6-2015

Race and Inequality in Cuban Tourism During the 21st Century

Arah M. Parker
California State University - San Bernardino, Arahp1912@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd

Part of the Politics and Social Change Commons, Race and Ethnicity Commons, Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons, and the Tourism Commons

Recommended Citation
Parker, Arah M., "Race and Inequality in Cuban Tourism During the 21st Century" (2015). Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations. 194.
https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/194

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Graduate Studies at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.
RACE AND INEQUALITY
IN CUBAN TOURISM DURING THE 21ST CENTURY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Social Sciences

by
Arah Marie Parker
June 2015
RACE AND INEQUALITY
IN CUBAN TOURISM DURING THE 21ST CENTURY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by
Arah Marie Parker
June 2015
Approved by:

Dr. Teresa Velasquez, Committee Chair, Anthropology
Dr. James Fenelon, Committee Member
Dr. Cherstin Lyon, Committee Member
ABSTRACT

As the largest island in the Caribbean, Cuba boasts beautiful scenery, as well as a rich and diverse culture. Yet, throughout Cuban history, the beauty of this famous socialist nation has been marred by social inequalities, primarily affecting class, gender, and race. In the Cuban tourism sector in particular, the three aforementioned components have been prevalent since the island’s inception of tourism in the early 20th Century. With the recent political changes marked by the attempt to restore relations with the United States, this thesis will critically analyze the theories of Black Marxism, Intersectionality, and World Systems Analysis (WSA), to explain how racism has affected the overall quality of life for Afro-Cubans. In addition, the theories applied to Cuban tourism also cause the tourist sector to be racialized in the 21st Century. Furthermore, this thesis will analyze how Cuban tourism is maintained from a Socialist perspective, as well demonstrate that the tourism advertisements in the 21st Century are greatly racialized, depicting Afro-Cubans in the mode of servitude to the tourist. In addition, it will reveal that gender also plays a significant role in the way Afro-Cubans are perceived by society. This thesis will conclude with how the WSA theory can be hypothetically applied to the recent changes in U.S. policy, promoting greater interaction with Cuba and American tourism, after more than five decades of travel ban.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is dedicated to my family and friends, in particular to my parents, Janice and Samuel Parker, as well as my maternal grandparents, Johnson and Maggie Williams. Without your love, advice, and support, my educational journey would have ended many years ago. Thank you all for supporting me in this endeavor and teaching me the importance of staying focused on God. To my friend Malissa Treviño, you are the main inspiration behind my love for the Cuban culture. As an outcome of your visit to Cuba more than ten years ago, I have been inspired ever since to study the culture, people, and politics of this beautiful island. To my friends who have supported me and assisted with the editing process, I wish to convey my appreciation for your willingness to take time from your schedules to assist me. To Dr. Teresa Velasquez, even though I am well aware that a simple ‘thank you’ is not enough to convey my sincere appreciation of your overall support of this project. I am very grateful for your guidance and for your willingness to be my advisor on this project. Thank you from the bottom of my heart! To Dr. James Fenelon, thank you very much for your willingness to act as a committee member. I am very appreciative of your readiness to take time from your busy schedule to contribute to this thesis. In addition, many thanks to Dr. Cherstin Lyon. I greatly appreciate your insight and willingness to guide me through the research process and writing of this thesis. To the staff at the California State Polytechnic University Library, I am grateful for the assistance I received with obtaining the resources
necessary to complete this project. To Dr. L. Kaifa Roland at Colorado State University at Boulder, your research from the perspective of an African-American female anthropologist has been immensely valuable to me and greatly assisted me in the continuation of this thesis. I greatly admire your fieldwork in Cuba and owe you immense gratitude for all that you have done.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS............................................................................................................... iv

LIST OF FIGURES...................................................................................................................... viii

INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................................... 1

  What is Cuban Tourism? ....................................................................................................... 6

  Does Racism Exist? ............................................................................................................... 8

  Critical Analysis .................................................................................................................. 11

  Organization of the Thesis ............................................................................................... 11

  Study Methodology/Limitations ....................................................................................... 12

CHAPTER ONE: FOUNDATION OF RACISM IN COLONIAL CUBA .................................. 14

  Slavery in Cuba .................................................................................................................. 17

  Colonial History and Cuban Women ............................................................................... 23

  Abolishment of Slavery in Cuba ..................................................................................... 27

  Relinquishing of the Spanish Rule .................................................................................. 29

  World-Systems Theory Applied to Cuban Relations .................................................... 32

  The Relations Between Cuba and the United States in the 20th Century ....................... 33

  Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution ......................................................................... 39

CHAPTER TWO: POST-REVOLUTIONARY CUBA AND THE TOURIST SECTOR ................. 42

  Cuban Revolution in Motion—1959 and Beyond .......................................................... 42

  The Revolution and Social Programs ............................................................................. 43

  U.S.-Cuban Relations after the Revolution ................................................................. 48

  Cuban Acceptance/Disapproval of the Revolution ....................................................... 51
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Afro Cuban Boys on Bicycle. ............................................................... 92

Figure 2. Afro Cuban Woman Dressed in Character. ......................................... 93

Figure 3. "Cubanos". ........................................................................................... 94

Figure 4. Afro Cuban Female Dancer. ............................................................... 95

Figure 5. Afro Cuban Dancers. ........................................................................... 96

Figure 6. Female Tourist. .................................................................................. 97

Figure 7. Family Vacation. ................................................................................ 98
INTRODUCTION

The strained political and economic relationship between Cuba and the United States has lasted for more than 50 years. After Fidel Castro came into power in 1959 and declared Cuba as a communist regime, the United States severed ties with the nation they once dominated. Owing to the development of Cuba’s communist regime and the aftermath of the Soviet Union collapse in 1991, the country has found itself in a precarious position from a financial standpoint. During the Special Period, which began in 1994, Fidel Castro made the critical decision to reopen Cuba for tourist purposes, as a means of achieving economic stability. However, while international tourism developed as Cuba’s primary gateway for economic stability, other factors and considerations began to arise, in particular the rapid pace of globalization, tourism intricacies such as race and gender inequality, and the outcome of future relations with the United States. The issues with race, class and gender inequality beckon Cuba’s past, as racism has proved to be interwoven in Cuba’s political, economic and social tapestry.

In the latter part of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century, the term globalization became a buzzword, whereby neoliberal policies were designed by industrialized countries, such as the United States, and were implemented in so-called developing countries. As such policies promoted by the United States are essentially geared towards increasing overall economic revenue, developing countries are often exploited in the process. According to Suzana Sawyer, globalization is defined as the “ever increasing and uneven
production and consumption of capital, commodities, technologies, and imaginaries around the globe.”¹ Furthermore, in his ethnographic work, Steven Gregory refers to globalization as, “A polyvalent, promiscuous, controversial word that often obscures more than what it reveals about most recent economic, political, social and cultural changes.”² Similarly, Heather Shreve defines globalization as the,

Transformative process in which forces at all levels, from local to international, exert pressure on the decision making process of states to harmonize with the policies and the practices of other countries; however, while this results in similarities, globalization is not homogenization.³

With the intent of creating a space for additional opportunities for enhancing wealth and prestige, globalization can be viewed as a double-edged sword that both helps and hinders countries, depending on the geographical location. Indeed, it is based on and reinforces the status of the country as either core-periphery or a semi-periphery, based upon the theory of World Systems Analysis (WSA).

In reference to core and semi periphery, WSA, as the theoretical framework, refers to the way in which a stronger country dominates and controls

---


a weaker one. According to Christopher Chase-Dunn and Peter Grimes, world-
systems is the utilization of relationships between, “core and periphery [powers
and states] in which powerful and wealthy ‘core’ societies dominate and exploit
weak and poor ‘peripheral’ societies.’” Furthermore, Chase-Dunn also defines
world-systems as the, “[Integration] of polities . . . . Systemness [which] means
that these polities interact with one another in important ways.” Exploitation is
the key in regards to the relationships among core, periphery and semi-periphery
states, as core countries seek to dominate and manipulate periphery and semi-
periphery states. Such states are considered to be less developed, weak and
lacking in resources that are prevalent in core countries. Although WSA has been
widely used in analyzing global inequalities, it fails to consider how race has
played a critical role in shaping unequal capitalist development. In this thesis, it is
intertwined with the theory of Black Marxism in order to demonstrate that the
critical issue of social inequalities exists in the form of globalization in the Cuban
tourism sector. Meanwhile, the Theory of Intersectionality takes into
consideration the race, class, and gender issues, as the three aspects that are
prevalent throughout Cuba and the tourist sector. This theory is inclusive of
social ills endured by Afro-Cubans. However, none of the three theories
recognizes or remedies the overall eradication of racial inequality coupled with
gender and social ills.

4 Christopher Chase-Dunn, “World Systems Analysis,” Annual Review of Sociology 21

5 Christopher Chase-Dunn and Bruce Lerro, Social Change: Globalization from the Stone
In the case of Cuba, colonial history recounts how slaves were brought from Africa in order to “help” with the overall development of the country. Taking this into consideration, WSA can be utilized in order to effectively evaluate the overall slave trade from Spain and Africa, to assist Cuba in its attempt to grow and emerge as a powerful Spanish colony. According to Cedric J. Robinson, the overall relationship or connection between, “capitalism, colonization, and slave labor [had] appeared almost coincidental.”\(^6\) However, upon closer scrutiny, it becomes evident that the slave trade that directly affected Cuba did not take place by happenstance. Indeed, slavery is an example of how a core country (in this case Spain) can exploit a semi-periphery country to obtain the necessary means and people for a specific purpose. In this specific case, slaves were purchased and brought from Africa to develop vast areas of land in Cuba. With uncountable human lives treated as a form of capital, the slave trade going directly to Cuba served as effective means of establishing capitalism. Such a relationship with the slave trade and position of a country clearly denotes how WSA accurately depicts the fact that slavery, in general, directly contributed to the expansion of capitalism. Furthermore, with this direct link to the future of capitalism, slavery also contributed to the onset of future issues and contingencies of racial, class and gender inequalities experienced throughout Cuba.

The purpose of this thesis focusing on Cuban tourism is thus to utilize the theories of Black Marxism and WSA, as well as intersectionality of multiple social inequalities, to delineate how Cuba’s tourist sector has been racialized since its inception, when the United States assumed power on the island after the War of 1898. Intersectionality as defined by Kimberle Crenshaw is the, “various ways in which race, and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of [Afro-Cuban’s social] experiences.” Intersectionality is relevant to the case of Cuban due to the fact that such social inequalities are not dealing with one facet, but with many facets and each social inequality must be addressed in order to create viable solutions. Furthermore, the following questions taken into consideration. First, how can Cuba still function as a socialist country, and adopt neoliberal practices that are deeply rooted in capitalism? If the most substantial gain in the Cuban Revolution was an equitable society, will the benefits of global tourism maintain or undermine social equality? How can Cuba shift power relationships in the core-periphery dynamic through a hybrid economic system that promotes and takes advantage of global tourism?

---

What is Cuban Tourism?

Cuban tourism has long served as the main method of promoting the island with the ultimate aim of enhancing economic growth. During the early 20th Century, Cuban tourism was critical to the entertainment, business needs, and desires for American citizens. The Cuban tourism industry in the early 20th Century heavily catered to the romanticized ideals of Americans, as well as citizens from other countries. In doing so, Cubans actively working in the employment sector suffered from employment inequalities due to race, gender and class status. In the tourism industry in particular, the disparity with respect to employment opportunities among Afro-Cubans versus white Cubans is recognized not only by Cubans, but by tourists as well. Such a divide can be directly linked to intersectionality and demonstrates how several sectors can have a detrimental effect on an entire community. Intersectionality in this thesis will analyze how race, class, and gender in Cuban society is not equitable and allows for continued suffrage for the Afro-Cuban community. During the Special Period that commenced in 1994, the issue of racism began to remerge as the tourism industry quickly became popular and the demand for additional hotels and resorts steadily increased. With such demand for international tourism in Cuba, jobs also became available, as well as opportunities for training individuals to work in the tourist sector. However, with such increased demand, the underlined bigotry of racism remerged, as disparities in the employment sector became more apparent. With the growing number of tourism/hospitality jobs,
discrimination became more prevalent, as mulattoes and Afro-Cubans were not readily visible in many tourism jobs. For example, more prominent positions, such as hotel front desk or receptionist, were mainly held by white Cubans. Managerial positions also lacked representatives from the Afro-Cuban community. When such blatant racial discrimination by withholding employment from Afro-Cubans is questioned, many reasons are provided. According to De La Fuente, “Cubans explains blacks' low presence in tourist jobs using various arguments, all which more or less imply that Afro-Cubans are unattractive, dirty, prone to criminal activities, inefficient, or lack proper manners and education.”

This and similar statements are demeaning and also serve as a reminder how blacks were treated as property during slavery. The overall worth of an Afro-Cuban citizen still has little to no value and are deemed as invisible. Therefore, these individuals are unofficially prohibited from participating in the formal tourism sector and the associated economy. Cedric Robinson aptly implies that Afro-Cubans are invisible.

The overall physical appearance of Afro-Cubans as being dark-skinned also had a great effect of Afro-Cubans being excluded from tourism jobs based upon their appearance. In that respect, De La Fuente refers to the *buena presencia* or the “pleasant aspect” that is considered to be lacking in the Afro-

---


9 Ibid., 32.
Cuban community. In this context, pleasant aspect is defined as a racial construct, whereby Afro-Cubans are not hired because their race is not attractive enough to present to tourists. When discussing this issue, De La Fuente cites Cuban historians Rafael Duarte and Elsa Santos regarding aesthetic conditions, noting that

The absence of blacks in tourism is an interesting phenomenon. I think that in part, it is an aesthetic question, even though this is not the most important factor. The main thing is that they [Afro-Cubans] are entertaining white tourists . . . These white tourists may or may not be racist. Then why risk anything, if this is business? You employ only whites and there is no problem.\textsuperscript{10}

When considering the validity of this statement, it is hard to believe that Cuba as a whole is primarily concerned with the opinions of tourists visiting the island and “hiding” the black sheep of the community. With such strong sentiments against Afro-Cubans “entertaining” tourists, travel agency websites promoting Cuban tourism to potential tourists also capitalize on images of Afro-Cubans in various modes of living to sell vacation packages.

\textbf{Does Racism Exist?}

Several white Cubans contend that racism is an issue of the past, claiming that Afro-Cubans have benefited the most from the policies implemented by the revolution. As stated by De La Fuente, White Cubans have held the opinion that Afro-Cubans were the “secret weapon” of the revolution. From a political standpoint, De La Fuente states that, “Afro-Cubans represent a group that

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.,32-33.
provides unconditional political support to the government.”¹¹ Throughout the 1960s, Cuba flourished, as Fidel Castro focused on reducing the overall illiteracy rate among Cuban citizens, by providing free education for all, and implementing social programs that would benefit families. According to Eloise Linger, after the Revolution of 1959, Cuba “has achieved far more social justice, and improved every social indicator far beyond the accomplishments of their own (often larger and richer) countries. Both first-hand observations and United Nations data verify these evaluations.”¹² Owing to the changes in policy, from the elementary school to the university level, all Cubans regardless of color were able to obtain a free education. In addition, trade and vocational schools were available for citizens who chose not to pursue university-level education, but rather needed basic skills and ability to learn a trade and be self-sufficient. Again, the sentiment that racism ended with the implementation of such social programs can be directly linked to the theory of Black Marxism. Racial disparities are simply highlighted and widely ignored, as programs are implemented to “address” the issue at hand, without any further discussion or dialogue.

Such programs in the limelight and on paper are deemed to be a powerful force and serve as a means of officially eradicating institutional racism for good in Cuba. However, ironically, although no longer in power as President of Cuba, Fidel Castro has recognized and openly acknowledged that racism still exists.

¹¹ Ibid., 66.

Nonetheless, in his speech delivered at the World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa on September 1, 2001, Castro seemingly points the finger figuratively at the United States and other core periphery countries, which are developed and exude dominance. Yet, Castro completely neglects to mention any racial division that is taking place in his home country. Echoing the sentiments of De La Fuente, Castro states that,

Racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia are a social, cultural, and political phenomenon, not a natural instinct of human beings; they arise from wars, military conquests, slavery, and the individual or collective exploitation of the weakest by the most powerful throughout the history of human societies.\(^{13}\)

As a whole, class, racial and gender inequality exercised in Cuba inherently limits the great potential and financial propensity of Cubans. Still, Castro’s statement does recognize that slavery is a direct and contributing factor to these historically embedded social injustices. More specifically, WSA is applicable to the onset of wars as well as military conquests. On the other hand, intersectionality is in effect through racist and social discrimination, while Black Marxism is the outcome of WSA and intersectionality. Yet, as it will be demonstrated in this work, the notion that Cuban society is affected by problems is virtually ignored.

Critical Analysis

This study aims to critically assess the historical aspect of Colonial Cuba and the foundation of racism, which has allowed the issues racial, class and gender inequalities to be in effect for several generations. Furthermore, this thesis will analyze the U.S.-Cuban relations as well as the recent development of lifting the embargo in December 2014 to allow U.S. Citizens to travel to Cuba on a limited basis. The Obama Administration has been conversing for approximately one year with Pope Francis and President Raul Castro, to arrive to the conclusion that such drastic non-communication must end. This thesis will also provide critical analysis that will demonstrate that Socialism and social programs have not eradicated racism, revealing that racism still exists in the tourist sector in the 21st Century. Furthermore, with the recent events of lifting the almost 60-year-old trade and travel embargo, hypothetical solutions will be presented as a means of possible guidance and consideration for effective communication and key relationships between Cuba and the United States for many years to come.

Organization of the Thesis

To provide an in-depth analysis of the way in which racism has been embedded in Cuban society and throughout Cuban history until the 21st Century, this thesis is organized into three chapters. The first chapter covers colonial history of Cuba’s inception and delineates how Spain as the mother country dominated the island and instituted slavery, which was the driving force for
racism. Chapter two focuses on race relations after the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro and provides evidence of specific social programs and regulations that were implemented to address the overall issue of racism throughout Cuban society. This chapter also introduces the foundation of tourism and briefly discusses the types of tourism that exist in Cuba. Chapter three presents the tourism case study during the Special Period in Cuba that commenced in 1994. The case study aims to establish how racism affects who can and who cannot actively work in the tourism industry. The conclusion of the thesis incorporates discussion of the recently lifted embargo by President Obama and President Raul Castro. All three chapters will focus on racism, class and gender inequality, as these are multifaceted phenomena, prevalent and interwoven throughout Cuban society.

Study Methodology/Limitations

This thesis utilizes a qualitative approach, whereby primary and secondary resources, primarily consisting of academic journal articles expounding on Cuban racism and tourism, are utilized. They are further augmented by various newspaper articles and books written by authors who have studied racism in Latin America. In addition, data is also gathered through interviews and reviews of Cuban tourism websites and forums. In using these sources, the aim is to highlight how tourism operates in the 21st Century Cuba. In particular, the goal is to demonstrate that the images available on Cuban tourism websites are also racialized, as Afro-Cubans are depicted as servants to predominantly European
tourists. As any other study, this too is affected by some limitations. Most notably, difficulty in accessing relevant data resources was a hindrance. In particular, obtaining first-hand information via the Cuban government was a challenge.
CHAPTER ONE
FOUNDATION OF RACISM IN COLONIAL CUBA

As the largest island in the Caribbean, Cuba has experienced both triumph and tragedy since its colonization by Spain in 1492. Cuba has constantly suffered at the hand of dominant nations, as it was a victim of the brutal force of colonization, deprivation, control and exploitation. Despite its abundant natural resources and rich history, arts and culture, Cuba has been deprived of the right to control its own destiny. The institution of slavery by the Spanish not only assisted with the flourishing economy for capitalist purposes, but also instituted the beginnings of race, class and gender relations that still plague the island. As the United States later gained control of Cuba, race, class and gender issues continued to magnify, resulting in inequalities that are still apparent in the fabric of Cuban culture. In order to address such issues, Fidel Castro led the now famous Cuban Revolution to overthrow President Fulgencio Batista and implement new laws and reforms aiming to eliminate social inequalities. With ousting the regime of Fulgencio Batista and the forces of the United States that ultimately controlled how Batista governed the island, the Revolution of 1959 single-handedly changed Cuba’s course of history, allowing the country to finally be sovereign. After the change of presidency and the way of life in general, the race, class and gender inequalities experienced by Afro-Cubans were addressed in the public sphere. However, in reality, such inequalities remained ingrained in Cuban culture and the employment sector in particular. In order to fully
understand why Fidel Castro sought to denounce the ties with the U.S.,
overthrow the president in the office at the time, and attempt to eradicate
historical inequalities, one must critically assess the overall history of the island.
It is also essential to understand how each change in government ultimately
affected Cuban citizens and led to the revolution that changed Cuba. As a result,
the way the rest of the world viewed Cuba also changed once the country
became a communist nation.

Cuba’s beginnings as a colonial nation were established as an extension
of the mother country, Spain. As a part of his expedition of the New World,
Christopher Columbus sailed to westward across the ocean and encountered
Cuba with its natural abundance of natural resources and accessible seaports.
These characteristics further established the island as a prime location for trading
and commerce. In order to effectively establish the island as a base for its export
and import activities, Spain utilized the remaining indigenous Indian tribes, such
as the Taíno, while also importing slaves from Africa to assist with the cultivation
of land and growth of various agricultural products. Upon the finalization of
colonization, the Spaniards immediately began to establish an operating
government and economy based upon mostly agriculture and imports. In terms of
economy, Cuba established itself as a powerful and profitable source for
producing sugarcane and tobacco, which were thereafter exported to other
countries. In addition, raising cattle was also very important to Cuba’s newfound
economy, as animals were critical for transportation purposes, as well as for
export. Salted beef proved to be an important produce, as it could be carried on ships traveling to and from Spain. The hide from the cattle was also an important export, as it was used to create and form leather, which was a very popular import throughout Europe.

The new Cuban economy flourished quickly due to the availability of raw goods. According to Rex Hudson, the foresight of Cuba’s economy was based upon,

Importing the bare necessities, with little or no provision for domestic manufacturing. Spain followed a thoroughly mercantilist economic policy, encouraging Cuba’s dependence on outside sources of supply for its needs and looking at the island as a producer of raw materials to satisfy the needs of the Mother Country.¹⁴

As political tensions arose throughout the rest of the world, Cuba’s economy continued to flourish, as word spread to other countries about the increased sugar production. In particular, the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763) was beneficial to Cuba’s economy, as the British defeated Spain and occupied the island. Cuba was consequently open to trade with Britain and the United States. Hudson stated that, “more than 700 merchant ships visited the port of Havana.”¹⁵

British occupation virtually opened trade markets for Cuba as additional slaves were brought to the island to assist with the sugar production. As Cuba was open to a variety of trade options, and the work force was supplemented by the slave trade, Cuba’s overall sugar production increased from 14,000 tons in 1790 to

---


¹⁵ Ibid., 17.
more than 34,000 tons in 1805.16 Furthermore, due to such increased production, the number of sugar mills also increased to 478 by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Slavery in Cuba

Although Cuba was a thriving extension of Spain, the institution of slavery was implemented as a means to assist with the increasing popularity and demand for agricultural produce. In this respect, import of African slaves proved to be critical to the economic needs of the island. However, slavery was also setting the detrimental tone for the race relations that emerged in the 19th Century. In particular, the roots of slavery proved to be the catalyst for future social and cultural destruction of the island under capitalist rule and the reason behind the revolution led by Fidel Castro. Colonial history recounts how slaves were brought from Africa in order to “help” with the overall development of Cuba. According to Cedric J. Robinson, the relationship or connection between, “capitalism, colonization, and slave labor [had] appeared almost coincidental.”17 However, upon closer scrutiny, it is evident that the slave trade had both positive and negative effect on Cuba. On the other hand, it is an example of a stronger country (Spain) exploiting a weaker one (Cuba). In that respect, Cuba served as a means of establishing capitalism. As stated by Roderick McDonald, slave

16 Ibid., 17.

import into Cuba, as well as to other territories in the Caribbean, achieved the following:

Labor was the key to the development of the Americas; initially land was plentiful, capital was available to ‘prime the pump,’ and labor was provided by African and Afro-American slaves. The source of all value is labor, the value of the New World, the fabulous wealth of St. Domingue, Brazil, Jamaica and Cuba, created by slaves, was enjoyed not only by planters and in the colonies, but by the mother country. It was reinvested, purchased power and position, and stimulated development in commercial and industrial spheres.\(^{18}\)

This statement clearly reflects how slave trade was viewed as a monetary benefit for the core-periphery country, the mother country Spain.

The harsh conditions of slave labor were not a factor in this process, as wealth acquisition was the sole driving force for all trade and future development in Cuba and throughout the Caribbean. Such a relationship with the slave trade and position of a country clearly denote how WSA accurately depicts the fact that slavery, in general, was a direct link contributing to capitalism. Owing to this relationship, slavery also contributed to the onset of future issues and contingencies of racial as well as gender inequality throughout Cuba. According to Cedric Robinson, the institution of slavery throughout the Caribbean, and Cuba in particular, was deemed necessary. He that, “All-whether landed nobility, landed colonists, or the masters of long distance trade-believed the brutality of the slave system to be a practical necessity.”\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 113.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 141.
Slavery, as a means of building the economy, did not take into consideration the turmoil and degradation those African slaves endured in Cuba. According to Robinson, slavery was a great necessity, resulting in the overall institution completely ignoring the psychological damage that was being ingrained into Cuba’s increasingly prosperous community. Similar to the institution of slavery in the United States, slaves in Cuba were treated merely as property and their basic moral values from a humanistic approach thus were ignored. As Robinson noted, slaves were generally viewed as, “a profit and loss account as an ‘item’ and ‘thing,’ a piece of property.” This is in line with Roderick McDonald’s statement, who claimed that slaves were considered as capital, rather than human beings.

In addition to the economic goals pursued by Spain in Cuba, the use of African slaves on the island aimed to further institute racism throughout the country and to create notable class and gender divides. This has set the tone for Cubans in general, regardless of color, class, and gender. Since those were not primary issues for Spain, the Theory of Intersectionality is directly applied to the outcome of slavery in Cuba. Such disparities are directly inclusive, rather than exclusive. Thus, Spain was able to further segregate and divide Cubans by color, class and gender, which clearly denoted who was accepted into society and who was not. Mirroring slavery in the United States, Cuban slaves (referred to as Afro-Cubans) were divided by gender, based upon tasks to be completed by men.

---

20 Ibid., 73.
and women. Typically, men worked mainly in the fields planting and harvesting, whereas women completed domestic tasks in the main house. As Cuba’s population steadily increased and forced intimate relations (now referred to as rape) were common, class sects were founded. Essentially, the darker the slave’s skin color, the worse treatment he/she received and the more difficult tasks he/she was assigned became. As the skin complexion of slaves lightened to a caramel color, the term mulatto or mulatta was introduced. White Cubans of Spanish descent with more prevalent Eurocentric features were the most desirable and were thus the elite in colonial Cuban society. From a visual standpoint, L. Kaifa Roland created a chart from her fieldwork notes, depicting the skin complexion of Cubans. She used this data to determine how this was applied to slavery operations and the influence it had on class and color distinctions. Utilizing such a chart clearly demonstrated that class and color were very apparent in Cuban culture. To further illustrate this point, Robinson utilizes the following quote from Oliver Cox, the author of *Caste, Class and Race*,

> The White man’s principal need is not a home, but a satisfied and exploitable people to develop the resources of the country. This ruling class adopts a policy of ‘co-operation,’ and, other things being equal, favors are distributed to the mixed-bloods [mulattos/mulattas] on the basis of their apparent degrees of whiteness among the people of color. Degrees of color tend to become a determinant of status in a continuous social-class gradient, with whites at its upper reaches . . . the lighter the complexion, the greater the economic and social opportunities.\(^{21}\)

---

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 179.
Such reinforcement of color as an institution of class further distinguishes mobility (or lack thereof) in Cuban society. Afro-Cuban slaves were stripped of their original African identity upon arrival to Cuba. Spain was not concerned with the livelihood or psychological and mental internal struggles of Afro-Cubans. Without a voice to be heard or emotion to be experienced visibly, Afro-Cubans in colonial Cuba were deemed invisible. This social invisibility continued throughout the remainder of Spain’s rule in Cuba and the transfer of power to the United States after the War of 1898. It further undermined the plight and struggles for Afro-Cubans to be viewed as humans rather than property. The constant denial of education that was provided to white Cubans segregated Afro-Cubans and women from society, forcing them to remain illiterate and unable to advance socially or economically. Without a voice to be seen and heard, Afro-Cubans resorted to implementing cultural traditions through natural movement, dance and spiritual rituals.

In order to comprehend the extent of gender and racial inequality in Cuba, along with the institution of slavery, the Theory of Intersectionality must be applied to race, class, and gender. As stated by Kimberle Crenshaw, “I consider how the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism, and how these experiences tend not to be represented within the discourses of either feminism or antiracism.”

Although

Crenshaw’s research is dedicated to the feminist movement among African-American women, intersectionality is relevant to the broader Afro community, irrespective of the origin of inequality. Furthermore, the inclusivity of intersectionality of race, class, and gender for the purposes of this thesis is derived from a systemic and anti-categorical model.

This particular category of intersectionality recognizes that all components in this process are mutually exclusive. According to Castiello-Jones, Misra, and K. McCurley, “Statuses of [such] relationships with each other are problematized under the assumption that they continually and mutually constitute each other.”

Moreover, they claim that, with intersectionality as an applicable theory for Cuban social disparities, “scholars take a complex and historically grounded approach to understanding intersections as always co-constructing race, gender, class and other statuses as systemic inequalities.”

---


24 Ibid.
Colonial History and Cuban Women

Continuing with the theory of intersectionality, gender relations, in particular how Afro-Cuban women are discriminated against, is also critical to analyze. During colonial times, the roles of women were highly romanticized and stereotyped, as they were viewed as lazy, uneducated, and passive.

To further illustrate how women in general were stereotyped, Teresa Prados-Torreira states that, “The islands daughters [were described] as lazy, frivolous, ignorant dolls who never engaged in any productive activity.” In particular, White Cuban women were also expected to maintain roles that were viewed as “female” and tended to revolve around domestic duties within households. Afro-Cuban women in particular were vastly mistreated and unrecognized as citizens with their own rights, and were usually only allowed to serve the households of the elite as slaves. In general, women were given inferior treatment to allow men to be free and rule the island without any opposition. According to Prados-Torreira, “Too much knowledge was deemed as dangerous, unfeminine. Innocence, a precious feminine virtue, was thought to survive only if women were kept in a state of ignorance.” This statement clearly demonstrates that Cuban women were purposely stifled, practically prohibiting them to expand their horizons beyond the home. In addition, the interpretation of


26 Ibid., 11.
women as being lazy also refers to concept of pleasant aspect, whereby Afro-Cubans in general were viewed as lazy and unproductive.

In the early nineteenth century, gender relations for women slowly began to change. Gradually, young girls started to attend schools, where they could study subjects such as, “penmanship, geography, history, basic French, music, grammar, arithmetic, and of course, embroidery and prayers.” Unfortunately, very few Afro-Cubans benefited from such educational opportunities. Children of slaves were from receiving any type of education. Continuing with the idea that educating women was seen as dangerous, Prados-Torreira elaborated that,

In no way should the girls’ education turn them into philosophers or writers; vocations incompatible with their duties as wives and mothers . . . . Geography and history were important too, because they could come in handy at social gatherings.28

As demonstrated by this statement, Spanish men clearly viewed women as a trophy for their personal benefit. Thus, even though they were deemed worthy of displaying, they had to be put into their place, i.e., in the family home, attending to domestic duties. Fear of the unknown was another reason for prohibiting women to gain more freedom. As women were likely to utilize education to expand their intelligence and independence, this was too costly for men to consider.

27 Ibid., 11.
28 Ibid., 12.
Continued progression during the Enlightenment Period allowed affluent women to have direct access to literature, in particular romantic literature. Unfortunately, Afro-Cuban women and slaves were not allowed access to any reading materials. As affluent women read works by George Sand, Shelly, Lord Byron, Walter Scott, Goethe, and Manzoni, their roles slowly began to change. As women were encouraged to immerse themselves in romantic literature, the strict stereotypical roles began to soften. According to Prados-Torreira, access to such literature,

Affirmed the roles of women as angelic and domestic, but also encouraged women to give priority to their own sentiments and sense of independence. Romanticism allowed women to imagine themselves as the object, as well as the subject of passionate love.

As a result of greater access to literature, women poetry as a means of expression. Self-expression through poetry is also viewed as a form of identity and was instrumental in the events that subsequently took place in Cuba, as they helped address continued racism, gender and inequality issues.

Gradually, women started to utilize their passion for reading and writing as a platform to contest social stereotypes and challenge the traditional roles given to them. Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda is particularly noteworthy in this respect. She was a female poet and writer who challenged women’s roles in Cuban society. The interesting and critical analysis of Avellaneda’s literary work encompassed the concepts of slavery and the roles of Cuban women in general.

---

29 Ibid., 16.
Gómez de Avellaneda openly stated that slavery ultimately formed and shaped women’s lives. Slavery, “assigned black women a subordinate economic, social and sexual role while it permitted the leisurely, impractical education [that] white [affluent] women received.” However, due to directly addressing the subject of slavery, Gómez de Avellaneda’s literary works were banned from the island, as her abolitionist views were deemed dangerous. Interestingly, it was elite women who had the privilege of education that helped raise the awareness of the effects that slavery had on Afro-Cuban women. Taking into consideration an intersectional approach adopted by Kimberle Crenshaw, the plight of women, and Afro-Cuban women in particular, also goes hand in hand with the social ills and the mistreatment suffered by Afro-Cuban slaves. As further research on this topic reveals, Gómez de Avellaneda’s bold stance of slavery directly contributes to the theories of Intersectionality and Black Marxism. Thus, her works help gain a better understanding of the suffering Afro-Cubans endured during colonial Cuba and beyond.

According to the theory of Black Marxism, in order to fully understand the Black experience via slavery throughout the world, one must first acknowledge that slavery had a dual agenda. In other words, slavery aimed to institute racism, while also serving as a means to achieve economic and capitalist desires. As stated by Robinson, “World capitalism was influenced in the most fundamental
way by the particularistic forces of racism and nationalism.\(^{31}\) This analysis can be extended to suggest that African women’s enslavement was particularly important for the formation of world capitalism because they were sexualized subjects, who reproduced in order to increase the slave population.

**Abolishment of Slavery in Cuba**

While race created a divide in Cuba, tensions continued even after abolishment of slavery on October 7, 1886. Despite this significant change, differences among Afro-Cubans, white Cubans and mulattoes remained apparent on the island. Afro-Cubans and mulattoes continued to be viewed as the lowest class in Cuban society, whereas white Cubans were esteemed and given great power and influence. To depict racial tensions in Cuban society, one must understand the overall definition of racism. According to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s article, *Rethinking Racism: Toward a structural Interpretation*, several definitions of racism exist and have evolved during the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) Century. Bonilla-Silva cites Ruth Benedict’s definition of racism as, “The dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group is destined to congenital superiority.”\(^{32}\) This means that one racial group will always dominate another racial group due to the nature of superiority. This directly relates to the WSA and the overall dominance of one country or a group over a weaker country.

---


or a group. In sum, the theory of WSA is directly applicable to the slave trade in Cuba.

As the British continued to contribute to the overall success of Cuba’s economy, Cuba fostered strong trade relations with other countries, primarily the United States and Spain, as the founding Mother Country. Soon, Cuba found itself at the crossroads, finding it difficult to merge its development during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. The onset of the Seven Years’ War, along with the French Revolution from 1789-1799, greatly affected Spain, as the country found it difficult to continue the interaction throughout the Caribbean. As Spain’s force began to be highly questioned and its status started to decline, the United State continued to foster strong relationships with Cuba. Strengthening the ties between the two countries was relatively easy, owing to the close geographical location, with merely ninety miles separating the island from the coast of Florida. The United States, fearful of Spain being involved with Cuba and wanting to mitigate the risk of a “terror attack,” tried to purchase Cuba from Spain during three presidencies (James Polk, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan).

From the U.S. perspective, Cuba had proved to be a desirable nation. As a result, the U.S. continued attempts to occupy the island. Even during Thomas Jefferson’s presidency, there was a great interest in purchasing the island to gain additional leverage and increase overall prosperity. As quoted by President Jefferson,
I consider that the Florida Cape and Cuba form the mouth of the Mississippi as well as other rivers that empty their waters in the Gulf of Mexico and, therefore its purchasing for our Union is the upmost importance because of what it represents to our internal tranquility and to our prosperity and enlargement.\textsuperscript{33}

This statement by President Jefferson clearly demonstrates the sense of entitlement to occupy as much land bordering the mainland as possible. Furthermore, by obtaining additional land and by dominating other nations, the U.S. would prove to the rest of the world, in particular Europe, how powerful it has become. This prominent status also allowed the United States to keep enemies at bay, preempting direct attacks on the mainland. Cuba continued to be an important topic of discussion for many U.S. presidents that came after Thomas Jefferson, even after the civil war had ended. Several U.S. presidents tried, albeit to no avail, to purchase Cuba and place down payments on the island as a means of acquiring additional land.

Relinquishing of the Spanish Rule

In the early 1890s, the political atmosphere in Cuba began to shift. Concerned with Spain's continuous control of the island, Cuba sought a way out of being controlled by the Mother Country. As a part of this effort, Famous Cuban poet and patriot Jose Marti founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party on April 10, 1892, in order for Cuba to finally gain independence from Spain. As stated by Marti, the party was created, “in order to create a Cuban nation, republican in

spirit and method warfare, a nation capable of securing the lasting happiness of her children and of accomplishing, in the historical life of the continent, the hard duties imposed by its geographic position. According to Marti, the ability to seek independence and to allow future generations to experience such independence was an important factor in Cuba’s quest for freedom from Spanish rule. Soon after the Cuban Revolutionary Party was formed by Marti a war ensued, known as the “Necessary War”. It officially began on February 24, 1895 and lasted three years. In 1898, although Marti died in battle, Cuba continued to gain more power as the struggle continued. As the war progressed, the United States became increasingly concerned with the close proximity of Cuba to the American shores.

President William McKinley had to act quickly in order to intervene in the conflict between Cuba and Spain. The United States served as a mediator and attempted to negotiate a truce with Cuban revolutionaries, whereby the island would be granted highly limited independence. This was not acceptable to either Cuba or Spain, and both countries balked at this attempt of negotiations. Cuba held fast to its desire to be truly free from the control of Spain as a dominant core-periphery country. From Spain’s perspective, negotiations were deemed a failure, as the country wanted to retain its power and control over Cuba, viewed as a “weaker” nation. As Spain declined to relinquish Cuba, the United States finally decided to take matters to another level and directly invade Cuba to

34 Ibid., 26.
eliminate Spanish control. With the approval from Congress, President McKinley’s request was answered in the form of the Joint Resolution of April 19, 1898. According to the Joint Resolution, “Cuban liberators have already won their independence and the right to its recognition that the isle of Cuba is, and rightfully should be free and independent.” As a means of direct invasion, the United States was allowed to “employ all sea and land forces in order to achieve the pacification of Cuba, including the establishment of a competent and stable government, and the expulsion of Spain from Cuba.” The now infamous War of 1898, with direct involvement of the United States, took place between April 21, 1898 and July 16, 1898 in Santiago de Cuba. Overall, the Paris Treaty, which was signed in December of 1898, signified Spain’s surrender of Cuba.

Although Spain was now a part of Cuba’s history, and had no place in its present or future, in essence, political power was simply transferred to the United States. The unfortunate outcome of the War of 1898 was that the United States practically led all negotiations between Cuba and Spain. Despite its fight for independence, Cuba had no say in the shape its future was going to take. According to Esteban Morales Dominguez and Gary Prevost, Cuba was seemingly invisible from negotiations. In their view,

The Cubans were not allowed to participate in the surrender of Spanish forces, in spite of the important role that Cuban forces played in the defeat of the Spanish...The Cubans were also not included in the peace talks with Spain, thus allowing the United

35 Ibid., 28.
36 Ibid., 28.
States to dictate the terms of the transfer of power...The inauguration of a U.S. controlled Cuban government on January 1, 1899, immediately ratified the agreement between Spain and the United States.\textsuperscript{37}

Owing to being marginalized during the negotiations, Cuba did not achieve Jose Marti’s dream of full independence from another country. The transfer of power between Spain and the United States is in line with the idea of WSA, whereby dominant countries continuously control weaker, less dominant ones.

World-Systems Theory Applied to Cuban Relations

Interestingly, the notion of transferring power from one dominant country to another, as was the case in Cuba, is a prime example of the WSA theory implied. According to the WSA, a more dominant country (referred to as the core-periphery country) takes control and rules a weaker one (referred to as the semi-periphery country). Chase-Dunn and Grimes noted that, owing to its explanatory power, WSA transcends all spatial and social boundaries. In some cases, world-systems dominance leaves no stone unturned. As stated by Chase-Dunn, world-systems is “importantly structured as a core/periphery hierarchy in which some regions contain economically and militarily powerful states while other regions contain polities that are much less powerful and less developed.”\textsuperscript{38} Cuba’s transfer of power from Spain to the United States is an excellent example of exercising power from the WSA perspective. As a core-periphery and hegemonic

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 28-29.

power, the United States had the ability to secure Cuba as a semi-periphery country, achieving a quasi-monopoly. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the goal of a hegemonic, core-periphery country, such as the United States, is to achieve a quasi-monopoly of geopolitical power, in which the state in question is able to impose its rules, its order, on the system as a whole, in ways that favor the maximization of accumulation of capital to enterprises located within its borders.\(^{39}\)

The concerns of Cuba from the U.S. perspective are clearly denoted in the aforementioned statement. While Cuba was consistently seeking independence and the ability to self-govern, the United States was more concerned with occupying additional land, in order to enlarge its territory and ultimately become the most powerful nation in the world. Unfortunately, such power comes at the cost of controlling the lives of others. Interestingly, the WSA theory, combined with the Black Marxism theory, can be used to explain why racism continued in the 20\(^{th}\) Century, and in particular, how racism dominated Cuban tourism in the 20\(^{th}\) and 21\(^{st}\) Century.

The Relations Between Cuba and the United States in the 20\(^{th}\) Century

Early 20\(^{th}\) Century proved to be prosperous for the Cuban-U.S. relations. The Platt Amendment of 1901 gave the United States, the undisputed core, hegemonic power to intervene in Cuban affairs at any time in order to, “maintain a government adequate for the protection of life, liberty, and individual property

In addition, the Platt Amendment also granted the United States power to obtain property for a military naval base, the infamous Guantanamo Bay. As a part of this transition of power from Spanish rule to the United States, Cuba was left controlling almost nothing on the island. All Cuban products were immediately exported to the United States and the Cuban government was overhauled to align with the U.S. interests. Such control from the United States, facilitated by the acquisition of Cuba, truly proves omnipresence of core- and semi-periphery control. Nonetheless, Cuba was able to enjoy strong economic ties with the United States, due to which sugar mills and additional railways were constructed, while the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank opened a branch in Havana. Despite this apparent progress, Cubans experienced neither freedom nor independence they fought for. In fact, increasing domination by the United States continued to place Cuba in a submissive political position.

During the early 20th Century, from a capitalistic, economic perspective, close ties with the United States helped Cuba prosper. A critical component of this successful relationship between the two countries was the availability and dependence on key people to maintain such strong alliances and intervene if necessary. During the Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency in the 1930s, the New Deal programs in the U.S. were underway. The Good Neighbor Policy was also introduced, encouraging strong alliances with the Latin American and Central

American countries. A key person working behind the scenes on behalf of the Roosevelt Administration was future Cuban President, Fulgencio Batista, who ensured that manipulation and political corruption served the U.S. interests. With the United States keeping an eye on the Soviet Union even back in the 1930s, Batista formed a Communist Alliance with the Soviet Union and created a group called the Cuban Workers Confederation in January 1939. As an unofficial spy for the United States, Batista helped to form this group, and enjoyed a cordial relationship with President Roosevelt. With such exposure, Batista positioned himself to run for the presidential election in 1940, which he won. From this point, Batista’s regime proved to serve a dual purpose, as it helped the United States, but also hindered and greatly affected the needs of Cuban citizens.

By the early 1950s, throughout the island, with the exception of the elite, most Cubans lived in impoverished, squalor-like conditions. The United States on the other hand, continued to prosper at the expense of Cuba. New sugar mills were constructed to assist with the increased capitalistic, exploitative role and also contributed to the new railways throughout Cuba to transport goods to other cities outside of Havana. Several American companies and banks were also established in Cuba, thereby creating an American fortress away from the mainland.

In regards to demographics and the increasing population, the 1953 census, had an overall population of approximately 3 and 2.8 million males and
females, respectively.\textsuperscript{41} In addition, of these 5.8 million inhabitants, approximately 220,000 were peasants, 575,000 were employed in the agriculture industry, 500,000 were considered to be the urban proletariat, 200,000 worked in the service industry, and 621,000 were deemed middle class.\textsuperscript{42} Given such demographics, Cuba clearly suffered greatly under the economic control of the United States. Unemployment continuously increased in the 1950s, as Cubans found it difficult to make ends meet financially.

Cuba was greatly affected by poverty. While the middle class struggled to survive financially, those living in the countryside and the poor suffered even more and were virtually ignored. Social systems and programs aiming to provide financial, health and education assistance were not available to Cubans residing outside major cities. According to Louis Pérez,

\begin{quote}
Only 15 percent of rural inhabitants possessed running water as compared with 80 percent of the urban residents. Health and educational services rarely reached the countryside. Medical and dental personnel as well as hospital and clinics tended to concentrate around the cities.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

By all means, life outside of Havana was considered to be a personal hell for rural citizens. To further exacerbate the overall dire situation, lack of education caused the overall illiteracy rate to increase greatly. In particular, the


\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 224.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 229.
number of children attending primary school during the 1950s was drastically lower in comparison to 30 years prior.

Within major cities, such as Havana, devastation continued, albeit in different ways than in the rural countryside. As the United States controlled almost every aspect of Cuban life and economy, Havana was transformed into a vacation and gambling paradise for the U.S. citizens. Reminiscent of slavery during colonial Cuba, local citizens were invisible as the United States continued to construct and establish new businesses on the island. Once again, economic preservation was key to the U.S. control of Cuba, and the wellbeing of Cuban citizens was not taken into consideration. Serving more as an exotic and tropical getaway from the mainland, Cuba endured the construction of illegal casinos, clubs and theaters, and multiple brothels throughout Havana, which catered to prostitution and outright pornography. The underground prostitution industry, according to Pérez,

Employed more than 11,500 women. As one frequent visitor shared, ‘I was enchanted by Havana—and appalled by the way that lovely city was being debased into a great casino and brothel for American businessmen over for a big weekend from Miami.’

With such social ills taking place throughout the island, further insult arose when the news magazine Carteles announced that Batista was placing public funds in unnamed back accounts and wasting money by funding political figures, the Catholic Church, and labor unions, as well as bribing government 

\begin{footnote}{Ibid., 231.}\end{footnote}
officials and newspaper editors/reporters. With such misappropriation of funds, it is not surprising that Cubans felt that they could not trust their local government or the United States.

As the 20th Century progressed, race continued to be a major issue, compounding the economic and social ills suffered by Cubans. Akin to race relations in the United States, particularly the Jim Crow South, the treatment of Afro-Cubans was distinctly different from that afforded to their Creole, mulatto, and white counterparts. In line with their status during colonial slavery, as mentioned previously, Afro-Cubans continued to be treated as subservient to other races. In the employment sector, Afro-Cubans held predominantly menial jobs in the service sector, working in domestic services, entertainment (both legal and illegal), and construction. Very few Afro-Cubans held positions in the Cuban government. Another alarming statistic highlighted by Louis Pérez Jr was the fact that,

Almost 30 percent of the population of color over twenty years of age was illiterate. [Afro-Cubans] suffered greater job insecurity, more unemployment/underemployment, poorer health care, and constituted a proportionally larger part of the prison population...Afro-Cubans were subjected to systematic discrimination, barred from hotels, resorts, clubs, and restaurants.45

Such invisibility ties directly to the notions of Black Marxism. Overall, the Cuban-U.S. relationship had no benefits for Cuba. Batista was more concerned with his political wellbeing than prosperity of his constituents. On the other hand,

---

the United States was primarily focused on retaining its status as a core
hegemonic power, neglecting the needs of Cubans, who worked hard to help the
U.S. to remain prosperous.

Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution

Fidel Castro emerged from the shadows as a hero or a type of savior that
was to lead the masses out of the hands of destruction imposed by the Batista
regime. In direct response to the social ills endured by Cubans throughout the
island, Fidel Castro led the 26 of July Movement in 1958. The purpose of this
movement was to directly address the social ills and to destroy the capitalist
regime imposed by the United States and ultimately carried out by the Cuban
government. More specifically, the 26 of July Movement sought to destroy the
“sugar mills, tobacco factories, public utilities, railroads and oil refineries.”

In addition, according to Pérez, the 26 of July Movement was, “a part of the
revolutionary coalition against Batista.” The way Fidel Castro led the movement
against Batista was a more extreme version of the non-violent Civil Rights
Movement in the Southern States in the U.S. Clearly, Castro and his entourage
knew that Batista needed to be ousted from power as a means of reestablishing
order. The ultimate goal was to allow Cubans to thrive and stop suffering at the
hands of their corrupt government and external advisors. The remainder of 1958
proved to be tense, with skirmishes taking place, attempting to overthrow

---

46 Ibid., 233.

47 Ibid., 235.
Batista’s regime. Batista struggled to maintain what little power he had left as the president.

January 1, 1959 marked a beginning of an important year, as Fidel Castro ousted Batista from government and now held the reigns. The onset of Fidel Castro’s revolutionary statutes and the residual of Fulgencio Batista corrupt and lackluster presidency led Cuban citizens to believe that life was finally changing and for the better. However, such rapid changes created strong opposition, as many started to question what Castro aimed to accomplish during his tenure. Most importantly, the U.S. government was highly concerned with the future economic relations prospects. Overall, replacement of President Batista by Fidel Castro clearly announced that Cuba was finally tired of enduring constant domination and control from other core-periphery countries, such as the United States. As previously noted, the War of 1898 did not provide Cuba with the opportunity for sovereignty and self-governance. With the exploitation from the United States and constant political corruption by Fulgencio Batista, Cuba continued to suffer from political, racial and social perspectives. While the beauty of the island was romanticized for American tourists, Cuban citizens lived in constant hell, as the overall illiteracy rate continued to soar and the availability of jobs and quality healthcare was limited. Thus, revolution was the only means of rescuing Cuba from its own demise, as it gave hope for ceasing the control of the United States. This move announced to the world that Cuba would stand alone in its quest for sovereignty. Once Fidel Castro assumed power in 1959, immediate
changes were implemented to remedy the previous social and political ills suffered throughout the island. He wanted to reassure the people that Cuba would recover and all Cubans would be free from control and domination. From the perspective of WSA and capitalist ideals held by the United States, Cuba’s revolution set the tone for immediate change, relinquishing external control previously experienced by the island. The only way Cuba would achieve such independence from the dominant U.S. was by officially denouncing domination and economic exploitation. According to Charles McKelvey, the Cuban Revolution “is fundamentally an anti-colonial and anti-neocolonial revolution forged in response to the peripheralization [WSA] of the economy and the imposition of a neo-colonial republic; it seeks above all national liberation and true sovereignty.”

---

Cuban Revolution in Motion—1959 and Beyond

With the Cuban Revolution underway, changes continued to be implemented during the entire 1959 and the beginning of the 1960s. With the fall of Batista’s regime, Fidel Castro and his young, vibrant revolutionaries were determined to create change throughout the island. Castro’s revolutionary cause was characterized by John Foran as, “almost uniquely in the annals of revolutions, the rebels had created the downturn needed to stabilize the government and enlist the population in a struggle for change.”\(^{49}\) Such immediate action, resulting in the demise of President Batista and the emergence of Fidel Castro, clearly shows how Cuba denounced the control of the United States, along with the practical applications of the world systems theory through having a core-periphery country solely control the island. Such euphoria after the fall of the Batista regime signifies the direct refusal to continue to be exploited, both politically and economically. According to Louis Pérez, approximately 1,500 laws were in effect within the first year following Batista’s Presidential demise. The implementation of such laws and programs aimed to address the dire needs of all Cuban citizens. Fidel Castro sought to remedy critical issues that plagued the island, in particular illiteracy, lack of employment, and limited accessibility of

programs designed to assist the needs of the people. Considering how Cubans had suffered historically from the lack of such social initiatives, the revolutionary programs implemented during this period quickly became popular among Cubans throughout the island.

The Revolution and Social Programs

Action taken by the Communist Party after January 1, 1959 proved to be swift and effective as the Urban Reform Law was enacted in March 1959. This particular law discouraged typical real estate investments, whereby wealthy Cubans owned several properties with vast amounts of land, while the middle and lower class citizens had no property ownership rights. In addition, the Urban Reform Law also instituted lower rent prices for Cuban citizens who could not afford to pay exuberant rates due to high unemployment prior to Castro’s regime. According to Louis Pérez, the Reform Law “decreed a 50 percent reduction of rents under $100 monthly, 40 percent reduction of rents between $100 and $200, and 30 percent reduction in rents over $200.”50 The revolution further addressed the public housing disparity by implementing the National Savings and Housing Institute (INAV), which obtained vacant property previously owned by wealthy Cubans to construct low cost, public housing for lower and middle class citizens.

---

Continuing with real estate initiatives throughout the island, Castro instituted the famous Agrarian Reform Law in May of 1959, which controlled the acreage in which citizens were allowed to own and maintain. Following the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Law, the Agrarian Reform Institute was created in order manage the transfer of land ownership. Both laws provided immediate change, promoting construction of new public housing, roads, health facilities, and additional educational projects.

The Agrarian Reform Law of 1959, as well as its reinstitution in 1963, changed how property was divided and sold to the general public. Instead of allowing only wealthy Cubans to successfully earn a living and own property, Castro’s goal was to allow all citizens to become land owners. As stated by Gladys Hernández, “the agrarian reforms of the Revolution turned tenant farmers, share-croppers and squatters into owners. Vast colonial and ‘neo-colonial’ estates were quickly replaced by vast state-owned farms, which differed from their predecessors in their social nature.” Such reforms finally made dream of owning property reality, not just for a certain population based upon status, but for all Cubans who were willing to work hard on their own land. The previous notion of privatization of agriculture was replaced by the right of the local citizens to work on their own land.

The Cuban Revolution was swift with implementing new programs and policies. According to Louis Pérez, “Discontent increased also among property

---

owners. Large urban landlords denounced the reduction of rents. So did middle-class, small property owners, many of whom had invested years of savings into small apartment houses, most of which were mortgaged.\(^{52}\) Opposition to such immediate change was commonplace, as Castro focused on “one man,” instead of many men, obtaining success in various ventures, and those less fortunate were left behind in this progress. Agencies not in favor of the Agrarian Reform Law included not only landowners, but also the National Association of Cattle Ranchers, the Sugar Mill Owners Association and the Association of Tobacco Planters. Each group held the view that such drastic change in land distribution of would ultimately destroy the national economy and lead to economic ruin from which there would be no recovery.

With respect to public utilities throughout the island, Castro addressed the high cost of monthly bills by reducing overall rates and negotiating the workers’ wages to be fair and just. Within the famous and highly profitable sugarcane industry, Castro managed to achieve an overall 15 percent increase in wages. Additional jobs were created, and the once deferred dream of owning land was now not only possible, but an immediate reality.

Education was a critical factor that Castro took into consideration upon entering his presidency in 1959. Prior to the change in power in Cuba, illiteracy rate skyrocketed, as education was a privilege of a wealthy few, rather than a

\(^{52}\) Louis A. Pérez, Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 244.
right of all Cuban citizens. According to Lavina Gasperini, Cuban education was in dire need of change. Gasperini stated that,

In 1959, in stark comparison [to current day Cuba], half of Cuba’s children did not attend school and all, 72 percent of 13-19 year-olds failed to reach intermediate levels of schooling, and there were over one million illiterates [out of a population of 6.8 million].\textsuperscript{53}

Such statistics are alarming, confirming that Batista and his predecessors did not focus on the dire need for education. As a result, citizens continued to suffer, with little to no hope of being able to have direct access to formal education. In response to this grave oversight, Castro immediately instituted free education for all Cuban citizens, from the pre-school level for young children, to university education. The outcome was a rapid growth in the number of lawyers, teachers, engineers and medical doctors throughout the island. In addition, the changes that followed the revolution allowed those wishing to attain secretarial and other trade and vocational positions to gain the necessary skills through free education. Essentially, not only was education free for all Cubans, but taking advantage of this opportunity in any capacity was greatly encouraged. When comparing and contrasting the societal ideals pertaining to education, it is interesting to quote Louis Pérez, who stated that, “higher education in Cuba was an important expression for material well-being, a sign of the coming of age of the colony, evidence of cultural diversity and sophistication.”\textsuperscript{54}

Free education for


all enabled the country to become culturally diverse and sophisticated, without
hindrances of class status. Indeed, Cuba was proud not only to boast, but rather
reap the benefits of a free education. As of 2004, according to Bruce Stokes,
“Cuba has the highest literacy rate in Latin America, with 81 percent of its
secondary-school-age children in school (Brazil has only 66 percent), and with
the average child getting 11 years of education.”55 As a result of this initiative,
Cuba achieved an overall literacy rate of 96 percent, according to Stokes. This
rapid change was unparalleled and could not be matched by any country.

Another facet of the revolution was the institution of free healthcare for all
Cuban citizens. This initiative captured the attention of not only Cubans that were
for and against the revolution, but also of other countries throughout the world.
Prior to the revolution, healthcare access was a privilege of wealthy only. In
particular, hospitals and local clinics serving Cubans living in the countryside and
in small cities outside of Havana were almost non-existent. Many in favor of the
revolution viewed the institution of free education and free healthcare for all as
instrumental in its success.

Since 1959, healthcare in Cuba has evolved and expanded, whereby free
healthcare and medical services are offered to residents of other Latin American
countries. As stated by Jerry Spiegel, Cuba has produced world-renowned
physicians, who are sent to other countries to assist with meeting the medical
needs of other citizens free of charge. According to Spiegel, “[Cuba] in fact,

55 Bruce Stokes, “Cuba Samples Globalization,” Council on Foreign Relations, (blog),
January 18, 2003 (8:00 am), http://www.cfr.org/cuba/cuba-samples-globalization/p5467.
achieved the world’s greatest physician to population ratio, and has dispatched
tens of thousands of physicians and other health workers to assist countries in
Africa, Asia and Latin America. Using training facilities it established, Cuba now
also trains thousands of developing country physicians annually. Not only does
Cuba boast low mortality rate among its own citizens, but nation’s medical
professionals also work throughout the world, providing assistance wherever
needed. This willingness to assist others is viewed as pivotal to the revolution’s
overall success. One key bilateral relationship Cuba formed was with Venezuela
prior to President Hugo Chavez’s death in 2012. Cuba provided free eye
surgeries to correct vision issues experienced by Venezuelan citizens, which
would otherwise be ignored and ultimately cause loss of vision.

U.S.-Cuban Relations after the Revolution

While Fidel Castro focused on implementing programs and policies that
would improve the overall quality of life for all Cubans, the United States was left
to ponder how its foreign policy would change. Castro proved to be a serious
threat to future U.S. prosperity in Cuba, as he denounced Western imperialism,
in particular that from the United States. To further his point, Castro opened the
once private beaches that could be enjoyed by affluent U.S. citizens only, making
them public and free for use by Cubans. To officially denounce U.S. imperialism,

56 Jerry M. Spiegel and Annalee Yassi, “Lessons from the Margins of Globalization:
Castro passed the First and Second Declarations of Havana on September 2, 1960 and on February 24, 1962, respectively. For all intents and purposes, both declarations rejected the Monroe Doctrine. Likewise, according to Isaac Saney, the declarations also,

Argued that the unity of Latin America and the necessity for revolution were immanent in the region’s common history. Thus, the Cuban Revolution and Latin America’s redemption were inseparable and Washington’s hostility to the Cuban Revolution had to do not only with Cuba, but with forestalling regional revolution: ‘By eliminating the Cuban Revolution, they [the United States] hope to eliminate the revolutionary spirit of the people’.  

Moreover, the United States did not appreciate being directly defied by a country that once enjoyed beneficial foreign relations. Hence, the U.S. government felt deceived by the success of the revolution.

The United States had to devise a plan to eliminate the revolution and hopefully retain economic ties with Cuba, as a means of continuing financial and entertainment prosperity. Further attacks on Cuban Revolution made by the United States took place within local newspapers, as well as through minor changes within various subsidiaries throughout the island. Castro clearly understood that his leadership was under scrutiny by the United States. Therefore, he had to pay close attention to any possible attacks on the island. According to Esteban Morales Dominguez, the United States took direct action on April 15, 1961, by bombing three airports in Cuba. This incident was followed by the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, which also displayed the disdain for the

---

revolution and the ongoing fear that the alliance with the Soviet Union would potentially cause a nuclear attack on the United States.

After the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the U.S. government decided to stop the Cuban Revolution by any means. From suspending molasses production for one year to suspending naval ships on the island, the Kennedy Administration in the early 1960s sought to terminate the revolution. It also needed to prove that the United States was not only the most powerful nation in the world, but would impose grave consequences on any country financially backed by the United States trying to denounce its alliances to the U.S. On July 8, 1963, the U.S. devised the Cuban Assets Control Regulations, also known as the CACR, to freeze all Cuban-related transactions. According to Dominguez, the CACR sought to, “prohibited all transactions related to Cuba, affected all financial operations with Cuba and froze all property in U.S. territory owned by either Cuban nationals or by the Cuban government.”\(^{58}\) The economic/trade embargo of the early 1960s also determined the fate of U.S. relations and aid to Cuba. In essence, the embargo prohibited exports from the United States to Cuba. Officially, the United States relinquished diplomatic relations with Cuba as of January 1961. As a result of severing political ties, Americans were ultimately banned from

traveling to Cuba, which significantly undermined the tourism sector on the island.

Cuban Acceptance/Disapproval of the Revolution

Despite the embargo looming over Cuba, the majority of the island was ecstatic with the drastic, yet positive changes that the revolution provided. With the sudden expansion of the employment sector and increased wages, according to Castro, Cuba was flourishing in the early 1960s. Louis Pérez asserts that the revolution directly caused, “euphoric times in Cuba. Expectations ran high, were met, and then raised higher again. Cuba had become an aroused nation. Everywhere and, it seemed, continually, Cubans were marching in protest, meeting in mass rallies, dramatizing demands in public demonstrations.” Isaac Saney echoes the same sentiment, “[The Cuban Revolution] attained its highest expression in the work and ideals.” With such solidarity among the vast majority of Cubans in favor of undisputed change and equality, there were also many who felt that the revolution was detrimental to the livelihood and financial security of wealthy families in Cuba.

Citizens that previously enjoyed social prominence found themselves at the opposite end of the revolutionary spectrum after 1959. Families who sought

---


to establish themselves financially and from a societal standpoint suddenly found themselves figuratively stripped of their hard earned wealth and class status. As a result, many wealthy Cubans left the island and migrated to the United States, predominantly choosing to reside in Miami Florida and throughout the East Coast. Clearly, the notion of communism and the community sharing was not endearing to wealthy Cubans who previously achieved an accumulate wealth, or were born into families with elite social and class status. As a result, in order to denounce communism and the Marxism tenets, wealthy, mainly white Cubans fled the island for better opportunities in the United States and beyond.

From racial perspective, the revolution was also a means of addressing social inequalities suffered by the Afro-Cuban community. The addition of social programs assisted with improving the life of all Cubans, and Castro also sought to officially remedy the long, turbulent history of racial and gender discrimination. The institution of free and equal accessibility to education, employment, and healthcare, Castro ensured that Afro-Cubans, mulattoes, men and women alike were treated equally. Taking such action was officially denouncing racism and officially eradicating racism. In his speech, delivered on April 16, 1981, Castro defended Cuba’s Socialist Revolution, stating,

When I mentioned the things that Socialism made possible, I left out another one of our great successes: the end of the cruel discrimination against women and of the cruel racial discrimination that existed in our country, the discrimination on grounds of race or sex.\textsuperscript{61}

While his words are certainly highly commendable, his vision is also unrealistic, as long-standing inequalities cannot be eradicated, ignored or erased by mere introduction of laws or reforms.

As previously discussed, such social injustices categorized by intersectionality are historically embedded and are not simply forgotten overnight due to the implementation of a law or edict. Surprisingly, Castro also declared that, “racial discrimination which had weighed on the backs of Cuba’s Blacks and Mulattoes was wiped out. Cubans today feel a growing pride in their country’s African heritage.”

Although national pride was to be spread throughout the island, this does not mean that institutionalized racism and imbedded prejudices against Afro-Cubans and women no longer existed in the privacy of Cuban homes and families.

Fidel Castro’s speech entitled, “This is Democracy,” delivered on May 1, 1960, provided the sentiment of how important Afro-Cubans and women were to Cuban society as a whole. Castro stated,

Democracy is this, where you, Black Cuban, have the right to work without anyone being able to deprive you of that right because of stupid prejudice. Democracy is this, where the women acquire rights equal to those of all other citizens and have a right even to bear arms alongside the men to defend their country.

---

62 Ibid., 81.

63 Ibid., 31.
Revolution and Eradicating Tourism-1959

To respond to the plight of several nameless, poverty stricken and deprived Cubans throughout the island, Fidel Castro and his rebels sought to change the trajectory of Cuban history. Castro announced that tourism was no longer needed for the island to prosper, as he aimed to eradicate the extreme misuse of the island for American greed. Once the tourism sector was eliminated and the socialist regime took hold, the United States responded by imposing the trade and travel embargo, prohibiting Americans from visiting the beautiful island, which once catered to every desire of Americans.

Following the elimination of tourism in the 1960s, Cuba focused primarily on the social needs of the citizens. Until the mid-1980s, tourism was considered an issue from the past. Unlike the previous Batista regime, Socialism did not focus on the economic prosperity of the island as a whole, but rather on the core social needs of the citizens, while creating conditions that would guarantee success for all. Due to receiving financial assistance from the Soviet Union, Cuba continued to prosper as a socialist country until the mid-1980s. After the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, Russia relinquished financial assistance to Cuba. The aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union placed Cuba in a precarious position. As stated by Taylor and McGlynn, by 1989, Cuba “lost close to 75% of its international trade. Living conditions were declining, and the phrase, ‘vida no
es fácil (life is not easy) was a common refrain." With such uncertainty plaguing the island, Fidel Castro had to quickly consider how Cuba could continue to function as a socialist nation and be able to provide for its citizens without dependence on another country. Furthermore, with globalization quickly spreading throughout the world, as countries started to forge key economic relationships to ensure prosperity, the question also lingered as to where Cuba would turn to form trade or bilateral agreements.

The Special Period and the Unknown-1990s

The 1990s, also known as The Special Period, marked uncertain times for Cubans, as the country struggled to find its footing following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet, The Special Period also proved how innovative Cuba would become in order to survive. By 1994, Castro announced that Cuba would once again reopen the island for tourism in order to become more financially solvent. This move was not without significant risks, as the country could potentially fall into the same trap that tourism created forty years previously, when the United States ultimately took advantage of the island and exploited its resources. In order for tourism to become successful, Cuba had to find ways to attract visitors. However, promoting tourism under a socialist regime proved to be a challenge. In order to successfully implement an effective, results-oriented tourism plan to

---

attract tourists from around the world, Cuba needed to emulate the approach adopted by another country, preferably a Caribbean neighbor. The answer to this problem for Castro was to consult with the Dominican Republic, where tourism packages and policies were very successful.

Types of Tourism in Cuba

Since Cuban tourism closely mirrors tourism practices in place in the Dominican Republic, Cuba has instituted all-inclusive travel packages to lure potential visitors. Other types of tourism packages available to international tourists seeking to visit Cuba include culture travel, health travel, eco-tourism and family-oriented travel packages.

Another unique aspect of Cuban tourism is the utilization of health tourism. Internationally known for high quality healthcare that is free to Cuban citizens, Cuba also offers a wide variety of health services to international tourists. Cuba offers state packages to international tourists that are similar to all-inclusive hotel packages. Healthcare services include cosmetic, anti-stress, health spas, and acupuncture, to name a few. Thus, tourists who have medical needs can purchase medical all-inclusive packages that include airfare, lodging, transportation, nursing after procedures, medication, surgical procedures and laboratory work. Cuba also offers hospitals that specifically cater to international tourists. Most of the medical facilities offering such services are outside the typical tourist zones, such as Havana or Varadero. For example, Cuba has
several anti-stress centers and health spas within its mountainous region that provide holistic care. Areas such as Holguín and Pinar del Río have holistic health spas that cater to the wellbeing of tourists who suffer from chronic ailments, such as high blood pressure and asthmatic symptoms. These healthcare services are unique, yet innovative, allowing Cuba to gain additional international attention, notoriety and most importantly, much needed economic provision.

Cuban tourism is geographically concentrated in Havana, Varadero, Holguín, and Santiago de Cuba. With respect to the structure of the tourist industry, Cuba instated the tourist ministry MINTUR in 1994. The overall purpose of the MINTUR was to help promote and advertise hotels and tourist activities. Best described as the cluster effect, MINTUR is responsible for organizing or “clustering” together the best travel packages that include a variety of hotels, restaurants, travel packages and other specialized deals throughout Cuba. The Cuban government is heavily involved with the implementation and the daily operation of hotels and tourist attractions. In addition, no developmental plans or their execution can take place without the approval of the state. Private hotel investors are limited in Cuba, as the state has strict regulations regarding the ownership and operation of hotels and other hospitality/tourist attractions. For example, in 2003, 62 state-owned hotels were operated by foreign investors, in

---

addition to 11 “joint ventures” that were solely operated by foreign investors, compared to 190 state-owned and operated hotels.”

MINTUR as a part of the Cuban government is also the driving force for advertisements for Cuban tourism in the 21st Century. The case study for chapter three will analyze images located on the MINTUR website that depicts Afro-Cubans and Afro-Cuban culture in a stereotypical manner.

The creation of MINTUR also allowed for the number of jobs in the tourist industry to steadily increase. According to Carty, Cuban tourism jobs nearly doubled between 1995 and 2002. Jobs in the tourist sector for Cuban citizens' supplemented wages earned from state positions, as many teachers, engineers, and lawyers chose to take on additional duties. As most Cubans earn a monthly wage of approximately $20.00 USD, in order to supplement these meager monthly incomes and better support their families, many took on tourism jobs, both formally and informally. At the beginning of The Special Period, there were approximately 54,000 jobs in both sectors, and the number nearly doubled to 105,000 by 2002.

---

66 Ibid., 170.
67 Ibid., 172.
exchanged services, such as prostitution, renting rooms from a private residence, private taxi services, and sales of artisan goods and artwork. These jobs in both the formal and informal sector allowed workers to often earn more money than state employed individuals with college degrees and other notable certifications.

The Dominican Republic: Neoliberalism versus Socialism

Cuba and the Dominican Republic share many similarities with respect to the structure of tourism industry as a whole. For example, while Cuba implemented the tourist ministry MINTUR in 1994, the Dominican Republic has the Tourist Development Association as well as the Department of Tourism Investment and Infrastructure (INFRATUR), responsible for organizing hotel bookings and travel packages. In addition to the centralized management of tourist travel packages in both countries, Cuba has also implemented all-inclusive packages, prevalent throughout the Dominican Republic. On the other hand, from an economic and capitalist perspective, Cuba’s uniqueness regarding the development of profitable and attractive health tourist sector is unmatched, as no other countries, including the Dominican Republic, offer such medical services. As advantage result, Cuba is able to “capitalize” on its internationally renowned healthcare field to gain additional international tourists.

Despite the success the Dominican Republic achieved in the tourist sector, with minimal state involvement, Cuba had to revise its tourism expansion
plans, in order to maintain the socialist standards, while still achieving economic success. As Cuba began to experiment with revamping tourism in the late 20th Century and early the 21st Century, success was immediate, as visitors from around the world gravitated toward the island. Viewed as the forbidden fruit for Americans, Cuba also lured many American citizens that traveled illegally to the island for many years during The Special Period. Quick gains were apparent in the newfound, yet resurrected Cuban tourism industry, as the sector increased significantly toward the end of the 20th Century. Statistics provided by Taylor and McGlynn purport that,

By 2004, the number of visitors to Cuba surpassed the two million mark for the first time. Concurrently, gross revenues from tourism increased from U.S. $1.1 Billion in 1995 to U.S. $1.9 billion in 1999, to U.S. $2.25 billion in 2004. By 2003, revenues reached $2.1 billion, almost half of Cuba’s total hard currency.70

With such increased revenues assisting the Cuban economy, the number of jobs also increased due to the continuous need for construction of new hotels and resorts. Taylor further states that, between 1990 and 2000, “The number of hotel rooms in Cuba, in pace with arrivals, doubled from 18,565 to 37,178. In Havana alone, the total number of rooms increased from 4682 rooms in 1988 to 12,002 rooms in 2002.”71 Finally, Cuba has begun to reap success from the tourism industry.


71 Ibid., 406.
The Dominican Republic, an island of a considerably smaller size than Cuba, has been the leader in the tourism industry in the Caribbean throughout most of the late 20th Century and the early 21st Century. Neoliberalism in the tourist sector in the Dominican Republic consisted of various reforms controlled by a free market economy in order to reap economic benefits. Neoliberal policies limited social programs and focused on restricting state involvement to ensure economic success. In order for neoliberal policies to be effective in the tourist or any other industry, the overall involvement of the state should be minimal. World-renowned anthropologist, Steven Gregory, the author of *The Devil Behind the Mirror*, analyzed the use of neoliberal policies incorporated into the tourism industry of the Dominican Republic. In his work, he studied the effects the tourism industry had on the economic, class, racial and gender inequalities that are apparent and rampant among Dominicans. According to Gregory, neoliberal policies in general seek to achieve minimal state involvement, “and the regulatory prices associated with the welfare state dismantled by sharply cutting back social welfare spending, privatizing public assets and functions, and reducing taxes on businesses and investors.”72 The neoliberal structural adjustment policies in the Dominican Republic allowed creation of additional hotels and all-inclusive resorts. In particular, as a result of the tourism police referred to as the POLITUR, tourist zones were created along the coast and public use of local beaches was restricted. According to Korine Kolivras and Joseph Scarpaci,

neoliberal policies implemented in the Dominican Republic caused much turmoil, despite the resulting economic success. As the authors noted, “The rapacious tourism sector gobbles up oceanfront properties with seemingly minimal public oversight. Indeed, weak public institutions and the prevalence of strong corporate agents in the Dominican Republic impose another set of obstacles.”

The Dominican Republic’s continuous success in the tourism industry is primarily due to the manner in which neoliberal strategies have been utilized to gain the attention of international tourists. Gregory Steven closely analyzed these neoliberal economic practices, noting that the Dominican Republic implemented the tourist zone as the sole means of sustaining the local economy during the 1960s. This initiative was heavily promoted by the World Bank and the International Development Bank (IBD). In the Dominican Republic, the establishment of tourist zones was a classic form of neoliberal reform in which the foreign investors were encouraged to invest in the sector, neglecting any other industry. From the neoliberal point of view, the interesting aspect of Cuban tourism lies it its close scrutiny of the tourist activities in the Dominican Republic, which approached this sector from a capitalist perspective. Cuba, attempting to maintain its socialist stance, has ultimately implemented several aspects of Dominican tourist attractions, incentives and protocols. Nonetheless, Cuba consistently rejected the notion of being a capitalist society.

---

Throughout Cuba’s advancement in the tourism industry, the Dominican Republic proved to be an effective and close model to mirror tourism practices. In order for Cuba to become successful in the tourism sector, assistance from other countries and companies was essential. In order for Cuban to maintain its Socialist uniqueness, Kolivras and Scarpaci defined Socialism in Cuba as the way,

“The national government controls land ownership except for some cooperative agricultural lands and leases to multinational firms who manage facilities that belong to the state. The island enlists a single-party system that excludes all other organized political networks, especially opposition groups.”

In order to maintain Socialist practices, Cuba has to closely monitor the way in which tourism is executed. In this respect, it is interesting to examine the way Cuba fostered relationships with other countries, as this practice questions the tenets of Socialism, especially as the onus on the government maintaining close control of the economic practices. For example, as tourism flourished in Cuba, joint ventures with international and domestic companies, as well as other countries, became instrumental in Cuba’s overall success. According to Taylor,

Cuba engaged in joint ventures with foreign companies that possessed financial, technical, and marketing expertise . . . . Firms included Spanish, French, German and other European Union companies [such as] Sol Melia, Accor, LTI, Mirama, Riu, SuperClubs, and Sandals. By 2002, 110 companies, such as

---

AT&T, Exxon, and General Electric, had licenses to operate in Cuba.\textsuperscript{75}

These relationships were critical to Cuba’s economic success, as the country lacked such expertise in the tourism sector. Thus, seeking assistance from outside the island has proved to be important to increasing Cuba’s annual revenue.

Another key component of Cuba’s tourism industry is the implementation of the aforementioned tourist ministry, MINTUR, as well as INFRATUR. All key decisions regarding tourism—from marketing to future construction of hotels and resorts—must be approved by MINTUR and INFRATUR. Victoria McCarthy presents the Global Commodity Chain (GCC) approach as a means of properly analyzing the Cuban tourism industry. In particular, GCC allows examining how tourism is able to flourish and how planning and development takes place before implementing a particular project or opening a particular resort to cater to the needs and desires of international tourists. The GCC is defined as “a network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity.”\textsuperscript{76}

According to McCarty, the GCC approach also “analyzes the issue of who controls global trade and industry, and how agents locked into lower-value segments of trade and industry can break out of this situation.”\textsuperscript{77} In addition to

\textsuperscript{75} Henry Louis Taylor and Linda McGlynn, “International Tourism in Cuba: Can Capitalism Be Used to Save Socialism?” \textit{Futures} 41, no. 6 (2009): 407.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 173.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 173.
MINTUR and INFRATUR, Cuba has also established hospitality institutes in order to effectively train future tourism employees, teaching those in hospitality sector how to cater to the needs of international tourists. Although university graduation rates in Cuba are high, and many residents have become respectable professionals, such as medical doctors, scientists, lawyers and teachers, human resource management and hotel management has not been adequately addressed through formal education and training. In order to mitigate this obvious weakness, Cuba’s Ministry of Tourism founded the organization FORMATUR, to provide training in the tourism sector. Furthermore, Cuba’s University of Havana also instated a tourism specialization as a field of study for students. Furthermore, the Jose Smith Comas Institute of Hotel and Tourism Services also trains those wishing to work in the hospitality industry. While addressing this disparity through continuing education and training in the HR arena, it is also important to ensure continued influx of tourists to the island.

While striving to maintain socialist regime, Cuba seeks to maintain control of the tourism sector in order to avoid economic exploitation from another country or foreign investor. Although socialist ideals helped tourism sector prosper, living standards of most Afro-Cubans have not been substantially improved and gender and race discrimination has not been eradicated. The present study addresses these issues, employing the theories of Intersectionality and WSA, in order to provide some insight into the future of tourism in Cuba.
CHAPTER THREE CASE STUDY
TOURISM: RACE, GENDER AND CLASS STATUS IN CUBA

Tourism Prior to Revolution
Tourism in Cuba, as previously discussed, is not a new phenomenon, as the island has catered to foreign visitors since the United States gained control after the War of 1898. By the 1950’s, Cuba gradually became a playground for American elite, as U.S. citizens flocked to the island for pleasure and exploitation. Once the revolution began in 1959, Castro eliminated international tourism on the island, as a means of denouncing U.S. control and exploitation. Casinos and hotels were closed and the country experienced a major decrease in the number of tourists visiting the island for fun and relaxation. With the loss of the Soviet Union as a major economic contributor by 1994, the country faced uncertain future and Castro agreed to revisit tourism as a means of obtaining hard currency and regaining financial independence. This chapter presents a case study of how tourism in Cuba has evolved from The Special Period and into the 21st Century. Most importantly, this case study will critically analyze the way in which contemporary Cuban tourism is instituted and how gender, class and race intersect and play distinct roles in determining how Afro-Cuban men and women are incorporated into the tourism industry on highly unequal terms. To illustrate such disparities within the tourism industry, I will analyze images of Afro-Cuban males and females to show how racism is prevalent within the
tourism industry. The images provided in this chapter depict stereotypical characterizations of Afro-Cuban culture, even as Afro-Cubans are excluded from well-paying and meaningful jobs in the tourism industry. By employing an intersectional analysis, I show how these stereotypical depictions of Afro-Cubans, are rooted in colonial forms of racism that works in gender-specific ways.

In the late 19th and early 20th Century, tourism was flourishing throughout Cuba, the capital city of Havana in particular. After the War of 1898, and the transfer of power from Spain to the United States, tourism industry in Cuba significantly increased due to the new economic and political relations with the United States. According to Martin Oppermann and Kye-Sung Chon, tourism in Cuba in the early 20th Century allowed for, “tourist resorts [to be] developed, first for domestic; and after the war with America, for North American tourists.” By transforming the island into an elite, adult paradise, Cuba found itself bound to the way in which the United States continuously reinvented the island to its own personal preference. The construction of hotels, resorts, restaurants, brothels, and casinos left the imprint of the United States and clearly demonstrated that Cuba was at the economic mercy of the powerful Western nation. While construction of lavish hotels continued to accommodate an increasing number of Western tourists, Cuban citizens continued to suffer greatly from impoverished conditions.

As the influence of the United States on Cuba increased throughout the 20th Century, tourism sector expanded as well. In particular, statistics reflect that, from 1948 until 1957, Cuban tourism experienced an overall increase of international tourists by 94%. Most importantly, approximately 86% of the tourists visiting Cuba were American citizens. While the United States enjoyed almost non-interrupted prosperity, the lives of local Cuban citizens were practically in ruin, as their living conditions continued to worsen and disparities among Afro-Cubans and elite white Cubans widened the racial divide. As described by Henry Taylor Jr. and Linda McGlynn, “tourism and sugar painted Havana’s social landscape in misery and pain. There were more than 5000 beggars walking the streets of the city in 1958, many of whom were homeless women with children.”

The fact that the wellbeing of Cubans during this time was virtually ignored, as many lived in hideous and inhumane conditions, clearly demonstrates that economic prosperity and political gain were achieved at the expense of the wellbeing of the island inhabitants. During this period, President Fulgencio Batista appeared to be mostly occupied by the political scene of Cuba and the need to maintain close economic and political relationships with the United States. In addition, according to a former American visitor to Cuba during Batista’s regime, Arthur Schlesinger,

---


80 Ibid., 405.
I was enchanted by Havana—and appalled by the way that lovely city was being debased into a great casino and brothel for American businessmen over for a big weekend from Miami. My fellow countrymen reeled through the streets, picking up 14-year-old Cuban girls and tossing coins to make men scramble in the gutter. One wondered how any Cuban—on the basis of this evidence—could regard the United States with anything but hatred.\textsuperscript{81}

Given such an experience, one has to wonder how Cubans truly felt about the controlling and suppressive relationship extended by the United States.

**Cuban Hospitality Relations**

As tourism progressed, the racial and gender inequalities within the tourism sector were present. Since Afro-Cuban males and females were limited in their ability to work in the formal tourism industry, employees had to ensure that they were more personable while interacting with guests. Tourism employees were trained to interact with guests in such a way that a relationship was established. According to Amalia Cabezas, “Workers strive to create and exploit conditions of intimacy, to forge bonds with guests through friendly conversations and gestures. While this is a practice suggested by management, the consequences cannot be predicted.”\textsuperscript{82}

From the point of view of hotel and resort management, sexual affection, although not directly encouraged, can be utilized as a means of forming an

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 405.
affectionate bond with hotel guests. In her article entitled, *Intimate Encounters: Affective Economies in Cuba and the Dominican Republic*, Amalia Cabezas presents how expanded human resource efforts can lead to further sexual encounters. Her experience began with being given a dirty hotel room, resulting in Cabezas paying more for a well-kept room. In the process, Cabezas was able to study how hospitality in Cuba and the Dominican Republic is centered on the idea of emotional labor. Emotional labor is an expansion of human resource policies to ensure that the tourist is well taken care of as a guest. When demonstrating affection, workers are able to easily manipulate a situation to their benefit, while taking care of the temporary needs of tourists and creating lasting connections that would lead to reciprocity in the future.

In recognition of this effect, Cuban hotel employees are trained in the area of emotional labor, resulting in the lines between guest and friend or significant other being easily blurred. According to Cabezas, “Training in the handling of customer interaction produces opportunities for workers and tourists to straddle the complexities of a market-driven relationship with private emotions.” Reminiscent of another article published by Cabezas, hotel employees are instructed to be as personable as possible with their guests. The investment into personal relationships can guarantee future visits to the island and more specifically to the hotel or resort in question. This building of a client base, similar

---

to the mortgage industry or life insurance industry, is present throughout the tourism industry in the Caribbean and Cuba in particular.

Maria, a maid at a local all-inclusive resort, describes how she writes personal notes to her guests, purchases flowers with her own money to leave in the rooms she cleaned, as well as creates towel art as a sign of personal touch. Rather than performing such duties for extra gratuities, Maria was instructed by her employer to add a personal touch for each guest in order to create bonds and ensure their future visit. According to Cabezas, “Indeed, relationships that create long-term obligations and commitment are, for many workers like Maria, advantageous, producing connections to composition lifestyles. These associations mingle the performance of work duties with opportunities for personal gain.”84 Such insistence on mixing business with pleasure, or rather business for personal gain, is a clear example of crossing a critical line dividing work responsibilities from personal benefits. In addition, hotel employees can also implement emotional labor to enhance their sexual desires. As Cabezas describes as, “the intimacy of jobs can also be extended for the cultivation of sexual affective relations.”85 In her study, Cabezas observed the hotel entertainers who are referred to as animadoras, or activity directors at local resorts. Such workers are mainly young mulattos and mulatta that are excluded from typical hotel receptionists and front desk positions. Animadoras are

84 Ibid., 7.
85 Ibid., 7.
responsible for organizing group activities, such as games and dances, for hotel guests. Often, these activities become more sexual in nature, as flirting between the employee and the tourist is encouraged.

Cabezas also studied tourists and local Cubans who openly participate in sexual relationships without much commitment, which are deemed as intimate encounters. According to her findings, suspect intimacies takes place when two parties are in a sexual relationship and regularly visit Cuba. Yet, the tourist paying for sex is claiming not to be participating in the exploitative nature of sex tourism, but is rather seeking companionship. Many are under false impressions that this would, in the long run, allow them to “find” love in a different country, even though such relationships obviously have restrictions in place. Cabezas interviewed two African-American men from the United States, both of whom were in an open sexual relationship with Cuban women. They openly admitted to providing financially for these women, knowing that they were restricted financially and did not have the means to support themselves on their own. In addition, both men were adamant that they were not seeking only sex from the women, claiming that they made a “connection” with these Cuban women, who offered companionship. One gentleman, named John, indicated that he appreciated how his Cuban girlfriend was able to organize his room by neatly folding his clothes, without asking for money in return. Another man was impressed by how his Cuban girlfriend, despite her broken, limited English was able to provide companionship when his sister died. He eventually mailed his
deceased sister's jewelry to Cuba to thank her for her kindness. Cabezas indicates that such a relationship can be beneficial for both parties, as long as an agreement is in place and is adhered to. Nonetheless, questions do arise as to why American and European men are seeking temporary girlfriends from other, usually underdeveloped, countries. In addition, Cabezas describes affective relationships as, "love treated as an aberration, the misguided and delusional idea of the participants, a fantasy that needs a dose of analysis provided by outside observers." It is thus questionable why these men that participate in such affective relations from afar do not marry the Cuban women, if they really formed such a close relationship. Such relationships are examples of an imbalance of power, rather than true affection. Once again, it seems that men from dominant, hegemonic countries, such as the United States, feel entitled to be cared for by women from inferior countries. Thus, the WSA theory is effect in the sex tourism in Cuba. Afro-Cuban and mulatto males and females represent the semi-periphery country by expressing the need of financial assistance. In contrast, tourists from around the world, in particular European countries and the United States, are representing the core-periphery countries, as they travel to Cuba for rest and relaxation. From the WSA perspective, in this aspect, tourism continues to support dominance of core countries over semi-periphery ones.

Cabezas also analyzed the spiritual aspect of such affective relationships. One Cuban woman, who was a single mother with no money to feed her

---

Ibid, 9.
children, sought spiritual advice from the virgin of the sea named Yemayá. According to her, the virgin instructed her to go to a tourist area to create a relationship with a male tourist in order to create reciprocity. Cabezas describes this encounter as, “divine intervention [which] aligned the spiritual with the exigencies of daily living.”  

Cabezas also interviewed several local Cuban women who credited Yemayá for their success of meeting a male tourist who was able to assist them financially. According to Cabezas, “Many women [were aided by Yemayá and had] before an experience with a foreign man, there was a divine intervention, part of a primary relationship that served to eclipse other ways of understanding interactions with tourists.”

Continuation of Racial and Gender Inequalities

Since Afro-Cuban males and females were excluded from the formal tourism industry, employees who were not Afro-Cuban were encouraged to interact more with guests directly. As an example, Cabezas recounts her interview with one resort employee named Jorge, who is described as a fair-skinned tall and slender Cuban. This physical description of Jorge is important, as it demonstrates the visual appearance, as described by Alejandro De La Fuente as the “pleasant aspect,” favored in the Cuban tourism sector. Jorge further shared, “my friends at the Polytécnico were only interested in getting

---

*87 Ibid., 10.
88 Ibid., 11.
married to a tourist and getting out. That’s the goal for every one of them, to find una Española [a Spanish woman] and to leave the country.”89 This sentiment is reminiscent of the findings yielded by the ethnographic research conducted by Steven Gregory. It also has many parallels with the story of African-American novelist Terry McMillian, who wrote “How Stella got her Groove Back” after vacationing in Jamaica. In this novel, the main protagonist, Stella, started a romantic relationship while on holiday, which led to her marrying Jonathan Plummer, an employee in the hotel resort where she vacationed. Unfortunately, after several years of marriage and his move to the United States, McMillian found out that her husband was unfaithful to her and opted to end their marriage. The needs and desires to have a better life are clearly more prominent in such decisions, causing emotional turmoil once the reality of living with an incompatible partner in a foreign country starts to cause problems.

With continued gender inequalities in the tourism sector, Cabezas interviewed Maria, who is described as a fair-skinned employee who also worked in Varadero as a hotel maid. As Maria described, Cuban women, like Dominican women, were typically placed in jobs that were more domestic in nature. Maria recounted how management instructed maids and chambermaids at the resort where she worked to leave personal, hand-written notes to tourists to leave in their rooms after cleaning them. Maria also mentioned how she would personally purchase flowers and leave them on pillows or create pillow art and form pillow

89 Ibid., 508.
swans or other small animals. Such use of pillow art is prevalent across many well-known cruise lines, such as Royal Caribbean, Holland America and Carnival.

With respect to employee characteristics favored by the tourism sector, Afro-Cubans are certainly underrepresented. Afro-Cuban males and females are non-existent in positions such as taxi drivers, hotel front desk employees and managers. Jobs in the formal tourism sector that require more visibility and more direct contact with guests, there are less Afro-Cubans representing such job positions. According to Cabezas,

> Competition is not only fierce for tourism employment, it is limited to those who have the proper social characteristics (gender, race, age, good looks and ‘personality’ serve as the matrix for labor organization), in additional to training, bribes and networks.⁹⁰

Even though the revolution has “helped” Afro-Cubans in many ways, there is still a disparity in the service sector. Consequently, in Cuba, not everyone is welcome in the tourism industry. Physical attributes are heavily scrutinized and analyzed in order to provide a good “look” that would appeal to the tourists. As a result, Afro-Cubans are not readily employed in prominent service jobs. In addition, in prestigious hotels, Afro-Cubans are restricted to menial and low paid jobs, such as kitchen staff or cleaners. As depicted in the aforementioned tourism website images, they even have to take exploitative entertainment jobs and use sex to lure guests through provocative dancing and rather suggestive games. Furthermore, Afro-Cubans, although not represented in the formal tourism

---

⁹⁰ Ibid., 512.
economy, are used and stereotyped in the advertisements to attract future guests. Such stereotypical images portray colonial and primitive images of Afro-Cubans.

Cabezas mentioned that trainees in hospitality schools are routinely scrutinized for color, gender and attractiveness. Jorge specifically stated that trainees could not be “ugly” if they were to have a career in tourism. Such focus on appearance is reminiscent of the “pleasant aspect” concept, which furthered race and gender inequality in Cuba. In this respect, the theory of intersectionality, analyzing the effect of the pleasant aspect on one’s career prospects. Considering how class, race, and gender can hinder one from working in the formal tourist sector, the reverse is presented by Cabezas as long as an employee is deemed visually presentable. Recounting Dr. Kaifa Roland’s color chart that depicts complexions, there are major differences as to how privileged light skinned men and women are treated versus dark skinned males and females. As described previously, Jorge, who was interviewed by Amalia Cabezas, was a light skinned Cuban and he was able to progress with his training and become employed at a local hotel due to his appearance. However, if a potential tourism employee was a dark skinned, Afro-Cuban male, based upon the appearance and skin complexion, employment opportunities are non-existent.
Although the revolutionary government clearly stated that racism was eliminated and that Afro-Cubans “benefited more than any other racial group,”\textsuperscript{91} statistics prove otherwise. Glass ceiling prevented Afro-Cubans and women from rising to more prominent and better paid positions, as hiring practices for jobs in Cuba were highly discriminating. According to a survey conducted in Havana in 2000, blacks were economically impoverished and were, “less likely than whites or mulattoes to earn (income wise) in the highest 10% category of $700 to $5,400 annually.”\textsuperscript{92} To further illustrate the false notion that racism was eradicated by the revolution, in 2010, USA Today published an open letter from American social activists to President Raul Castro, addressing the fact that Afro-Cubans were still vastly mistreated in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century. In particular, the article highlighted their exclusion from prominent tourism jobs. According to DeWayne Wickham, “the signs of racial disadvantage, if not outright racial prejudice are easy to find. The best jobs in Cuba’s growing tourism industry are overwhelmingly held by whites.”\textsuperscript{93} It is alarming to read that, in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century, while Cuba is becoming increasingly popular tourist destination, such racial disparities still exist.

On the other hand, in the informal economy—also referred to as the black market for earning quick, hard currency—according to Sarah Blue, Afro-Cubans


\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 45.

and mulattoes are highly represented. They resort to partaking in illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, prostitution, etc., as many are desperate to earn living. Afro-Cubans and mulattoes are less likely to rely on remittances from relatives living in the United States or other prosperous countries. In that respect, white Cubans are more fortunate, as some have relatives that have emigrated following Castro’s arrival to power. According to Blue, the Havana Survey conducted in 2000 also revealed that 36% of respondents felt that blacks were more likely to struggle (luchar) for extra income than were whites.  

The Havana Survey further revealed that blacks and mulattoes were also more likely to have low-income and middle-income jobs in the state sector. As Blue noted, “Blacks, and to a lesser degree mulattos, were clearly at a disadvantage relative to whites in their access to the dollar economy, resulting in lower levels of income.”

From academic perspective, Dr. L. Kaifa Roland, an anthropologist that visited Cuba several times for field work purposes, recounts her personal encounter with racism when she arrived in Cuba in 1999. As the only person of color in her travel group, she was mistaken as an Afro-Cuban citizen and, when her party was served mojitos at a local establishment, she was purposely served her drink last. When she tasted her drink, she realized that it was deliberately watered down. After sampling the mojitos from others in her party, Roland had her drink taken back twice for correction. When she confronted the local street

---


95 Ibid., 45.
hustlers who were trying to get the attention of her group, the *jineteros* were shocked to learn that she was a doctoral student from the U.S., completing fieldwork. The most unfortunate part of this account of racism was the fact that Roland, due to her complexion and the fact that she was female and wore her hair in dreadlocks, was automatically deemed to be an Afro-Cuban prostitute. She described, “Since I had kind of tagged along toward the back of the group, and most of all, because of my skin color, they assumed I was a *prostituta.*”

Again, this clearly demonstrates the effect of the pleasant aspect, as described by Alejandro de la Fuente. It also highlights that intersectionality remains present in the Cuban tourism sector. Finally, the theory of Black Marxism is also applicable, as Dr. Roland was purposely ignored as the only person of color within her travel group.

Like Alejandro de La Fuente, Roland also contends how Afro-Cubans were deemed to have reaped benefits from the onset of the revolution. Therefore, the issue of racism is believed by many to have ceased. Yet, in reality, racism continues to be both practical and institutional issue. According to Roland, since racism was deemed eradicated in Cuba, whiteness reigned supreme as color lines were erased, and the only reality was based upon whiteness and not the overall blend of Afro-Cuban, mulatto and Spaniard ancestry. Roland states, “Race tends to be written out of analyses of Cuba’s past and present politico-economic processes due to the pre-revolutionary policy of ‘whitening’ and the

---

revolutionary position that removing class exploitation would also eradicate racial discrimination. Racism also rears its ugly head in the form of class distinction. In Cuba, whiteness is still held in high esteem, and is equated with being an elite, highly cultured class. In contrast, blacks or Afro-Cubans are on the opposite end of the spectrum, deemed as having low cultural status. From the tourism perspective, Roland provides an interesting look at how class distinction also affects tourists of color when visiting Cuba. Roland contends that tourists from European countries and Canada, for example, are easily accepted due to their whiteness. They are implicitly assumed to have great class status and money to splurge while visiting the island. On the other hand, tourists from South America and in some cases Africa, are deemed not to be as wealthy and are assumed to be visiting the island for medical purposes. Consequently, they are believed not have the monetary means their European or Canadian counterparts possess. With this in mind, in this case study, WSA is applied to the countries in which tourists originate from and not from the colonial aspect of who has direct power from a governance perspective. WSA applied in the tourism sector implies that tourists from other dominating countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Canada have more access to wealth and are able to travel to Cuba on a frequent basis. This proves that, while racism was supposedly eradicated, it is still embedded in Cuban society and politics.

\[97\] Ibid., 152.
Echoing the sentiment of Fidel Castro’s Democracy Now speech and how Cuba is proud of their African heritage on the island, the individuals that Roland interviewed also noted that Cuba is accepting of their heritage and their hybrid mixture of African, Indian (Taíno, etc.) and European (Spaniard) descent is valued. Although such “pride” is spoken of, the bold truth and reality is that the darker the skin color of an individual (which is ultimately associated with being African), the lower his/her class status is. This, in turn, indicates whether he/she is worthy of basic human rights, including employment in the tourist sector at the front desk of a hotel. In regards to the concept of having the right appearance for work in the tourist sector in Cuba, Roland describes the relationship as being, “extended beyond the complexion of individual workers and tourists, and incorporates the global imbalance of power that allows one group to tour while the other group serves them.”\footnote{L. Kaifa Roland, “T/racing Belonging Through Cuban Tourism,” \textit{Cultural Anthropology} 28, no. 3 (2013): 401.} This indicates that, in Cuba, tourists still hold greater value than those who work within the tourist sector. In other words, the entire industry ultimately serves the needs and in some cases the desires of tourists. This relationship is also reminiscent of core-periphery versus semi-periphery countries, as the misbalance in power is evident. As the country status is determined by its strengths and weaknesses, such a relationship allows a dominant country to take over a weaker one and dictate how the semi-periphery state will serve the needs or the core country. Furthermore, Dr. Roland’s
experience also intertwines with the theories of Black Marxism and Intersectionality. Dr. Roland visited Cuba as an African-American woman completing fieldwork for academic purposes; yet, she was mistaken for a prostitute. From a Black Marxist perspective, the “negro problem,” evidently still continues to be ignored. In addition, when considering the aspect of invisibility in the tourist sector, intersectionality also plays an important role in Dr. Roland’s personal experience, as the fact of being racially profiled while completing fieldwork is not simply an issue of being Black, but also an African-American female. In the context of the Theory of Intersectionality, such social injustice is not exclusive to one component such as race or class distinction.

Intersectionality, gender issues, and racial disparities are ever-present in Cuba, as one’s social class status is still important in the tourism sector.

Furthermore, regarding only specific races being allowed to work in Cuban tourism sector, the fact that people must know their place is a clear sign of racism. In addition to the fact that Afro-Cubans are restricted to low paying jobs only, the fact they are forced to accept their place is very reminiscent of segregation in the southern states in the United States. Roland recounted how, despite her dark skin complexion, she was given a “compliment” by being called a *mulatta* by a Cuban musician. Baffled by the remark, she was instructed to say “thank you” to the musician, since he essentially upgraded her socio status by referring to her as a *mulatta*. As Roland clearly states, “Despite the systemic restructuring of education, hiring, and housing policies early in the revolution, a
t/race of emancipation era beliefs about the meanings of skin color and belonging remain.” With such continued disparities in the tourist sector, international visitors must be aware and cognizant of the blatant racism and class divides that still exist in Cuba.

Sex Sells in Cuba and the Caribbean

In addition to the issues of race and gender in the tourist sector, the existence of the sex industry has had a profound effect upon Cuban tourism in the late 20th Century and most certainly in the 21st Century. As Afro-Cubans and mulattoes are excluded from prominent positions in the tourism industry, many men and women have resorted to working illegally as sex workers, in order to earn quick, hard currency and survive financially. The reemergence of sex work or prostitution is not a new phenomenon in the Cuban tourist industry, or even in tourist industries throughout the rest of the Caribbean.

Tamar Diana Wilson and Annelou Ypeij analyzed the intricacies of sex and gender within tourism development from the perspective of the workers in the Caribbean. The focus of tourism development in the Caribbean is best described as, “Tourists are consumers of the local constructions of gender, ethnicity, and sexuality in the form of experiences, encounters, fantasies, images, handicraft products, and in the case of prostitution or romance tourism, the

---

99 Ibid., 404.
bodies of local men and women.\textsuperscript{100} With this in mind, tourists, mainly American and European, are seeking an escape from the realities of everyday life and responsibilities. Their idea of escape is usually equivalent to visiting a country where the environment is entertaining, comfortable and enticing at the same time, with an allure that may not be immediately present in the home country. According to the authors, Caribbean tourism accounts for approximately 70\% of the national income. As of 2006, Caribbean tourism revenue increased to more than $45 million dollars.\textsuperscript{101} With the implementation and expansion of all-inclusive resorts, aiming to attract additional tourist population and further create a specific tourist zone in each country, Wilson and Ypeij argue that, “the primary beneficiaries of tourism development should not be foreign companies but national and regional governments and local communities.”\textsuperscript{102}

Furthermore, the idea that authenticity is lacking in their home country is an important contributing factor to the continuous increase in the Caribbean tourism in the recent decades. According to the authors,

Western tourists come from homogenized modern societies that have lost their traditions and authenticity . . . [tourists in turn] scavenges the earth for new experiences to be woven into a collective, touristic version of other peoples and other places.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{100} Tamar Diana Wilson and Annelou Ypeij, “Tourism, Gender, and Ethnicity,” \textit{Latin American Perspectives} 39, no. 5 (2012): 5.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 6.
In addition, the authors contend that, “tourism by Western travelers to remote places in the South a form of ethnic relations because it leads to the interaction of people of different cultures and subcultures. Those who travel are searching for authentic encounters with exotic others.” When WSA is applied to this phenomenon, it reveals that tourists, in particular those from more dominant core countries, such as the United States and the EU, are highly valued by locals, due to their wealth. As wealth and superiority is mostly associated with dominant nations, their residents feel entitled to seeking fulfillment, fun and relaxation in less developed countries. Another aspect of Western tourists seeking authenticity is the idea of trying to recapture a simpler way of life, even if only briefly.

Although authenticity is cited by most tourists as the main reason for visiting the Caribbean, the notion of core-periphery countries dominating a semi-periphery country is not unusual within the Caribbean tourism industry. As stated by Wilson and Ypeij, “Tourism superimposes itself on existing ethnic and gender relations, inequalities, and power hierarchies.”

Sex tourism, according to the authors, is driven by the need to exert power rather than seeking true love and companionship. When sex tourism is examined in other studies and ethnographic research, findings usually indicate that both parties involved gain benefits, due to the process of negotiation. Authenticity is also an important construct for sex tourism in the Caribbean, as negotiations make the locals feel that they hold a certain level of power. In this process, they

104 Ibid., 6.
105 Ibid., 7.
likely attempt to convey to the tourist a false sense of cultural authenticity, which is essentially sold in return for money. According to the authors,

From the perspective of the local community, the commoditization of cultural products and stages authenticity may not always mean the loss of meaning or the destruction of culture as some scholars may assume . . . . They may also lead to a renovation or revival of ethnic identities, self-representations, and customs. ¹⁰⁶

The authors further contend that, “Caribbean men and women alike are construed in tourist imaginations as racial-sexual subjects/objects—typically the hypersexual ‘black male stud’ and the ‘hot’ brown or black woman—whose main roles are to serve and please the visitor.”¹⁰⁷ This is reminiscent of ethnographic research conducted by Steven Gregory in the Dominican Republic, as well as the work completed by Florence E. Babb in Cuba. In post-colonial Cuba, specifically after Spain inhabited the island in the 16th Century, Afro-Cuban women were deemed as being more pleasing sexually to Spanish men on the island, due to being perceived as more primitive and true to their “essential” nature. In this context, authenticity can be understood to refer to a female’s sexual aspect. Sex tourism in Caribbean on the rise because, “sex tourism flourishes in countries where a large percentage of the population lives in poverty, where there is high unemployment and no welfare system to support those who are excluded from the formal economy.”¹⁰⁸ The exclusion of Afro-Cubans from the tourism industry

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 7.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 10.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 10.
caused many to seek work in the black market in order to obtain quick, hard currency.

Continuing with the utilization of sex as a tool to earn money, Valerio Simoni provides insight from the international male tourist’s point of view in his ethnographic work, *Coping with Ambiguous Relationships with the Sex Tourism and Transformation in Cuba*. Providing in depth interviews, Simoni interviewed Marcelo, an Italian male who was visiting Cuba with a group of friends and who had visited a discotheque. According to Marcelo,

> You should know a bit about it, is like an art, is like a game. But well . . . here [in Cuba] you cannot do that...you know that at the end you will have to pay for that . . . At the end, if you have to pay, you lose all this, all this ritual.¹⁰⁹

Essentially, Marcelo and his friends clearly understood the game Cuban women were attempting to implement when inside clubs frequented by tourists. With this in mind, the young Italian men chose to limit their interaction with the women, knowing that they were trying to lure them into sex. Marcelo also indicated that, in his view, Cuban women probably believed that most male tourists visit Cuba for sexual relations only. Power inequalities among North American and European tourists and Afro-Cuban sex workers are reminiscent of the core periphery and semi-periphery dynamics that play out on the global stage. According to Marcelo,

> The problem is the First World, is with sex tourism. Because there are people who go to Thailand, Cuba, Brazil . . . and ninety per cent,
no let’s say seventy per cent of the people wo come here come for that [for sex]. Therefore people here [Cubans], when they see you they think that’s what we [tourists] all come for. People here got used to this, that tourists have this in their mind already.\textsuperscript{110}

In particular, two men Simoni interviewed were very open and transparent of their annual escapades to the island. One gentleman from Italy, who was described as being in his mid-sixties, had spent more than two decades visiting Cuba and considered himself to be a professional in dealing with Cuban women. The man, referred to as Armando, basically alluded to Simoni how he had been able to satisfy his carnal desires by venturing outside the typical tourist zones to the countryside, where the women were essentially more ignorant and willing to engage in sex with foreign men for monetary purposes. According to Simoni, Armando was, “very proud of his know how, his competences regarding, for instance how to move around the capital, and most prominently, how to deal with Cuban women.”\textsuperscript{111} In particular, Armando would advise novice male travelers not to frequent local discos in the tourist zone, for the fear of being taken advantage of by the Cuban women. In fact, Armando was trying to convey the importance of maintaining dominance over Cuban women. This clearly exemplifies that visitors from core-periphery countries feel entitled and find being taken advantage of by residents of a so-called semi-periphery country unacceptable. Armando’s preference for not engaging with women inside the tourist zone was described by Simoni as preference desire to, “Move outside the main tourism routes in order to

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 170.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 172.
access the ‘authentic’ culture of intimacy and sexuality of Cuban people.”

Armando essentially made sure that his needs were taken care of, in his own terms, at the price he was willing to pay, not the other way around.

From the perspective of a novice male traveling to Cuba, much was to be learned and processed from their direct interaction and in some cases, the exploitation that such novices encountered when engaging in sexual relations with Cuban women. One young man named Aldo, also from Italy, learned a hard lesson in sex tourism during his initial visit to Cuba. After meeting two Cuban women in a local discotheque, Aldo engaged in sexual relations with both women while heavily drunk. Afterwards, he realized that not only were both women gone from his hotel room, but all of his money was missing as well. Rather than being able to control the situation and the women, Aldo was the one who was taken advantage of, with no money left inside his wallet. As he described to Simoni, he was upset that the women took advantage of him. In this aspect, while Aldo was more than willing to pay for his actions, he wasn’t prepared to lose control and all his finances.

The sexual aspect of tourism in Cuba is highly criticized by the Cuban government. According to Henthorne, George and Williams, sex tourism in Cuba is the “uncontrolled sex tourism problem” and refers to the concept of jineterismo. According to the authors, sex tourism is a “hotly debated issue in Cuba and is

112 Ibid., 173.
most often seen as a consequence of tourism.” ¹¹³ They further contend that sex tourism is, “antithetical to the revolutionary narrative of global brotherhood and racial-socio equality.” ¹¹⁴ This means that the blame for sex tourism mainly rests on those who actively participate in it, as the revolution eliminated any class and racial disparities, according to the authors. Thus, WSA directly applies to the Cuban sex tourism, as the sexual interactions between tourists and Afro-Cuban and mulatto employees and the outcomes of such interactions clearly demonstrate imbalance in power.

Afro-Cuban Tourism Images

There are several websites advertising Cuban tourism. The tourism websites provide images and videos depicting Cuban culture and the beauty of the island along the shoreline. Analyzing the tourism websites promoting Cuban tourism, there are several images of Cuban culture and life that are racialized. Although subtle, the images depict Afro-Cubans as servants to tourists, who appear to be European in nature. For example, the ministry of tourism in Cuba, MINTUR has a website to promote Cuban tourism. In addition, there is a photo gallery to entice potential tourists to visit Cuba.¹¹⁵ The images shown below are


¹¹⁴ Ibid., 134

also featured on the MINTUR website for Cuban tourism for Nordic and Baltic countries as well as MINTUR’s main tourism website.

Figure 1. Afro Cuban Boys on Bicycle.¹¹⁶

The photo of two young Afro-Cuban boys riding bikes in Cuba, shown above, is quite innocent. However, it is also rather ironic that such a photo will only depict the carefree lives of young Afro-Cuban boys. Furthermore, the role of Afro-Cubans in the tourist employment sector, was marginalized, as they have been historically deemed as lazy and lacking the “pleasant aspect” preferred by Western tourists. Hence, if Afro-Cubans are deemed as lazy and unable to maintain employment, the same sentiment can also apply to young Afro-Cuban children, even the young boys depicted in the photo above.

Figure 2 depicts a young Afro-Cuban woman in “character” attire, adorned with a red head-wrap, which is highly reminiscent of images portrayed during slavery in Colonia Cuba, as well as the United States. This image also shows the Afro-Cuban woman with a basket of flowers on top of her head. To “celebrate” Cuban culture, the website for Cuba Tourist Board for Nordic and Baltic Countries is attempting to sell the history of Cuba, which is inclusive of Afro-Cubans. Deemed as primitive and celebrating the past, images of Afro-Cubans are meant to show how Cuba celebrates all facets of its history. Yet, at the same time, these depictions reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate a legacy of exploitation.

\[^{117}\] Fig. 2. Afro Cuban Woman Dressed in Character. Cuban Tourist Board for Nordic and Baltic Countries. [http://www.vivacuba.se/sites/default/files/fot18g.jpg](http://www.vivacuba.se/sites/default/files/fot18g.jpg) (accessed on March 10, 2015).
time, they also continue to place labels on the Afro-Cuban community. As Afro-Cubans, Afro-Cuban men in particular, were deemed lazy, and Afro-Cuban women were deemed primitive, such images are still conveying such stereotypes.

![Image of three individuals representing skin complexions](http://autenticacuba.com/wp-content/themes/autentica/img/gallery/group3.jpg)

Figure 3. “Cubanos”.

The image entitled “Cubanos” on MINTUR’s website depicts the array of Cubans and their skin complexions. This image is directly related to Dr. Kaifa Roland’s color chart and how the lighter the skin on a person, the better. This image purposely displays the skin complexions of three individuals. One image is of a brown skinned Afro-Cuban woman with curly hair, the following image is of a dark skinned Afro-Cuban male, and the final image is of a young light skinned Cuban male with light green eyes. All three individuals are a direct representation

---

of the diversity of the island, however closer analysis provides a more in-depth look at how intersectionality with race, class, and gender is present.

Figure 4. Afro Cuban Female Dancer.\textsuperscript{119}

Figure 4 again depicts Afro-Cuban women in a primitive, yet suggestive manner, as her attire is colorful, aiming to entertain and entice. This sexualized role of Afro-Cuban women in the Cuban entertainment sector is in line with their inferior status.

\textsuperscript{119} Fig. 4. \textit{Afro Cuban female dancer}. Cuban Tourist Board for Nordic and Baltic Countries. \url{http://www.vivacuba.se/sites/default/files/dancing-girl_0.jpg} (accessed on March 10, 2015).
Figure 5. Afro Cuban Dancers.\textsuperscript{120}

Continuing with the sexualized view of Afro-Cubans in the tourist sector, Figure 5 depicts a dance performance with a dominant Afro-Cuban cast, with the exception of one Cuban, who is more Eurocentric as far as his facial features and skin complexion are concerned. This image is still maintaining the notion that Afro-Cubans are best suited for entertainment jobs within the tourist sector. In addition, the dance poses of the Afro-Cuban women are highly sexually suggestive in nature, conforming to the view of Afro-Cubans as unsuitable for any but most primitive roles. Such images validate the theories of Black Marxism, Intersectionality as well as WSA, as they confirm that the issues experienced by Afro-Cuban men and women are clearly ignored. In this regard, WSA demonstrates that such images of Cuban tourism confirm that Afro-Cubans are

\textsuperscript{120} Fig. 4. Afro Cuban dancers. Cuban Tourist Board for Nordic and Baltic Countries. \url{http://www.vivacuba.se/sites/default/files/fot45g.jpg} (accessed on March 10, 2015).
dependent on tourists from a core-periphery country to visit Cuba and directly contribute to the national economy.

The MINTUR tourism website caters to specific countries in order to attract a larger audience. Research for this thesis contends that countries in which there is most interest in Cuban tourism include Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the Baltic/Nordic countries. In particular, MINTUR promoting Cuban tourism lack images or information for potential visitors from countries throughout Africa and the Middle East.

Figure 6. Female Tourist.¹²¹

Figure 6 shows a Caucasian woman relaxing on the beach, as an indication of the type of experience Western tourists can expect when visiting Cuba.

¹²¹ Fig. 5. Female Tourist. Cuban Tourist Board for Nordic and Baltic Countries. http://www.vivacuba.se/sites/default/files/girl-view.jpg (accessed on March 10, 2015).
Similarly, Figure 7 depicts a family of tourists walking along the shoreline of a Cuban beach. The family depicted in this image is clearly of European descent. The tourism webpages aimed at residents of Baltic and Nordic countries do not have any images in their photo gallery advertising for potential Cuban tourists that are not of European descent.

Thus, as the country enters the new era in international relations, it is very important for the Cuban Tourism Ministry MINTUR to include Afro-Cubans within the tourist sector in regards to employment, rather than to continue to exclude them and exploit them in such advertisements. Presently, Afro-Cubans are depicted as servants to tourists and are still given only menial jobs. The Cuban

---

122 Fig. 5. Family Vacation. Cuban Tourist Board for Nordic and Baltic Countries. [http://www.vivacuba.se/sites/default/files/fot28gr.jpg](http://www.vivacuba.se/sites/default/files/fot28gr.jpg) (accessed on March 10, 2015).
government, along with President Raul Castro, must recognize that the country is still dealing with race and gender inequality, which especially affects the Afro-Cuban community. As DeWayne Wickham stated in his article in USA Today in 2010, racial discrimination in Cuba is easy to locate throughout the island and in particular in the tourist industry. Indeed, as this study has revealed, racism was not eradicated in 1959 with the implementation of certain policies aiming to address the issue. In order to fully acknowledge the overall issue of racism in Cuba, social activism is critical. In particular, it is essential to have open dialogue to address the issue and ways in which such inequalities must be dealt with. As stated by Tomas Fernandez Robaina, “Now we [Cubans] understand it will take more than goodwill to get rid of it [referring to racism in Cuba], something Americans should know better than Cubans.”

Further analysis of Afro-Cuban images and how Afro-Cubans are perceived in Cuban tourism and Cuban culture are depicted in two documentaries located on YouTube. The first documentary entitled, “Cuba Documentary: Black Man Travels to Havana, Cuba,” provides insight from the perspective of an African-American male tourist in Cuba first hand. Notably, the male tourist, named Cameron navigates through the streets of Havana, Cuba alone, and while doing so, Afro-Cubans are throughout the streets trying to make ends meet by selling fruit or salvaging scraps of metal to sell. Watching first-hand how Afro-Cubans are living in Havana was disturbing to watch as men and

---

women tried desperately to make ends meet. On the other hand, Cameron at the end of his video met an Afro-Cuban female friend for lunch at a local restaurant, called Havana Club. Whereas Afro-Cubans were in the streets peddling for cash, the employees in Havana Club were predominately white, as well as the entertainers who provided live music for the patrons. Watching such footage of the restaurant scene validates how Afro-Cubans are directly excluded from the tourist sector and from jobs that are highly visible as far as providing service to tourists is concerned.\(^{124}\)

Another interesting video that analyzes how Afro-Cubans are stereotyped in Cuban culture and the tourism industry in the 21\(^{st}\) Century includes an interview with Claudia Orlando, the director of the Museo De Los Orichas. Interviewed by journalist Cristina Escobar from “Interviews from Havana,” Claudia reiterated to Cristina how discrimination in Cuba created, “too much oppression,”\(^{125}\) for Afro-Cubans. Orlando points out in her interview with Escobar how Afro-Cubans are only, “referred to in folklore, religion, dancing, and music. Blacks are never referred to in the following aspects: social or political.”\(^{126}\) Such as statement validates how the use of Black Marxism throughout this thesis is

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fn04zFwqUOo.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2bjYRdLoKw.

\(^{126}\) Ibid.
appropriate and how Afro-Cubans are truly invisible, even in Cuban culture. In regards to the tourism industry, Orlando also states that,

Discrimination exists today because of prejudice, and discrimination is expressed through images...on television, in the presentation of culture...in the tourism industry, now people can view images of ‘ugly negritas,’ with big eyes, red lips, with a melon...Blacks [in general] cannot present themselves.  

This statement clearly validates the aforementioned images provided by MINTUR and how Afro-Cubans are not taken seriously and are merely referenced in Cuban culture and not recognized historically.

Intersectionality: Race, Class and Gender Combined

Given the aforementioned examples of racial and gender issues in the Cuban tourist sector, it is necessary to fully comprehend the extent of gender and racial inequality in Cuba. The theories of WSA analyze the power carried forth from the core and semi-periphery countries, and the theory of intersectionality identifies the ways that race, class, and gender contribute to oppression and further inequalities. Intersectionality is also implied to the race, class, and gender inequalities experienced within the Afro-American community in the United States. The fight against such injustice shows that discrimination that Afro-Cubans experience is similar to the struggles of African-Americans in the United States.

\[127\] Ibid.
States. Therefore, such inequality can be further dissected to class issues and gender differences.

Intersectionality can further be divided in order to accurately depict the overall suffering that has taken place in Cuba since colonial times. Forging on a similar path as that taken by Crenshaw, it is important to critically analyze race and gender inequalities in order to “highlight the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.”

In the unique case of the Cuban Revolution and The Special Period, the social construction of policies and attitudes addressing such issues is necessary in order to implement change and to further recognize the need for Afro-Cuban assimilation into Cuban society without further reproach. Furthermore, the case for intersectionality with the overall plight of Afro-Cubans is echoed by Aline Helg. The compound force of racial inequality is best described as,

Race [is] a fundamental social construct in Cuba. Discrimination on the basis of race limited Afro-Cuban socioeconomic and political participation…[Also], there was a deeply rooted sense among many Afro-Cubans of sharing a common experience of white racism that called for joint action.

To further address the issue of class discrimination and inequality within the Afro-Cuban community, Helg states that, “race was a fundamental social construct

---


that articulated the hierarchy of Cuban society. Cuba’s population was indeed divided not only by class and place of birth, but also by race.\textsuperscript{130}

The issues of race, gender and social inequality still remain in the Cuban tourism despite evident changes that have taken place in recent decades. As political policy regarding the famous trade and travel ban eased in December 2014, both Cuba and the United States have more work to complete in order to accomplish a harmonious relationship and fully address the eradication of such social ills.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid, 12.
CONCLUSION
CUBA IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND BEYOND

Cuban-U.S. Relations: 2014 and Beyond

Considering strained relations between Cuba and the United States that have lasted for almost 60 years, many scholars, politicians, and Cuban-Americans alike have analyzed various hypothetical scenarios of the possibility of renewed relations between the two nations. Such hypothetical scenarios finally became reality on December 17, 2014, as Cuba and the United States announced lifting of the embargo and allowing for Americans to travel to Cuba on a limited basis. With new developments on the horizon for both nations, many questions arose, but are presently left unanswered. Only time will reveal whether the renewed Cuban-U.S. relations will fulfill their promise. Presently, the key issues include the impact that Americans being able to visit the island legally will have on Cuban tourism, and whether any political implications or restrictions will take place that will hinder both nations from engaging in peaceful relations throughout the remainder of the 21st Century.
American Tourists in Cuba

Since 1960, Americans have been banned from traveling to Cuba legally, as President Kennedy implemented the famous embargo. Yet, despite the embargo, many Americans continued to visit the island illegally. In order to accomplish this feat, Americans would travel to another country, such as Mexico or Jamaica, and pay cash for a connecting flight to Cuba without presenting their U.S. passport. With the pending excitement and anticipation of another travel influx of Americans openly flying to Cuba, questions arise as to the ability of Cuban hotels and resorts to accommodate Americans comfortably. According to fortune.com’s recent article entitled, “America is ready for Cuba. Are Cuban hotels ready for Americans?” the concern for Cuba not being prepared for the pending influx of Americans is evident. Most resorts are unprepared for catering to the needs and desires of Americans, who expect to find typical American fast food restaurants such as McDonalds, KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken), and Taco Bell wherever they go. While the International Monetary Fund is expecting for Cuban tourism from the United States to increase by least 50%, the reality of the lack of modern technology in Cuba and amenities is a cause for concern. According to the article, “the IMF has said, the number of annual visitors to Cuba could easily double. Yet with a shortage of high-end accommodations, what Cuba will do with all of them is unclear.”

131 Anne VenderMey, The tourist influx to Cuba is about to begin, Fortune, February 20, 2015, http://fortune.com/2015/02/20/the-tourist-influx-to-cuba-is-about-to-begin/.
Many American travel agents are thrilled with the possibility of experiencing a great increase in the travel arrangements booked for Cuba. According to Anne VenderMey, several travel agents are eager to participate in the Cuban tourism resurrection. For example,

Michael Zuccato of California-based Cuba Travel Services, which operates flights to Cuba and organizes tours for Americans, says he expects his business to increase 50% to 200% over the next several years. Michael Sykes, founder of Cuba Cultural Travel, has moved to secure some 10,000 rooms in anticipation of strong demand. Pam Hoffee, a VP at Swiss travel company Globus, predicts its travel business will triple.¹³²

This brings the question of what will happen if Americans are not impressed with the local amenities and inadequate usage of technological services, such as internet, Wi-Fi and international cellular phone service. Will Americans attempt to interject in Cuban affairs to improve the quality of international travel to suit the needs of Americans, or will they simply cease traveling to Cuba altogether?

Furthermore, the legitimate concern of Americans not being impressed by Cuba has prompted the need to begin construction on new and improved hotels and resorts. As VenderMey states, “What Cuba may lack in first-class amenities, it makes up for in culture, and the years before luxury development takes off may be the best time to go.”¹³³ In addition, Sebastiaan Berger, the CEO of Cuban developer CEIBA Investments, stated that the Cuban tourism excitement will soon cease if Cuba does not act quickly to gain the respect and travel revenue from Americans. According to Berger, “with all its romance, the slippage of five-

¹³² Ibid.
¹³³ Ibid.
star services is being forgiven. That will last for three or four years. Then Cuba will have to improve.”

New Development in Cuba

Developers are also responding to this anticipated influx of American tourists and are already present bids for constructing additional hotels, resorts and golf courses in Cuba. Since lifting the embargo, major companies, such as Marriott, Hilton, and Coca-Cola, have expressed direct interest in investing or completing some type of construction in Cuba. With such interest from key international companies, all of which have a strong influence in the United States, Cuba must carefully consider the risks and the gains that can be accomplished from fostering international ties with the United States once again. The fear of being pressured from a capitalist point of view has to be taken into consideration, and Cuba must also consider how the socialist government can reinstitute a healthy and respectful bilateral relationship with the United States after almost sixty years of cold war tensions and skirmishes.

In addition to cultural and educational tourism in which Americans have illegally participated for several years, Cuba is also anticipating a vast increase in its medical tourism sector, which is unique and unparalleled. According to William Neuman, medical tourism in Cuba is vital to international tourists throughout the world, due to the fact that,
Thousands of people from other countries go to Cuba each year for what is known as medical tourism: travel abroad for surgery or other medical care, often because the treatment is less expensive there or is not available where patients live.\textsuperscript{134}

In essence, Cuba holds a partial monopoly on the medical tourism sector, as it allows visitors to have various surgical procedures at a low cost. This service also provides patients a different experience compared to those in typical Western medical institutions. The same excitement that travel agents experienced with the lifting of the embargo is also felt by those in the medical tourism industry. According to William Neuman, Cuban healthcare administrator Anuja Agrawal was sitting by her telephone as President Obama announced lifting the embargo. Immediately after President Obama’s groundbreaking speech, Agrawal was on the phone drafting plans to lure Americans to visit Cuba for medical purposes. As stated by Agrawal, “There was a lot of excitement about it…For them (Cubans), they’re looking at it literally like winning the lottery.”\textsuperscript{135}

The lottery reference is due to the fact that Cubans in general are excited and are anticipating that Americans will now freely travel to Cuba for affordable healthcare treatments, which will also help increase revenue in Cuba’s medical tourism sector.

The types of medical care services presently offered in Cuba include spinal procedures, weight-loss procedures, cosmetic surgery, cancer treatments, and more.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{134} William Newman, Americans may see appeal of Medical Tourism in Cuba, \textit{New York Times}, February 17, 2015, \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/18/world/americas/americans-may-see-appeal-of-medical-tourism-in-cuba.html}

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
and spa treatments. Such treatments are more holistic in nature and do not include intrusive interventions that are commonplace in the United States. With the pharmaceutical industry in question and in constant scrutiny in the United States, Cuba offers better relief and is often viewed as a second chance for patients who would not experience any health improvement in the United States or in North America in general.

Competition: United States Versus the World

From the perspective of other countries outside of the United States, the shift in policy with slowly eliminating the travel and trade embargo is remarkable, yet questionable at the same time. As the United States was the only country in the world that banned its citizens from traveling to Cuba legally, other countries, such as Canada and Mexico, have experienced lasting relationships with Cuba. Similarly, local citizens from other countries have been able to visit Cuba freely without any restrictions. According to the Canadian Hospitality Think Tank online forum, the elimination of the travel embargo for the United States will serve as a direct threat and competition to Canadian tourism. According to the recent article, “Cuba: At the dawn of a Revolution, a look at a century of Tourism,” American visitors to Cuba can essentially surpass the number of Canadian tourists, due to the potential for inexpensive flights to the island as well as the proximity of Cuba to Florida. As stated in the article, “the number of American tourists to Cuba could in theory be 9 to 10 times greater than its Canadian counterpart, thus
representing a large untapped potential for Cuban tourism."\textsuperscript{136} From the perspective of WSA, will such possible competition between core-periphery countries, such as Canada and the United States, ignite a competition? If so, this will reaffirm that WSA is still applicable to the control mechanisms dominating Cuba. Will such possible competition result in return to the power relations between the United States and Cuba, with the former acting as the dominant power?

\section*{Political Influences}

From a political perspective, many politicians in the United States and in Cuba have been anticipating the day when the embargo would end and both nations would be allowed to reengage in political relations. According to the Council of Foreign Relations, the Pew Research conducted a poll shortly after President Obama's speech in December, noting that approximately 63\% of Americans supported the lift of the embargo and the onset of rebuilding relations with Cuba. In addition, most Cuban-Americans were in favor of lifting the travel trade ban. In contrast, there were several Cuban-Americans in Miami Florida who were vehemently upset that President Obama and Raul Castro would now consider lifting the embargo. The sentiment from those against the lift of the embargo revealed the view that the embargo was falsely instituted. It caused the displacement of many Cubans, who left the island to start their lives again in

Miami and throughout the eastern seaboard of the United States. With the lift of the embargo, President Obama is also seeking to loosen ties and,

Use executive authority to open U.S.-Cuba ties around trade, investment, banking, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and travel . . . . This may create ‘a political dynamic that would ultimately shift opinion inside Congress to eventually repeal or no longer enforce Helm-Burton.’

The infamous Helms-Burton Act, implemented during President Clinton’s administration, restricted the countries with American investment and economic ties from assisting Cuba. The act in itself practically stifled the way in which other countries communicated and attempted to assist Cuba, although the United States was still assisting Cuba in the agricultural sector. Due to the Helm-Burton Act, other world nations were discouraged from assisting Cuba and, if there was any assistance provided, the United States would in turn cease any economic or political relationship with the country in question. In essence, the Helm-Burton Act aimed to purposely isolate Cuba and force the country to fail. As a result, it would be at the mercy of the United States and would need to accept restoration of the previous relations that favored the U.S.

Only time will tell how Cuba and the United States will be able to effectively work together to revamp relations and to help each other to thrive economically and politically. The anticipation of tourism increasing and political ties strengthening is potentially a positive move for not only Cuba and the United States, but will also serve as examples for other countries throughout the rest of

---

the world. Time will reveal how relations will progress or possibly regress for Americans and Cubans alike.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

Overall, Cuban tourism has proved to be an important component in the globalization practices that took place in the 21st Century Cuba. As was shown in this study, tourism is an important tool in maintaining strong economic ties, and allows the country to directly participate in the global economy. However, Cuba must address several important issues if it is to continue to thrive in the near future. In addition, the removal of the travel embargo from the United States as of December 17, 2014 is critical for future relations between the two nations, which have been almost non-existent for almost sixty years. Thus, the removal of the embargo also provides further insight as to how Cuba and the United States will work together to achieve harmony and to be helpful for each other. As far as traveling between the nations is concerned, it is presently uncertain whether American tourists will find Cuba attractive and whether Cuba will aim to meet their needs by becoming more westernized. In regards to the recent restored relations between the United States and Cuba, it is debatable whether the previous superior-subordinate structure will continue, as indicated by the WSA. Owing to Cuba’s recent isolation, the United States as a core-periphery country must be very careful when restoring relations with Cuba, as the latter is likely to be fearful of repeating the past as far as control and domination is concerned.
Furthermore, questions are still unanswered as to how Cuba will address the overall issue of racial, gender, and class inequality still prevalent on the island. As stated by Dr. L. Kaïfa Roland, “The rise of tourism as the engine of Cuba’s Socialist economy has profound implications for the revolution . . . [The] special period [of] Cuba teaches during lessons about belonging in the contexts of race, nation, and tourism.”\textsuperscript{138} From her personal experience as an African-American woman traveling to Cuba for fieldwork purposes, Roland confirms that racism is still apparent in Cuba’s culture. In closing, Roland also states, “Issues of race, gender, and international class highlighted by contemporary tourism in Cuba are not creations of post-Soviet present, but are foundational to Cuban identity regardless of time or place.”\textsuperscript{139} This statement directly confirms that the theories of Black Marxism and Intersectionality are still applicable to Cuban tourism. In order for the United States and Cuba to continue to restore political relations that would be beneficial for both countries, the Cuban government, along with the tourism ministry, must find the way to eradicate racism, since Americans (many of whom are not Caucasian) will be able to travel to Cuba. If Dr. Roland could experience such blatant racism while completing her academic work, it is likely that an average African-American tourist would have a much worse treatment.


\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., ix.
The questions presented in the beginning of this thesis have been answered throughout the chapters with the associated research and analysis. In regards to the first question regarding Cuba maintaining its operation as a Socialist country given such capitalist ideals throughout globalization, Cuba can affectively maintain its Socialist perspective as long as the Cuban government maintains strict control of programs such as MINTUR. With tourism steadily increasing, MINTUR is vital to Cuba maintaining its Socialist ideals and carefully critiquing the requests for foreign investors as the United States begins tourism to the island. Second, with the gains of an equitable society from the gains of the revolution, such gains will be a positive notion to help maintain global tourism. The key aspect of an equitable society and functioning on the world stage with global tourism is diversity. In particular with the United States reinstituting political relations with Cuba overall, more Americans will travel to Cuba, in addition to Canadian and European tourists. The acceptance of diversity is important to recognize and to maintain to benefit global tourism. Last, the Cuban government will need to continue to allow MINTUR to operate effectively in the tourist sector to ensure that sudden shifts within the realm of WSA do not repeat history. Strict guidelines of the functionality of MINTUR are critical to Cuba maintaining control of the tourism industry.
REFERENCES


