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Anna-Claire Chappell

Racism in Cuba

Introduction

The term racialisation can be interpreted differently with potential for extensive scope and application. However generally speaking it describes the way in which ideas of race and ethnicity are understood and conceptualised, often through binary terms as a means of categorisation and division (Murji and Solomos 2005, 2). Although the United Nations officially denies the use of skin colour and physical racial distinctions to differentiate between people, racialisation continues to affect aspects of every day life economically, politically and socially, both at an individual level and within international systems and institutions as a whole (Goldberg 2005,101). This essay seeks to characterise the processes of racialisation in Cuba, with specific focus on four areas: post-racial discourse, socialism as opposed to Cuban imperial pasts and the culture of Santeria, and the arts.

Cuba proves an interesting country to look at and is distinct from other national experiences of racialisation, having had fifty years under the anti-racist agenda of the revolutionary state (Law 2012, 1). The first section of this agenda addresses post-racial discourse as a strategy to counter racism and has characterised President Fidel Castro's action on racialisation in Cuba since the revolution succeeded in 1959 to more recently. However, despite the acknowledgement that racism persists, the state continues to take little responsibility to combat racism. State objectives do not deal with racial discrimination directly, but rather focus on improving education and job opportunities. Fidel Castro continues to blame Cuba's imperial past for its racism, whilst critics would argue that socialism itself also nurtures racist ideologies. Using Dikotta's three trends of global racialisation, this analysis will argue that it is difficult to entirely disassociate racialisation in Cuba from its imperialist past. However, this should not be a justification for Fidel Castro's failure to address on going racism in Cuba, as this is rooted in the revolutionary leadership rather than in socialism itself.

One stark example of this is the state's management of remittances, which in 2015 were overwhelmingly (85%) coming from white families in Miami to benefit white families in Cuba (Aljazeera, 2015). In general far more could be done to equalize the impact of tourism and to enable Afrocubans to have the voice that they have historically been denied rather than imposing measures to control it. These issues demonstrate a cultural ignorance and racism within the state leadership (Falola and Childs, 2004, 266). They are aggravated by a perverse notion of gratitude, that since the state freed Afrocubans from slavery they should therefore be grateful for freedom in any form. Counter revolutionaries who were black were thus dealt with in much more serious ways than whites because they offended this notion of selfless liberation that had been freely granted to the Afrocuban population.

In comparison to racialisation experiences in other countries it is important to note Cuban definitions of being black are different to that of Northern America. In America a drop of black blood makes a person black where as in Cuba this is the reverse, and a drop of white blood can make a black Cuban or mulatto white (Zurbano, 2013). This reverse definition reinforces a desire to be white and resonates with Fanon's exclamation, "For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white" (1952, 4). The black man is made to feel estranged from his own self and ego, undergoing a process of epidermalisation where a sense of inferiority becomes inextricable from his sense of self and he tries to emulate the white man in every way possible (1952, xiii).

In Cuba it can also be argued that one of the consequences of Fidel Castro's discourse on racialisation, identifying revolutionary Cuba as a post-racial state, is to create an environment where people may be less willing to identify themselves as being black. Cuba is also distinct from America in that the population is mixed to the point that whilst some Cubans may have distinctive Afro-Cuban features external appearances do not always show the genetic heritage. In Cuba there are white Cubans of Spanish origin, indigenous Cubans, mulattos (mixed race Cubans) and Afro-Cubans of African descent (Law 2012, 1). This variability illustrates the difficulty with precise definitions of race, and to what extent physical features play a part in this; how far back along one's ancestry line do we go to find our race and is their such a thing as an essential definition given its dynamism (Winker, 2004. 1614)

Nevertheless, what is common to both Cuba and America is an experience of racial mobility determined by a process of whitening, or what is described as the 'mulatto escape hatch', whereby Cubans with more white features are treated differently and face less discrimination (Law, 2012, 1).

A POST-RACIAL STATE

Post-racial discourse as described by Wise in 2010 represents a colour-blind universalism in which policies for equality actively de-emphasise racial discrimination and race based initiatives in favour of class-based or universalised strategies, such as job creation policies, education funding and health reform (no pagination). With regards to Cuba, a strong case can be made that these trends manifest themselves under the revolutionary leadership. Goldberg supports this notion, claiming, "the masking of racial injustice by celebration of mixing *metizaje* and state hostility to recognition of the claims of antiracists" is one of five trends of racial Latin Americanisation (2008, cited within Law and Tate, 2015, no pagination). In 1959 when Fidel Castro assumed power after the revolution succeeded in overthrowing Fulgencio Batista's military dictatorship, he called for power to be returned to the people with a focus on equality and an end to racial discrimination. He unified the Cuban people on the basis that "all of us have black blood" (Law, 2012, 8), and subsequently adopted a strategy of nationalisation, aiming to erase racism from the employment sector by state reclamation of industry, transport, retail and agriculture sectors. Additionally private schools were nationalised to remove inequalities of education and residents of shantytowns rehoused to remove inequalities in housing (Fernandes, 2006: 33)

However, whatever the benefits of these policies, by 1962 discussions on

race became taboo as the issue of inequalities underpinning racism was assumed to be addressed and solved. However, in Cuba today race continues to inform social class hierarchies, whilst blackness remains synonymous with degrading physical and ethical characteristics including “ugliness, laziness, incompetence, vanity, and ignorance- and also identified with the most despicable behaviours, from robbery and peddling, to prostitution and rape” (Fuentes and Rodriguez 2010). Moreover, AfroCubans continue to live in the poorest areas and their representation in private business, the tourist sector and governance remains low (Fernandes, 2006: 33). The post-racial approach to racism arguably fails on its own terms, as it discourages racial discussion and makes it more difficult to challenge racial bias whilst increasing the likelihood of discrimination (Wise, 2010, no pagination). Dominguez, a prominent AfroCuban intellectual, agrees with this viewpoint, arguing that political conditions in Cuba encourage an idealistic mind-set, leading the political leadership and Cuban citizens to believe that it was possible to forget about racism (2012, 21). Most importantly this approach undermines the voices of those experiencing oppression, and racism can become rationalised as resulting from cultural or biological flaws that keep a racial group at the lowest tier of the hierarchy (2010, no pagination). In Fidel Castro’s eyes contemporary racial discrimination is ‘objective’, and resultant from poverty and a ‘historical monopoly on knowledge’ (Castro with Ignacio 2007, 230).

In order to analyse the state’s understanding of Cuba being post-racial it is important to acknowledge that state attitudes are largely based on interpretations of the words of Jose Marti, a national symbol for Cuban independence. In the latter part of the 19th century struggle against Spanish colonial forces, Marti’s political writings argued that racial equality in Cuba was necessary for a future free of imperialism, yet would only be achievable if there were no distinctions of race. He believed the acknowledgment of race would lead to conflict and the negative projection of a particular race’s superiority over another (Baro, 1994, 55). In his article *Mi Raza* that was posted in his newspaper *La Patria Libre* (Free Fatherland) Marti famously said:

“Man has no special right based on his belonging to one race or another: say man, and you already say all rights...Man is more than White, more than Mulatto, more than Black... Everything that divides men, everything that specifies, sets them apart, is a sin against humanity (1994, 58)

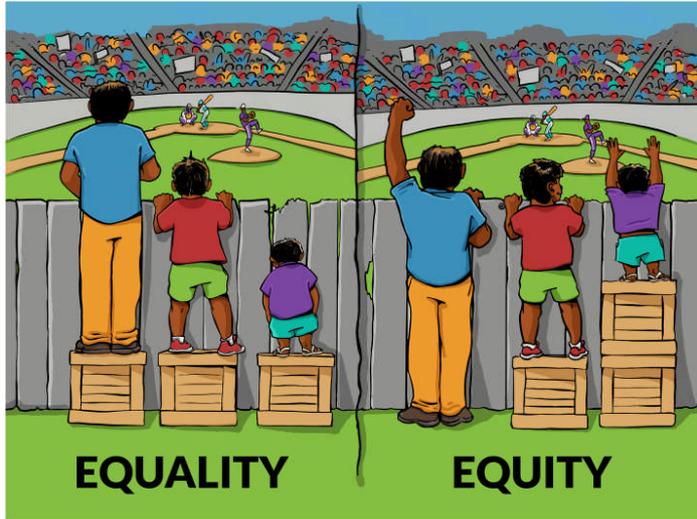
Moreover Jose Marti places emphasis on viewing blacks as equal, that “in Cuba, the black person does not have to be elevated; to tell the truth, as many whites need elevation as blacks”. Marti was speaking after the abolition of slavery, where racial tensions were tenuous due to the anger of ex-slaves towards ruling whites, and persistent racism of ruling whites towards ex-slaves. He rejected the notion of ‘raising the black man’ as an ideal that was racist of its time and implied that blacks needed to become ‘cultured’ and ‘civilised’ like whites in order to be considered intelligent and human.

These revolutionary words helped shape the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination [1963], however, this analysis believes that in rejecting notions of race under the same premise as Marti one hundred years later Fidel Castro undermined a recognition of AfroCuban oppression. By assuming black and white Cubans were on an equal footing, he implied that the sense of continued racism was ill-founded.

The closing of the national Afro-Cuban newspaper after the revolution exemplifies how positive initiatives of empowerment were quelled (Fernandes, 2006: 30). Such autonomy was seen as threatening racial equality as opposed to a necessary part of the process of achieving racial equity. This could be attributed to a flaw within socialist ideology where by giving preference to particular racial group is viewed as bias. It is an interesting contradiction and inconsistency that the state allowed of a Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women) to represent the voices of women, but not an equivalent organisation for Afro-Cubans (Fernandes, 2006, 33). Finally the fact that the UN disregards the notion of any country as being post-racial racism must be considered (2001, 2) and to say otherwise is seen by many as white supremacy cloaked under a different name (Winant 2001, 288, Dyer, 1997, 10).

Socialism and Imperial Pasts

Castro defends the revolutionary socialist leadership from such criticisms, continuing to attribute racism to Cuba's imperial past rather than recognising its persistence in the socialist present. It was only as late as 1986 that Castro stressed the need to "straighten out what history has twisted" (Law, 2012,10). A consideration must be made in this section of analysis as it is uncertain how long it takes for racism to be erased from a system that it has become an intrinsic part of. However, Fidel Castro's acknowledgment of racial discrimination falls short of actively putting in place policies to address these issues. Castro continues to view racism within a paradigm of post-racial discourse, as previously discussed. In 2007 he characterised racial discrimination as objective and resultant of poverty and a "historical monopoly on knowledge"(Ramonet and Castro, 2007, 229). Referring to the ways in which black and mulatto actors are often cast as criminals on state-owned Cuban TV, Castro comments, "what good does it do associating the crime that is most irritating to society with a particular ethnic group?" (Castro and Ramonet, 2007, 232). His words condemn the pattern yet he distances himself from the real issue. The state should take greater accountability rather than continuing to shun its responsibility to counter racial discrimination beyond its reliance on the outdated strategies already in place. Moreover, the state has made it more difficult to analyse racialisation by removing any reference to ethnicity from the Cuban censuses on the basis that to keep records would in its self be discriminatory (Law, 2013, 14). This can be attributed to a flaw in the socialist values that the state aligns itself with as previously discussed where racial equality is confused with racial equity. See Figure 1 below for the distinction between these two terms:



(IISC 2016, no pagination)

However it could be argued that despite priding itself on the socialist foundations of its belief system, the state's approach to racism is not always reflective of beliefs shared by key thinkers who informed these political philosophies, such as Karl Marx. In his essay *On the Jewish Question*, Marx critically evaluates the emancipation of the Jews through actions of state secularisation, which have the intention of achieving a state where no religion would have superiority over another. Marx argues that by renouncing the presence of religious beliefs alone this would not result in removing religious belief nor would it mean that the conflicts between different religious entities would be absolved (1844, 5). He makes the argument that rather than removing religious contentions entirely they are only superficially removed from the public sphere. As a result they shift into the private sphere, so the only political achievement is that the state is alleviated of any responsibility to address the issue (1844, 5). This analysis can plausibly be extended to the state's approach to racism in the case of Cuba where it seems that the persistence of racialisation is not a factor of the socialist value system in itself but rather the interpretation of socialist values by the revolutionary government and the actions of its leaders.

Dikotta's three dimensions of global racialisation can explain the ideological roots of racialisation in Cuba, including the 'common sense model', the 'imposition model' and the 'diffusion model' (2008: 1480-82). Within his conception of the 'the imposition model', which Dikotta directly applies to Fidel Castro's revolutionary leadership in Cuba, racism is perceived as remnant of global capitalist structures and ideology. Using this model, Dikotta argues that in Cuba racism was beneficial to European colonisers as a means to maintain power and access to cheap labour through characterising black slaves as inferior and primitive, which justified them being traded as commodities rather than people and fuelled the colonial economies (2008, 1481; Winant, 2001, 26). In agreement with this notion is Hintzen, who writes more broadly on the Caribbean islands. He comments on how the influence of imperial structures of racialisation has been key in shaping contemporary Caribbean identities,

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and that notions of “white purity continue to reinforce and legitimise a system of globalised dependency”(2002, 493). The influence of America is a key contributor to this way of characterising racism in Cuba, as Winant argues, “race is not natural but socio-historical. It was only gradually invented”(2001, 290).

The third model Dikotta presents, the diffusion model, can also be applied to explain race in Cuba whereby as a result of Westernisation racism has spread and redefined more traditional grounds for discrimination (2008, 1482). America can be held accountable for the gradual invention of racism in Cuba after American military intervention to overthrow the Spanish colonial rule in Cuba's fight for independence, which succeeded in 1989 (Perez 2008, 7). During the war of independence, black and white Cubans had fought alongside each other with a number black Cubans possessing highly respected positions such as Lt. General Antonio Maceo Grajales who was second-in-command of the Cuban Army of Independence (Afrocubano.org, 2016) Once America assumed responsibility and governance of Cuba, however, segregation laws were instated, preventing the Cuban military from being mixed (Fernandes, 2006, 4). Moreover the act of American intervention was fundamentally an act of power. American military intervention was provided to Cuba with the knowledge that this favour could not be returned. America then used this notion of owed gratitude on behalf of Cuban people to deter resistance to American control (Perez, 2008, 179). Parallels can be drawn regarding the Cuban state's subsequent treatment of Afrocuban counter revolutionaries, which was disproportionate to that of white Cubans holding the same views. A greater expectation was placed on Afrocubans to be grateful for the equality brought by the revolution and this reflects a racial dimension to the revolutionary leadership (Fernandes, 2006, 5). It is quite clearly plausible in this case that western ideas of racism derived from America were transplanted to Cuba and went on shaped racial attitudes there, just as Dikotta's diffusion model describes (2008: 1482).

Another example of the diffusion model is the transplanting of Western ideals of glorified whiteness. During my own stay in Cuba in June 2015 I observed that the majority of music videos shown in restaurants were similar to those from Western cultures, where women with pale skin are more dominantly portrayed than black women, being symbolic of the ideal beauty. However, the experience of racism is more complex in that there is self-oppression within the Afrocuban population where black men find black women less attractive as well as white men and women. This resonates with Fanon's arguments introduced earlier in this essay about the “white” aspirations of black people seeking to better themselves. This is remnant of a ‘whitening’ process similar to that in America whereby people seek to become less black. Sawyer addresses this notion in a qualitative study he carried out in 2006, where an Afro-Cuban doctor says: “race is a problem here; everyone knows that it is best to be white and worst to be black” (2008, 124). The prostitution industry offers a different facet of Westernisation where unlike the under representation of Afrocubans seen in the tourist sector more generally, within the sex tourism sector black Cubans are favoured by tourists (Fernandes, 2006, 11). This is indicative of racist Western eroticisation ideals of black women in particular which regard them as being “sexually open, wild and naturally good dancers with “velvety soft skin” (O'Connell 1996, 46).

According to Dikotta's models of radicalisation however, he would ultimately dismiss these stereotypes, arguing that racism is not a homogenous

experience with a universal cause and origin. He would consider these models eurocentric in that they portray non-western cultures as passive recipients of racism, and lack the recognition of other peoples perspectives as powerful agents in their own right (2008: 1481, Fernandes, 2006: 8-9). From this point of view racialisation in Cuba cannot be attributed to its past alone. In a changing political environment where normalising relations between America and Cuba will mean a greater influence of capitalist global markets the Cuban state must readdress its antiracist strategies. Obama's visit in April this year was met with criticism when his speech addressing the people of Cuba made no reference to Afro-Cuban struggles in the face of on going racism. Afro-Cuban journalist Elias Argudín wrote an article responding, "But Negro, are you Swedish?" which emphasises the indignation that Obama as a black man himself did not give solidarity with racial oppression faced by Afro-Cubans (Argudín, 2016, no pagination)

SANTERIA

The religion of Santería or La Regla de Ocha in Cuba has been both a means for the state to discriminate against Afro-Cubans as well as a strong foundation to counter discrimination (The Economist, 2015, no pagination). Santería derives from practices of Afro-Cubans of Yoruba ancestry, or the Lucumi people, who were imported from Nigeria to Cuba as slaves in the first half of the 17th and 19th Century to support the sugar plantation boom in Cuba (Falola and Childs 2004: 209). Since that time Santería has become more popular due to its liberal outlook that is accepting towards Cubans of all race, gender, sexuality and political orientation (Beliso-De Jesus, 2015, no pagination)

However State attitudes towards the practice of Santería have not been consistent. In the 1960s Santería was celebrated as an important contributor to Cuban culture with the establishment of the Teatro Nacional in Habana in 1959 that included Folklore (the traditional dance of Santería) as one of its 5 departments of dance (Falola and Childs 2004: 265). In 1961, however, religious issues was censored and it became increasingly less acceptable to practice Santería until anyone professing to be religious could not be a member of the communist party. This barred believers from privileges given to party members, such as new housing and cars (2004: 269). In order to perform traditional rituals, individuals had to fill applications 30 days in advance of its taking place and give specific reasons explaining the purpose of the ritual. There were cases of sacred instruments being used for such practices being confiscated by the government (2004: 270).

The state defends these acts as being based on the socialist values discussed by Marx who believed:

"Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is, indeed, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself, or has already lost himself again... This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted

consciousness of the world, because they are an *inverted world*... Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people. (1844, no pagination)

A plausible argument can be made however, that attitudes informing state control of Afrocuban religion are not based solely on socialist values but based on existing racial attitudes of revolutionary leadership. Party documents regarding policy on religion from the late 60s included notions that Santeria was less sophisticated than Christianity, suggesting that its practice was a sign of underdevelopment and in some cases of poor mental health (2004: 273). This would directly contradict Castro's own words in 2007 that "for us revolutionaries, countering racial discrimination has been a sacred principle" (Castro with Ignacio 2007, 230). The fact that Cubans who participate in Santeria worship are more likely to support the socialist regime and pose less of a threat to the state than Cubans with other religious beliefs also suggests that racism plays a role in the states rejection of Santeria practices (Law, 2012: 13, Falola and Childs 2004: 269). In agreement with this is argument, Moore states:

"First comes silence; second comes the effort to distort the role blacks have played in the formation of a true Cuban consciousness and the liberation of Cuba from Spanish colonialism... third comes the affirmation that [Afrocuban] religions are "the opium of the people" and thus incompatible with a socialist revolution; fourth comes the branding of them as counter-revolutionary, and the grave has been opened to bury an entire culture.... Yes of course our religions have "entered into conflict with the revolution" for the simple reason that what white "revolutionaries" are intending to destroy are the values, customs, habits, creeds, and culture that constitute the essence of the Afrocuban nation, as an indispensable prerequisite to their objective of turning Cuba and its inhabitants into a culturally white nation" (1964: 222)

More recently since the Special Period of the 1990s the state has enabled greater autonomy to Afrocuban religions. However, it is argued that this was a calculated response of the state to ensure continued Afrocuban support for the revolutionary vision. During a time where black Cubans were suffering most from the effects of a collapsed economy and severe food shortages enabling greater freedom would help galvanise support for the political agenda (Falola and Childs 2004: 279). Moreover state support of Santeria is not guaranteed but satisfied by occasional public acts of acceptance. For example In 1987 the Casa de Africa in Havana was the first institution for Afrocuban culture to be built, and the Cuban institute of friendship and the supreme representative of Yoruba religion in Nigeria, Alaiyeluwa Oba Okunade Sijuwade Olbuse II was invited to Cuba for 5 days and personally

greeted by Fidel Castro himself. However with exception to more positive view of Santeria being circulated in national news for the duration of this visit, in future years religion became silenced again (Falola and Childs 2004: 282)

However, as previously discussed in connection with Dikotta's models of racialisation, people are not passive recipients of racial discrimination. In Cuba more recently Santeria continues to expand with black participation in Afro-Cuban religions being 58.6% in 2012 (Law, 2012, 13), which is a triumph itself given the obstacles faced. Moreover Santeria has been one of the ways in which Afrocubans can connect to larger international communities and, most importantly, gain access to foreign currency, goods and travel (2015 Beliso-de Jesus). The *Confradia Negritud* (Brotherhood of Blackness), established in 1998 has countered the Cuban state's denial of Afrocuban religious practice and Afrocuban autonomy in general (Law, 2012, 13). It demanded that race should not be included on job applications during the Special Period that increased the likelihood of employment and thus improved access to capital (Fuente 2008: 710). Moreover, *Confradia Negritud* has brought about a wider awareness to aspects of Afrocuban history, to which the state has given little recognition. Each year schools commemorate the murders of eight medical students by the Spanish troops in 1871, yet fail to mention the role of five black Cubans who died trying to save these students (Law, 2012, 13). Perhaps this is because these individuals were members of *Abakua*, a secret Afrocuban entity. In 2008 alongside a number of other Afrocuban associations *Confradia Negritud* gave commemoration to those individuals (2012, 13). More recently, in 2010 *Confradia de la Negritud* organised a forum in Havana proposing strategies for changes to be made to discriminatory practices in schools such as racial jokes including Afrocuban children being told to 'do it like a white person' because of assertions that blacks are less able (Law, 2012, 13). The word 'Negritud' within *Confradia de la Negritud* arguably shares meaning with conceptions of Negritude, a term which was developed in the French Caribbean and coined by Aime Cesaire during the 1930 with the intention to reverse negative discrimination and to present blackness as something to be proud of (Law 2010. p 20-21)

ARTS

In Cuba an interesting parallel exists where being black is both central to being Cuban and celebrated in some aspects whilst being denied in others. For example despite Santeria religion being historically ostracised as this analysis previously discusses, the state heavily profitises from the commodification for Folklore dance in the tourist sector (Fernandes 2006: 11). It is also interesting to note which types of Afrocuban expression receive state approval and which does not. Buena Vista Social Club, a highly acclaimed Cuban ensemble made international stardom in the late 90's, which brought renewed international interest in traditional Cuban music which the state was supportive of (Stubbs, 2016, no pagination). In direct contrast with this is the underground Cuban hip hop movement where artists like *Hermanos de Causa* have vocalised their opinions of racism and state leadership and subsequently been repressed by the government and unable to perform certain songs. In one of their songs *lágrimas negras* meaning black tears their lyrics state "Don't you tell me that there isn't any, because I have seen it; don't tell me that it doesn't exist, because I

have lived it... Dont say there is no racism where there is a racist... prejudice is always there” (Fuente, 2008, 697)

However one of the aspects that scholars tend to ignore regarding Cuba is the existing vibrancy of its culture and arts sector considering these existing obstacles. There is a tendency for scholars to emphasise state repression of individual freedom and imprisonment or exile of counter revolutionaries and then negatively attribute this to Cuba’s socialist belief system (Fernandes 2006: 2). However Habermas argues under socialist rule it is not possible for public spheres to form and state intervention prevents independent development, social groups and cultural identities (1996: 369). Fernandes makes the argument that contrary to what is assumed under a socialist state the state monitors domestic cultural production through incorporating it into the system and this enables some space to be creative. Rather than separating culture from the public sphere the state incorporates it into existing structures as a means to reduce contestation against the state and benefits from using the issues raised within revised revolutionary projects. (2006:12). This does not mean all forms of expression are accepted and state interest does not always coincide with that of critical art forms however similarly to folklore notions of race and blackness are fetishized in global markets (162). AfroCuban photographer, René Peña’s work, Cuchillo meaning knife (see figure 2 below), in 1999 has come to symbolise the AfroCuban male stereotype of being violent and sexually rampant and Peña questions the fears and myths associated with this (Afrocubaweb.com, 2016, no pagination). He has partaken in four significant exhibitions called *Queloides (keloids- left by the wounds racism inflicts)*, *Queloides II* and *Ni musicas ni deportistas* (Neither Musicians nor Athletes) and *Queloides III* in 1997, 1999 and 2010 respectively, as part of a collective of artists including which sought to contribute to existing debates on race in Cuba (*Fuente, 2008, 701*). However whilst Cubans are able to criticise the state to some degree, it is hard for a collective voice of artists on racism to sustain them selves and the number of artists with international success is limited (Fernandes, 167).



(Afrocubaweb.com. 2016, no pagination)

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Conclusion

The Cuban experience of racialisation is unique, having been influenced by both Imperial and Communist ideological systems. Cuba has had the longest on going agenda for anti-racism and equality, however after determining that the state's depiction of Cuba as a post-racial nation were far from true, this analysis has sought to understand the reasons why racial discrimination continues to impinge on the lives of the Afrocuban population. Fidel Castro's view on racism echoes the words of Jose Marti, which were relevant in the context in which they were spoken, but are now outdated. Marti accentuated racial 'equality' as the necessary route to a unified nation, however in a contemporary setting this analysis believes that racial 'equity' holds greater potential to alleviate racial discrimination at all levels. This would mean mobilising autonomous Afrocuban organisations, without discrediting this action as an unnecessary bias.

Fidel Castro denies that racism is anything more than a remnant of Cuba's imperial past and in some ways this analysis recognises that this is convincing. The intervention of America during the Cuban War of Independence created segregation laws between whites and blacks. This analysis uses Dikotta's 'diffusion' and 'imposition' models to support notions that racialisation in Cuba can be explained by the imposition of western ideology and capitalist beliefs that thrive off the exploitation enabled by racism. However, Dikotta himself acknowledges that the Cuban

revolutionary leadership cannot be viewed as a passive recipient of racialisation, but rather as a powerful perpetrator of racial discrimination in its own right. Statistics that would be crucial to understanding racialisation are not permitted, causing the state to be under-informed in this respect. Whilst it is not known how long it takes for racialisation to be entirely removed from society, there are aspects of Cuban society that do not always reflect the socialist belief system theorised by Karl Marx that the revolution was founded on. In this way viewing socialism alone as the cause for on going racial discrimination is ill founded.

This analysis used the example of Santería to show the way in which Afro-Cuban religions have been marginalized but also commoditized by the state during times of economic deficit. Discriminatory views of the revolutionary leadership towards Santería reflect cultural ignorance within a predominantly white, middle-class group of individuals that deem Santería as inferior to other white religions. State attitudes towards Santería have been inconsistent but the number of Cubans practicing Santería has steadily risen and movements like La Confradía Negritud have helped make Afro-Cuban voices heard. It is assumed that socialist states by definition cannot nurture strong artistic communities in their public spheres, yet this is not the case in Cuba. The presence of the arts continues to play an important role in raising awareness to racial discrimination in Cuba and offers a space to freely express oneself. The state monitors these spheres, interestingly internalising some aspects as a means to bolster future visions of the revolution. The distinction between acceptable aspects of Afro-Cuban culture versus aspects that the Cuban state represses is arguably reflective of global markets trends. It is likely that Cuba will have a heavier reliance on global markets in future and this will mean that racial discrimination is likely to worsen, as the gap between rich and poor will widen.

Throughout the dimensions discussed in this analysis, a trend noticeably percolates. This analysis argues that the greatest obstacle preventing the Cuban revolutionary leadership from deconstructing racialisation is an inability to commit to the cause. Often the State makes a public gesture addressing the need to tackle racism, or validates some component of Afro-Cuban identity with the establishment of a cultural centre celebrating Afro-Cuban music, for example, and then goes silent on the issue as though it has been solved.

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