., Cuban policy makers realized that changes could be made to eliminate the greatest public and social barriers, but the underlying racist mentalities would be much harder to affect through policy-making. It would be naive to suggest that the government failed altogether in their struggle to eliminate institutionalized racism. On the other hand, it seems that the incredible progress made remained relegated to the realms of the social sphere, the

⁸⁹ Sawyer. 71.

⁹⁰ De la Fuente, Alejandro and Alejandro Vázquez. “La peligrosidad en ciudad de la Habana (1986). Unpublished report to the office of the Attorney General. 1987. Quoted in De la Fuente. 315.

job sector, and education. Areas such as housing and wealth distribution where there was still work to be done across the country remained highly segregated. These inequalities were only exacerbated by the onslaught of the economic depression of the Special Period. Though the revolutionary government had made incredible changes to the racial landscape, it was still clear that all was not accomplished. Castro, though, does not cling to a solely class-based ideology when this inequity becomes apparent. He makes a shift to what Edward Telles called a “Universalist Mantra” in which racial ideology is no longer solely class-based or race-based.⁹¹ Castro realized that by merely restructuring the economic classes of the nation, there still remained racist attitudes and evidences of discrimination. Therefore, he began to make a shift to an acceptance of the existence of race through its appearance in census data as well as his admissions in the Third Congress and made policy shifts directly related to reshaping the racial stratification of the society.

⁹¹ Telles. 256.

Chapter 3

Race Policy and the Special Period

The Special Period in Cuban history is defined as the period following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. Due to the U.S. trade embargo and the strength of the Soviet Union, Cuba had developed a very strong dependency on the Soviet Union. Its entire economy was held up by the Soviet Union and various partners in Eastern Europe. As this market collapsed, Cuba was left with almost no way to trade internationally and its economy went into a depression so deep that between 1989 and 1993 the gross domestic product declined by 40%.⁹² The sudden dramatic change in the economy put a very heavy and unexpected burden on the revolutionary government. This burden acted as a litmus test for the true status of race relations in the country and revealed that the underlying racial inequalities that had been changed, smoothed, or covered over by socialist policies were much greater than expected.

The stagnant economy forced the Cuban government to begin seeking new policies to stabilize it. These policies did allow for some levels of recovery, but they came with the price of greater inequalities than had been experienced earlier in the revolutionary period. One of the most dramatic of these policies was the legalization of U.S. dollars. Under the current socialist mantra of a society that was unaffected by race and only class, any changes in the economy should have affected members of all races. In the case of family remittances, though, there was a grave inequality. The problem was the massive difference in the racial structure of Cubans living in the United States. The 1990 U.S. census stated that the Cuban immigrant base in the

⁹² De la Fuente. 317.

U.S. was 83.5% white.⁹³ Therefore, the percentage of people in Cuba receiving dollar remittances was equally off balance in favor of whites.

The importance of having access to U.S. dollars goes well beyond its stability compared to the Cuban peso. "In a sense, Cuba today has not one population, but two: those with dollars and those without."⁹⁴ There is a major difference between the items available for purchase to those holding dollars and those who do not. Some medicines, clothing, and foods are only available for purchase with dollars.⁹⁵ The vast importance of owning dollars has created the largest inequality gap since the advent of Castro's government. The fact that dollars are most often gained through family remittances has created vast differences in the black/white sphere due to the racial composition of the Cuban immigrant population in the U.S. This problem is compounded by the inequalities of employment in the new tourist industry that was quickly developed to assist in pulling the economy out of depression.

The tourist industry has created the second most important source of dollars for Cubans. For the first four years after the fall of the Soviet Union a system of "tourist apartheid" was created in which some hotels and special "dollar stores" were available only to tourists. The situation did not last long, though, because, in 1993, a large group of Cuban citizens began breaking into stores in the new hotels to loot for food as well as to seek vengeance for their plight. A riot ensued that had to be quelled by police and even merited an appearance of Fidel himself to be calmed. Shortly thereafter, dollars became legal for all Cubans.⁹⁶

⁹³ De la Fuente. 319.

⁹⁴ Sawyer. 108.

⁹⁵ Sawyer. 108-109.

⁹⁶ Sawyer. 109.

Now access to dollars is gained through either remittances or tourists. Therefore, employment in the tourist industry is the most sought after in the country. Another inconsistency in race policy has been created by the tourist industry as well though. Due to the fact that the new hotels are run by foreign corporations, they do not follow the aforementioned hiring laws. The government is so dependent on the foreign corporations that it has generally been the policy to allow the foreign corporations "complete autonomy to select, hire, and when necessary, fire the hotel's employees."⁹⁷ These shifts have allowed the racial landscape of the tourist sector to be changed dramatically. Whereas during the 1980s blacks were highly represented in the tourist industry, it is reported that their numbers have quickly fallen. A 1994 survey revealed that blacks do not have the same employment opportunities as whites in the tourist industry. These statements have been explained by interviews such as one conducted by Rafael Duharte and Elsa Santos in 1994 which includes a white female hotel manager's words:

"Yes, it is true, there is a lot of racial prejudice in the tourist sector. I have worked there for about a year and I know that there is a lot of racism. In my corporation, for instance, out of five hundred workers there are only five blacks....There is no explicit policy stating that one has to be white to work in tourism, but it is regulated that people must have a pleasant aspect, and blacks do not have it....It is so rare to find a black woman in tourism that when there is one, people comment that she must be going to bed with an important boss. The few black men who work in tourism always perform manual labor, such as driving trucks or lifting merchandise in the warehouses. They never work directly with the tourists."⁹⁸

There is a discussed concept of a "good presence" that is generally used to determine eligibility to work in the tourist industry. It is generally accepted that within the concept it is believed that "blackness is ugly and that blacks—their formal schooling notwithstanding—lack

⁹⁷ De la Fuente. 320.

⁹⁸ Duharte and Santos. *El Fantasma de la Esclavitud*. 126-127. Quoted in de la Fuente. 319-320.

proper manners, 'cultural level' and education in their social relationships.⁹⁹ These statements are not merely underlying examples of remnant racial prejudices that have carried over from pre-revolutionary periods. In fact, it would be short-sighted to call them anything but direct discrimination on basis of race. In order to maintain the level of needed economic support Castro and his leadership have turned from their original policies of creating a raceless economy to allow some discrimination to take place if it means survival of the economy.

Further examples of inequalities have even surfaced in the informal market. The repressions on small business by the government have forced many Cubans to turn to the informal market. In fact, the informal market has become so prevalent that the government even has admitted it existed. The most common, as well as the most accepted, forms of illegal trade usually involve renting rooms to foreigners without licenses or skimming gasoline or foods from state resources to sell.¹⁰⁰ An interview with a retired official revealed: "We know that the majority of the population is involved in some form of illegal trade. However, we understand that some of this activity is necessary given the embargo and the special period for survival and comfort of our people."¹⁰¹ Due to their already disadvantaged status, many Afro-Cubans have turned to the less desirable illegal market opportunities such as petty crime, hustling tourists, and prostitution. These practices only serve to proliferate the already strong beliefs among many of the white population that blacks are more prone to crime. Afro-Cubans on the other hand point to their lack of dollars and resources as the reason for their inabilities to participate in the more socially accepted sectors of the illegal market.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ De la Fuente. 320.

¹⁰⁰ Sawyer 112.

¹⁰¹ Sawyer. 113.

¹⁰² Sawyer. 114.

Other forms of labor discrimination have been evident even outside of the tourism industry. Government positions are usually awarded on a “merit system.” Interviewees report that more often than not whites are considered more worthy on account of “merit.” These merits are awarded through service to the revolution. It is reportedly not impossible to work hard enough to be rewarded with a position, but it is very difficult for Afro-Cubans. One interviewee stated, “No one will say, ‘you can’t have the job because you are black.’ It is always discussed in terms of merit. In Cuba and especially in Havana, it isn’t so much bad to be black, but there are advantages to being white—rich relatives, perceptions of merit, and many other things you just can’t count.”¹⁰³ These perceptions of the government’s methods for distributing jobs, regardless of their validity, seem to be generally accepted and are therefore highly affecting the ideas of the population towards the government’s “equality goals.”

Finally, there continues to be an overrepresentation of blacks in the prisons and under police scrutiny. There is a generally accepted belief that blacks are more prone to criminality than whites and are therefore the focus of many police investigations. These beliefs have been backed up by various interviews as well as in statements from Castro himself. A white female professional stated that, “A lot of stealing was going on and they [Afro-Cubans] were accused. Fidel offended them by saying something to the effect of ‘Old Havana is full of Eastern delinquents.’”¹⁰⁴ Another interviewee described the overt belief that blacks were generally the cause of crimes in the city, “If you describe a crime to someone, the first question they will ask is, ‘Were they black?’”¹⁰⁵ These beliefs make finding employment even more difficult for blacks

¹⁰³ Sawyer. 117.

¹⁰⁴ De la Fuente. 328.

¹⁰⁵ Sawyer. 119.

due to the turn toward a more liberal economy and the cycle of poverty and forced turns to less desirable employment continues.

These beliefs about crimes have forced an apparent turn towards “protecting” Havana from the growing entrance of Afro-Cubans. The U.S. State Department issued a Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Cuba in 2000. The report pointed to the focus on internal migration and the institution of the 1997 Cuban Decree 217. The government’s stated goal for the Decree was to slow the increase of migration into the capital city in order to protect it against the growing stress on infrastructure. Police were allowed to check an individual’s identification to determine if they were living in the city illegally. Any found in violation of the Decree were fined \$15 and sent home. The report also stated that human rights groups have observed that, “while the decree affected migration countrywide, it was targeted at individuals and families, who are predominantly of African descent, from the more impoverished eastern provinces.”¹⁰⁶

This focus on controlling the increase of an Afro-Cuban population in the city may point to part of the reason for the inclusion of the race data in the 1981 as well as the 2002 Cuban census data. In a country that is supposed to maintain a “colorblind” perspective, there seems to be a growing attention to the Afro-Cuban population and its movements. Interestingly enough, the ethnicity data for both censuses was listed by the total population, the urban population, and the rural population.¹⁰⁷ It is important to note also that the 2002 census also included the same definitions of race with the ironic lines stating, “El enumerador tenía las instrucciones de anotar sin hacer la pregunta a las personas presentes durante la entrevista,” (The numerator had instructions to note [the race] without asking the question to the people present during the

¹⁰⁶ U.S. State Department. Cuba: Country Report on Human Rights Practices. 2000. 23 Feb. 2001.

¹⁰⁷ Cuba. Censo de Población y Viviendas 1981 and 2002. Havana: 1981 and 2002.

interview) and "Las características se refirieron al concepto al concepto que entiende comúnmente la población y no reflejan realmente razas."¹⁰⁸ (The characteristics referred to the concept that is communally understood by the population and does not really reflect races.)

These points make the data seem less and less credible for two reasons. First, the government is not allowing the citizens to determine their race. Secondly, it seems that the government is trying to downplay the data by stating that the numbers do not really reflect race. In a society in which it is claimed that race does not exist, the census reports cannot claim to actually list race. There is obviously some concern about race on the part of the government, though, because the data has been collected and published.

Below is the information on race and region from the 1981 and 2002 censuses for the purpose of comparing the shifts in the population.

1981 Census Data¹⁰⁹

Territory, Skin Color	Entire Country	Percent Total	Urban	Percent Total	Rural	Percent Total
Total	9,723, 605	100%	6, 712, 030	100%	3, 011, 575	100%
White	6, 415, 468	66%	4, 394, 600	65%	2, 020, 868	67%
Mulatto	2,125, 418	22%	1, 394, 184	21%	731, 234	24%
Black	1, 168, 695	12%	913, 434	14%	255, 261	8%

2002 Census Information¹¹⁰

Territory, Skin Color	Entire Country	Percent Total	Urban	Percent Total	Rural	Percent Total
Total	11, 177, 743	100%	8, 479,329	100%	2, 698, 414	100%
White	7, 271, 926	65%	5, 522, 013	65%	1, 749, 913	65%
Mulatto	2, 778, 923	25%	1, 998, 235	24%	780, 688	29%
Black	1, 126, 894	10%	959, 081	11%	167, 813	6%

¹⁰⁸ Cuba. Censo de Población y Viviendas 2002. Havana: 2002.

¹⁰⁹ Cuba. Censo de Población y Viviendas 1981. República de Cuba 1981. 16:12.

¹¹⁰ Cuba. Censo 2002.

There seems to be a concerted effort to map the direction of population movements as well as control it. Referring to the 1981 information from Chapter 2, the urban Afro-Cuban population has grown by over 649,000. Also, the percentage of the Afro-Cuban (black and mulatto) population living in urban versus rural areas is 5% greater than in 1981. These shifts, once again, can be considered to be even greater than the data represents due to the circumspect nature of the Cuban census data. There is definitely a shift taking place, though, and the revolutionary government seems to be reacting to it through policies such as Decree 217 that allows police to issue fines to anyone caught living in Havana illegally.¹¹¹ The numbers are showing a growth in urban centers (Havana) and the government is creating policy to control that movement.

Thus, the Special Period prompted changes in race policy that undermined the original goals of Castro's administration. Where labor was once fully controlled by the government and odious discrimination by race in the labor market was eliminated there now stood a very broken racial landscape in which whites had clearly taken the front seat showing more evidence of the fact that a solely class-based racial reductionist policy is incapable of changing deeply ingrained beliefs in people's hearts. The legalization of the dollar paved a clear path towards inequality as white families in the U.S. sent remittances to their white Cuban counterparts and whites were given top priority in hiring in the tourist industry. A continuation of racial profiling that had actually been somewhat prevalent in the time before the Special Period became even more visible. Overall, many of the laudable gains that the revolution had made in the years prior to the Special Period were almost imperceptible underneath the massive inequalities that rose to the foreground of the Cuban society of the 1990s.

¹¹¹ U.S. State Department.

Conclusions

The original goal of the paper was to study the shifts in race policy in Cuba to better understand the depths of Castro's affects on the racial landscape of Cuba. The three time periods that were studied offered a broad description of the changes in the racial landscape throughout the history of Cuba with a focus on the time period of Castro's leadership.

The first chapter offered a very broad picture of the race situation that Castro encountered when he began his control of the country. The chapter discussed how racial identity was created in Cuba through slavery, the independence movement, the U.S. occupation and the period leading up to Castro's revolution. The chapter indicated that Afro-Cubans were allowed much greater participation in the leadership and movements of the country during times of greatest need. The Afro-Cuban representation in the military, for example, especially in the case of leaders like Antonio Maceo was greatly welcomed. This welcome, though, was not offered without an overt caution that participation would only be allowed to go as far as the white institutional leadership allowed (as indicated by the shift in white support away from Maceo even when he was succeeding for the Cuban cause). This ideology is actually somewhat similar to some of Castro's ideology.

The second chapter offered a close look at Castro's sweeping statements regarding race in the first months of his leadership. This open-armed welcome to Afro-Cuba to take its rightful seat in the Cuban society seemed remarkably similar to the open arms offered to Afro-Cubans when they were needed to help win independence just as Castro needed them to consolidate his power. His promises proved to be generally true, though. In a memorable speech in March 1959, Castro promised to create equality in the social, labor, and educational spheres. He did not waste time. All three of these goals were more or less achieved by 1962. But, in that same year,

the first of his odd contradictions began to rise to the surface. Castro had deemed his revolution socialist and therefore could no longer discuss race as a distinguishing factor in the society. So, because he had succeeded in creating as close to an equal playing field as he could create, he and his leadership called the case closed.

He then proceeds to begin work fighting his archenemy the United States with an unmatched propaganda campaign. He housed African American civil rights leaders in Cuba and showed them the "miracle" he had created convincing most of them to return to the U.S. with a very leftist leaning ideology. He further carried his banner into Africa as he worked on the side of the struggling indigenous groups to "free" them from the imperialistic grip of capitalism. The important note here, though, is that Castro was spending a great deal of time discussing race issues regarding the U.S. and Africa while at home he was quickly shunning any debate or representation of race. This silence within the country led to an inability of Cubans to really inspect the state of race affairs in Cuba.

The third chapter revealed the greatest inconsistencies of all as Castro allowed the most blatant representations of institutionalized racial discrimination to occur in the history of his leadership. Instead of what would be suspected to be a growth in progress of the leveling of the racial playing field, there surfaced major inequalities that seemed to have roots that had been created even during the wonder years of the 1960s and 1970s. These inequalities were exacerbated by an economy that Castro's leadership could no longer control. Thus, many of the racial equalities that Castro had originally claimed had been created were revealed to be merely covered by the zero-balancing of the economy. Furthermore, direct representation of a fear of the Afro-Cuban population is evidenced by policies aimed at the decentralization of the Afro-Cubans and close attention to the internal migration of Afro-Cubans from rural to urban areas.

Furthermore, statistical data collected by the Cuban government has fallen under extreme scrutiny as an estimate as high as a 62% Afro-Cuban population made by the United States Central Intelligence Agency in contrast to the 32% reported by the Cuban government.¹¹²

If these estimates were to be proved correct, the numbers that the Castro administration points to regarding employment and governmental participation would look outrageously low. Instead those numbers are allowed to be viewed from the perspective of the Cuban data and are therefore satisfactory.

Fidel Castro is undeniably one of the most adept politicians in the history of the world at consolidating support through his policies and speeches. It would also be wrong to suggest that the revolution did not do anything to resolve to race problem in Cuba. In fact, it could be argued that Castro's regime did more than any other single administration in the history of the world to combat racism (although he also had the luxury of being the longest standing leader of any country). But, it would also not be fully accurate to suggest that he eradicated racial distinctions from the Cuban society. Furthermore, there is substantial evidence to conclude that not even institutionalized discrimination in portions of the labor force or racially based governmental policy has not been fully eradicated in Cuba. There are inequities in job distribution as well as policies that are obviously directed at controlling movements of the Afro-Cuban population.

This study could not be fully conclusive due to the shortage of data allowed in and out of Cuba. In order to fully understand the race situation in Cuba, it would be necessary to have a much more credible source of information regarding the proportions of ethnicity in the country.

¹¹² "Cuba". *CIA World Factbook*. 17 Mar. 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cu.html>. These numbers, though, remain difficult to prove. A series of phone discussions and emails to the CIA Office of Public Affairs was not successful in determining the source of the CIA data. Presumably, it is the product of estimates from multiple third party estimates, but this information was not available.

Also, a substantial need for data collection remains to determine the actual levels of participation in the economy and government Afro-Cubans play.

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