

# Anti-Communist Anti-Imperialism?: Agrupación Abdala and the Shifting Contours of Cuban Exile Politics, 1968–1986

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ON MARCH 13, 1971, SIXTEEN MEMBERS of Agrupación Abdala, a Cuban exile student organization, staged an unexpected act of civil disobedience at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Taking their name from a dramatic poem by independence hero José Martí, the young Cubans made their way to the chambers of the Security Council, posing as sightseers and following the route of regularly scheduled tours. When a guide asked visitors if there were any questions, the students—men and women—quickly fell into rank, declaring their intention to occupy the room until they could speak to a high-ranking UN representative regarding the plight of political prisoners in their homeland. Chaining themselves to the chairs from whence, less than ten years prior, superpower diplomats had squared off during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the group held its ground for several hours before being forcibly removed and arrested.<sup>1</sup>

More than age and protest tactics set Abdala members apart from predecessors in Cuban exile politics. In the first edition of its monthly newspaper, *Abdala*, published one month after their UN demonstration, the organization not only lambasted Cuba's "Marxist-Leninist dictatorship," but took potshots at exile brethren with a history of allying with the U.S. government:

Against us, the "champions of democracy" will rise. Those that speak about Latin America with a check from the CIA in their pockets. Those that modified the Monroe Doctrine, changing it into "Latin America for the North Americans." Those that dream that upon returning to Cuba, they will be received at the airport with a car and a furnished house so that they can go and save the homeland.<sup>2</sup>

Such sarcastic criticism of an older generation's sense of entitlement, acquiescence to U.S. meddling, and historical paralysis only continued. "For many, Cuba only exists in the past," wrote Abdala founder Gustavo Marín Duarte, "but we must not forget that if we want to be free we have to incorporate ourselves into the present in a combative and energetic form."<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, while mainstream exile culture had become imbued with increasingly commercialized iterations of an idealized “Cuba of yesterday,” Abdala boldly claimed a stake on the Cuba of tomorrow. “The Future Will Be Ours!,” their chief slogan declared.

This essay assesses Abdala’s trajectory from its founding in January 1968 through its demise in the 1980s, exploring unique features of the group’s activism and heterodox ideological profile. With somewhere between two hundred and three hundred affiliates—spread, at the organization’s peak, across eighteen delegations in the United States and abroad—Abdala injected new blood, energy, and a dose of progressive iconoclasm into stagnated exile political discourse. And yet, in most studies of the Cuban diaspora, the organization has been neglected or grouped uncritically with other anti-Castro groups of the era.<sup>4</sup> A closer look at the distinct shape and targets of Abdala’s political engagements offers fresh insights into the contentious inner history of the Cuban community in the United States, too often cast by Miami boosters as a unitary story of resilience, adaptation, and shared anti-Communist struggle.<sup>5</sup>

Overshadowed in popular and scholarly memory by the upheavals of the Cuban 1960s, the 1970s provided a unique incubator for Abdala’s rise to prominence. Histories of the émigré community tend to treat the decade as an interlude, wedged between the founding waves of post-revolutionary exodus and the Mariel boatlift in 1980.<sup>6</sup> As this essay reveals, however, the 1970s represented a critical juncture at which the political and cultural center of Cuban exile life cracked at the seams. As hopes of returning to the island fizzled away and a new generation came of age, pressures toward assimilation coupled with the rise of détente conspired to unleash a wave of not only intra-communal polemic, but also domestic and international violence. Abdala grew directly out of these clashes, controversies, and fractures, denouncing those who had given up on the cause while flirting with extremist forms of political militancy marking the era.

The invocation of “fracture” here is not incidental. Taking a wide view of American cultural history, historian Daniel Rodgers has recently characterized the 1970s as a period when “strong metaphors of society [began to be] supplanted by weaker ones,” when “imagined collectives shrank” and an “era of disaggregation” took hold.<sup>7</sup> Abdala’s resilient long-distance nationalism arguably reflected the proliferation of identities, immigrant and otherwise, accused of imperiling U.S. traditionalists’ notions of national character. Yet from *within* Cuban exile circles, too, the 1970s proved a decade of mounting

divisions, as already delicate claims to unified community consciousness struggled to hold amidst new rifts and tensions.

By way of foil, then, this essay also introduces Abdala's chief rivals: the left-leaning intellectuals gravitating around the journal *Areíto*. *Areíto* contributors became infamous for daring to accept the Cuban Revolution on its own terms, forging ties with Puerto Rican nationalists, and even traveling to Cuba to see the Revolution's results firsthand. Both groups, though, shared common criticisms of their forebears along generational lines. As young people unburdened by direct implication in the calamitous events of the early Cuban 1960s (like the Bay of Pigs Invasion), *abdalistas* and *Areíto* members alike showed a free hand in denouncing their parents' misguided faith in Washington. Abdala, however, bitterly accused U.S. officials of selling their parents' generation up the river once containing and not toppling the Castro government became a sufficient policy end in their eyes. If *Areíto* took inspiration from U.S. leftists long defending the Revolution's right to exist, Abdala forged a *sui generis*, albeit at times contradictory, anti-Communist anti-imperialism—born of détente-era frustration yet drawing on Cuba's historic nationalist canon. Committed on paper to replacing Fidel Castro with their own project of progressive nationalism, Abdala urged fellow Cuban exiles to free themselves of imperial patrons increasingly disposed to negotiating with former enemies. Achieving such lofty goals, however, would prove easier said than done, as internally, the group struggled over tactics and the expediency of certain alliances.

Such polemics made palpable the exile community's own "age of fracture," as suggested. Yet underneath Abdala's project, paradoxically, also lay a profound search for wholeness—a rejection of "minority" ethnic politics and an embrace of nationalist roots. In this way, the organization not only complicates ingrained portrayals of generically "right-wing" exiles tied to Washington's hip; it blurs the arbitrary lines dividing "Cuban" from "Cuban American" histories in the first place. While some exiles began deploying the concept "Cuban American" strategically during the 1970s, Abdala's dual rejection of Washington authority and a hyphenated identity placed the group squarely in the little explored anti-Communist, though, as we will see, not neatly *conservative*, borderlands of Latino/a and Latin American politics. The group's story, then, compels us to take seriously alternative, expatriate, even self-fashioned "revolutionary" projects conceived on the margins of the Cuban Socialist state, while also evidencing tensions between processes of ethnic ascription and sustained homeland identification common to all

migrant communities.<sup>8</sup> Relative to literatures on U.S. ethnic mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s, meanwhile, Abdala adds a peculiar anti-Communist twist to histories of nationalist, broadly anti-imperialist youth militancy documented by other scholars.<sup>9</sup>

## ROOTS

Gustavo Marín Duarte's political education began at home, under the influence of his father. An accountant and professor at Havana's Villanueva University, Gustavo Marín, Sr., had welcomed the onset of the Revolution in 1959 like many middle-class professionals frustrated with Cuba's bankrupt Batista Era politics, rural poverty, and wider history of stillborn national aspirations. Yet despite being swept up in the spirit of reform pervading all corners of Cuban life, and even landing a job at Cuba's Ministry of State, Marín, Sr., soon grew disillusioned with the radicalization of government policies, signing a declaration ratifying the expulsion of allegedly pro-Communist students from Catholic Villanueva in late 1960. As part of the roundup of an estimated 100,000 suspected anti-Castro fifth columnists in the days preceding the April 1961 Bay of Pigs Invasion, Marín, Sr., was arrested. Released several months later, the erstwhile civil servant quickly found his way out of the country. Within two weeks, a thirteen-year-old Gustavo, too, boarded a plane headed north.<sup>10</sup>

Marín Duarte's early life experiences parallel those of other future contributors to Agrupación Abdala. As young witnesses to the confrontations of the early Cuban 1960s, abdalistas saw their childhoods interrupted when parents rubbed up against intensifying revolutionary orthodoxies and decided to take their families abroad. Yet while many of their elders may have sympathized with the Revolution in its pre-Socialist, "olive green" phase (lasting through early 1961),<sup>11</sup> what most linked participants was not class or political inheritance, but a profound experience of cultural and historical uprooting.<sup>12</sup> Like other members of the so-called "one-and-a-half generation" (born in Cuba but raised partially in the United States), Abdala's leaders grew up navigating the mores of an adopted country alongside the inherited traumas and political commitments of their parents.<sup>13</sup> Often conscious of the ways history had happened *to* them as children, many clamored as young adults to make history of their own.

Coming of age in or near New York City during the 1960s and 1970s no doubt left a particular mark on the organization's founders. Miami, of course, was the undisputed capital of Cuban exile life, home to well over half of the

800,000 Cubans residing in the United States by 1980. The greater New York area came second, with more than 150,000 Cubans spread across New York and New Jersey, especially Hudson County (bordering the Big Apple).<sup>14</sup> And yet, while bearers of a shared anti-Communist torch, founding abdalistas simultaneously drew from their unique surroundings to distinguish their work from the tight Miami enclave's ideological norm. Early members gathered weekly at the Woodstock Hotel, a once-luxurious midtown establishment converted into a seedy single-room occupancy hotel (SRO) and union haunt. Outside its doors, writes author Jonathan Mahler, the "quasi-socialist city, with the great free higher education, rent controlled apartments, lots of jobs for the working class—was dying."<sup>15</sup> Abdalistas, though, bore traces of that fraying ideal, attending public universities like Hunter College (as Marín Duarte did for postgraduate work) and linking up with activist forces struggling to mount a defense of city institutions and labor rights as the mayor's office teetered on the brink of insolvency. Over the course of a decade, Abdala leaders forged lasting ties with not only Harlem-based civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, organizer of the March on Washington, but also the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL)—the youth wing of the Socialist Party of America (later, Social Democrats USA), with roots in anti-Stalinist, pro-labor, democratic Socialist currents in American leftist thought. Women, while outnumbered in Abdala's leadership, would play much more than supporting roles, bucking the gender dynamics of exile organizations past. In contrast, moreover, to Cuban Miami's fabled professional and middle-class "miracle," early abdalistas—predominantly white—explicitly rooted their organization's image in blue-collar experience, drawing both on their own parents' economic struggles in the United States (irrespective of prior class origins in Cuba) as well as the emergence of the Tri-State Region as an important center of working-class Cuban émigré settlement, particularly after the mid-1960s. Indeed, though Abdala eventually would establish one of its largest branches in Miami, the organization's heart remained in what members called the *Zona Norte* (Northern Zone), with persistent racial tensions, rising crime rates, and massive public service failures (like the 1977 New York City blackout) as backdrop.<sup>16</sup>

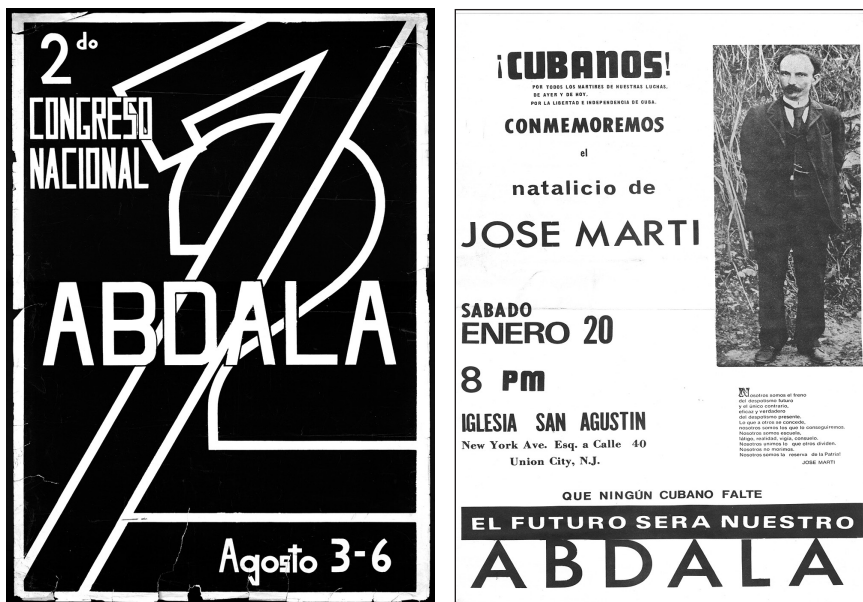
Ultimately, New York's hardscrabble, economically depressed 1970s landscape inspired little confidence in U.S. potential or American influence abroad—especially with Vietnam lingering in the shadows. Whether experienced from outer-borough neighborhoods like Jackson Heights, Queens (where Marín's family settled), or working-class suburbs like Elizabeth and Union City, New Jersey, the wider malaise hitting New York City catalyzed

for abdalistas, more than anything else, a sizeable turn away from the affairs of the adopted home toward the dreamed-of redemption of the homeland. The story of Abdala, then, muddles still influential characterizations of the so-called one-and-a-half generation as key cultural brokers on the path to immigrant adjustment and bi-cultural accommodation. As early as 1970, an admittedly novice short story published in Abdala's ephemeral magazine, *Revista Abdala*, cast the death of one exile family's son in Vietnam (on the same day that the father receives approval of his application for U.S. citizenship) as a tragic wake-up call for renewed Cuban nationalist commitment. Blunt as the narrative device may have been, the message was clear: exiles should embrace, not shun, their island origins.<sup>17</sup>

### FORWARD TO THE FUTURE, EXORCISING THE PAST

As founder and polemicist-in-chief, Marín Duarte led the way, immersing himself in the writings of famous Cuban essayists during visits to Spanish-language bookstores.<sup>18</sup> Among the works that proved influential was *Dialogues about Destiny*, a terse, penetrating diagnosis of Cuba's pre-1959 economic and cultural dependency on the North by Italo-Spanish biologist, doctor, and anti-Franco exile Gustavo Pittaluga (resident in Cuba from 1939 until his death). First published in 1954, the book would be reprinted in revolutionary Cuba in 1960 as an effective sounding board for national ambitions at the time.<sup>19</sup> Equally noteworthy was historic nationalist intellectual Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring's *Cuba Does Not Owe Its Independence to the United States* (1950), a primer on the struggle for Cuban independence in spite of U.S. imperial impositions in the late nineteenth century—also reprinted several times during the revolutionary era.<sup>20</sup> In this way, Abdala's public profile came to reflect a serious intellectual engagement with the dominant motifs of Cuban nationalist thought pre- and post-1959: effective independence, economic and political sovereignty, and sacrifice for the greater good.

Admittedly, the organization's founders may have been more intellectually precocious than rank-and-file members happy to find a network of young people with common cultural backgrounds, experiences, and a vague interest in connecting with their roots. "Abdala's parties," remembers one Cuban woman growing up in New York at the time, "were famous."<sup>21</sup> Friendships, even marriages, originating in Abdala circles outlasted the organization's existence. To raise money, group members arranged communal car washes, organized pay-at-the-door dances, and convinced beloved émigré comedian



Figures 1 and 2: Posters promoting Abdala's Second National Congress (1972) and a march to commemorate the birth of Cuban independence hero José Martí (1977). Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, FL.

Guillermo Álvarez Guedes to give pro bono performances. Predictably, and simplistically, published articles railed against American “hippies” and Communist sympathizers as one and the same.<sup>22</sup>

Still, whatever the social function of the group's activities for its growing base of affiliates and casual hangers-on, Abdala's compelling mix of associational life, political militancy, and vaguely countercultural aesthetics (e.g., invocations of Latin American protest song, poster art, even a stray Kurt Vonnegut reference) recalled the broader swirl of overlapping influences characterizing the Latin American and U.S. New Left.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, while the group's anti-Castroism could warm the hearts of the most trenchant Cold Warriors, Abdala crafted a fascinating ideological admixture more amenable to the center-left. Programmatic documents envisioned a future republic with agricultural cooperatives, nationalized public utility and natural resource companies, and a banking sector free of foreign control.<sup>24</sup> As the organization expanded from its origins in New York into a network

of delegations spread across college campuses throughout and beyond the United States—including chapters in Spain and Puerto Rico—leaders strenuously rejected accommodation with the proverbial anti-Communist middle ground.<sup>25</sup> Again and again, Abdala's fifty or so core cadre lambasted members of Cuba's *ancien régime* and historic political class for their passive consent to, or worse, *complicity* in past patterns of Cuban political corruption and external submission. "Those who lived from dirty business during the years of the past Republic," they warned, "those who gambled with the fate of the nation could try to do it again."<sup>26</sup> Rather than buying into phony glorifications of the past as idyll or the false sense of security afforded by anti-Castro boilerplate, Abdala urged young Cubans in exile to question so-called community "leaders" allowed to speak in their name.

To put such forward-looking attitudes into action, abdalistas naturally needed to marshal collective memories of their own. Thus, while the group's demands at the UN in 1971 reflected the steady emergence of "the political prisoner" as a uniform subject of exile attention beyond individual detainees' prior affiliations or actions,<sup>27</sup> it was no coincidence that they staged the demonstration on a March 13. It was on that date in 1957 that members of a militant student organization, the Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE; both a rival and later ally of Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement), launched a failed series of commando attacks in a brazen plot to assassinate then head of state Fulgencio Batista in his office. Though the martyrs killed that day were duly incorporated into the revolutionary government's sanctioned pantheon of heroes after 1959, Abdala, too, claimed the DRE's school of direct action as its own, inscribing various protests within a wider legacy of Cuban student activism unfairly sanitized and monopolized, they believed, by Castro government institutions.<sup>28</sup>

In these respects, Abdala's political platform echoed several significant, though often forgotten, sources of left-leaning exile thought in the 1960s. For a number of years, anti-Communist partisans of the DRE (breaking ranks with those who had allied with Castro after 1959) had run an active, anti-Castro branch of the organization in exile, albeit supported by the CIA. Later, the simple, inexpensively made magazine *Nueva Generación*, first published in 1965 as "The Voice of Cuban Youth," raised suspicion in conservative corners for its insistence on recovering a "humanist" progressive tradition. *Réplica*, too—a Miami newspaper founded in 1963 by Max Lesnick, former youth leader for Cuba's populist Ortodoxo Party in the 1950s—foreshadowed Abdala's combination of anti-Communism and reformist nationalism.<sup>29</sup>



And yet, Abdala's views went *beyond* the liberalism of a Lesnick or the understated, literary profile of a *Nueva Generación*. In articles like "Why We Are Revolutionaries," abdalistas not only attempted to recover a category, *revolucionario*, seemingly tainted for most exiles by its association with Fidel Castro. They also sought to revive a vocal, previously influential strain of nationalist, non-Communist militancy in many ways defining Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement during the late 1950s. "Cuba needs a Revolution, not a revolt," they argued. "Revolution means destroying unjust, oppressive structures and building a new order. . . . [And if] we do not prepare to face the constructive phase that comes immediately [following Fidel Castro's defeat], we will incur the same errors of past eras, wasting the hopes of an entire people."<sup>30</sup> The nature of these past mistakes, in Abdala's view, was clear. "Cuba's is a revolution murdered by the two great failures of our time," Marín Duarte wrote passionately in September 1971:

The representatives of a middle class incapable of comprehending the message of the true revolution; those that never sat at the table of the black man or the farmer and now take portraits of themselves in his embrace, and call him brother and the great hope [*proeza*] of the future. And [secondly], the communists, the merchants of hate and deceit, who ride upon the backs of the poor with their flags of destruction and death.<sup>31</sup>

Notably, run-of-the-mill, if vitriolic, condemnation of Cuba's Communists comes second in this passage, almost as an afterthought. The open-ended denunciation of false revolutionaries, on the other hand, seems to target a diverse cast of characters, notwithstanding a somewhat instrumental (and, for Abdala, rare) invocation of anti-racist ideals. By formally allying with the Castro government's ideology, Marín implied, opportunistic individuals had found ways to maintain past privileges. Yet equally worthy of reproach were those armchair reformers (perhaps even abdalistas' own parents) who, too easily in the past, and again in the exile present, paid lip service to the concerns of the common man. On paper at least, Abdala's ideology bore little resemblance to that influential strain of exile thought focused primarily on Fidel Castro's violations of democratic process over and above demands for rapid social reform. A moderate, comfortably middle-class lament for the gradualist "revolution betrayed," theirs was not.<sup>32</sup>

## NO STRINGS ATTACHED

Yet another distinguishing feature of Abdala's ideological platform was the depth and consistency of its criticisms of the United States. Many sectors

of the Cuban exile mainstream had come to bitter conclusions about U.S. hypocrisy by the dawn of the American “Me Decade.” Still, by drawing on anti-imperialist readings of Cuban history *before* the Revolution, abdalistas proved unique in the degree to which they indicted predecessors for having ever gotten into bed with the Americans in the first place. The FBI, for one, appeared to take Abdala’s anti-American credentials seriously enough, at one point having an informant pose as an Abdala militant willing to sell weapons to members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War in the lead-up to the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami Beach.<sup>33</sup>

In some ways, Abdala partook of a broader anti-Communist, anti-Washington sentiment slowly percolating across U.S. Cuban communities in response to a litany of perceived American betrayals. From blown air cover and backup at the Bay of Pigs to a suspicious pledge not to invade the island during negotiations over the Cuban Missile Crisis, the list of exile militants’ grievances against their erstwhile political benefactors had grown substantial. Never mind that the White House had never promised to send in the Marines in 1961, or that the spirit of the famed (and phantom) “Kennedy-Khrushchev Pact” of October 1962 had been almost immediately ruptured by a series of failed covert initiatives to bring the Cuban regime to its knees (Operation Mongoose). As the Kennedy and then Johnson administrations gradually began reining in the actions of exile groups not operationally subordinate to CIA mandates—and then eliminating material U.S. support for exile subversion altogether—mainstream Cuban opinion in the United States saw a community being progressively left in the lurch.<sup>34</sup>

The move toward global *détente* and Kissingerian *realpolitik* only seemed to confirm the exiles’ worst fears: when push came to shove, the White House had bigger fish to fry—or, as one political cartoon of the era put it (fig. 3), “El Tío [Uncle Sam]: Ni me saca del lio, ni me cruza el río” [He won’t get me out of the jam, nor will he get me across the river].<sup>35</sup> The beginnings of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, Nixon’s announcement of plans to visit China, and, later, the negotiation of an Anti-Hijacking Accord with the Cuban revolutionary government in 1973 (following the attempted diversion of over ninety American planes to Havana between 1968 and 1973, mostly by U.S. radicals) all seemed to augur the unmooring of American interests from firm anti-Communist commitments.<sup>36</sup> As rumors flew in 1972 concerning alleged White House negotiations with China and the Soviet Union, Abdala joined forces with ideologically disparate exile groups to organize a six-thousand-man “March for Cuban Sovereignty” in front of the White House. The pre-emptive message in light of apparent U.S.

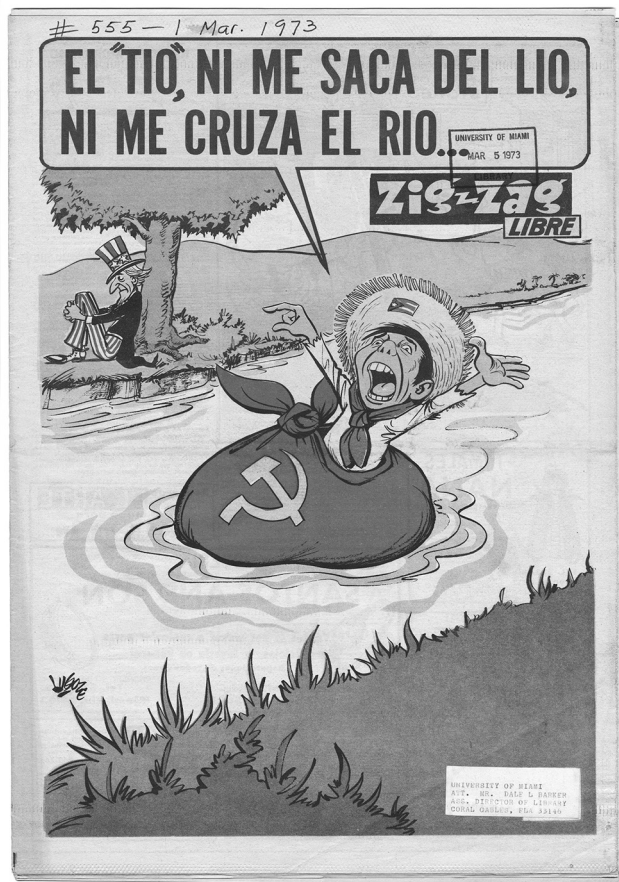


Figure 3: Anti-Communist Anti-Americanism from *Zig-Zag Libre*, a satirical newspaper widely read among Cuban exiles (1973). Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, FL.

vacillation?: Cuba's future would not be negotiated in Washington; going forward, Cubans, and only Cubans, should be free to deal with their own problems.<sup>37</sup>

And yet, while disparate voices in Cuban America grafted a gradual convergence of their exile identities upon shared narratives of Communist and U.S. victimization *since* 1959, Abdala's leaders tended to see recent acts of treason through a wider historical lens. Students of the island's

troubled past under a profound U.S. shadow, abdalistas insisted that pre-revolutionary Cuba had been “mediated politically, alienated economically, and humiliated socially”—not only during the most clearly interventionist period of U.S. dominance under the Platt Amendment (1902–1934), but also throughout the post-Platt Amendment years (1934–1959).<sup>38</sup> The use of Cubans as expendable pawns in a greater play for global power, therefore, did not strike the organization’s leaders as a Cold War, Kennedy, or even Nixon Era invention. On the contrary, such treatment appeared consistent with a deep record of U.S. meddling and obstructionism in island affairs, with disastrous consequences for Cuban political culture. “One of the most destructive effects of the Platt Amendment,” the newspaper’s editorial board noted in 1973, “had been the forced political dependence of the first years of the Republic.” “But even worse,” they continued, “was the fact that after the abrogation of said Amendment [in 1934], a mental dependency remained that has plagued our struggles for a better Cuba ever since”—a not-so-subtle swipe at exiles’ predominant *modus operandi* in the 1960s.<sup>39</sup>

Abdala thus attempted to distance itself from attitudes, personalities, and legacies in exile politics smacking of submissiveness to great power manipulation—“Plattismo” in Cuban historical jargon. Because of an ingrained “political-psychological” deference to U.S. power, the organization alleged, it remained common to hear exiles submissively affirm “without the Americans, nothing.”<sup>40</sup> A truly “independent mentality” meant “understanding that like 1,500 men on the beaches of Cuba twelve years ago”—a reference to the Bay of Pigs—“we are alone.”<sup>41</sup> While showing a certain reverence toward the men who risked their lives during the CIA-organized debacle, the group dared to call veterans of the escapade “naive” and “gullible,” breaking commemorative taboos.<sup>42</sup>

Further, Abdala made a point to emphasize that its opposition to Fidel Castro stemmed not from his nationalization of “U.S. interests,” but from his willingness to serve as a “puppet of global Soviet aspirations.”<sup>43</sup> If such arguments ignored the internal, grassroots logics accompanying Cuba’s radical transformation, as well as substantial sources of friction between the island and Moscow that made Havana anything but a straightforward Soviet “proxy,” the organization was nonetheless distinct in marrying this assessment to a powerful denunciation of U.S. power.<sup>44</sup> At one point, members not only canvassed their neighborhoods and campuses with flyers reading “¡Abajo los Imperialismos!” [Down with Imperialisms!]; they also called for the elimination of foreign military forces on the island—*both* possible Soviet submarines at Cienfuegos Bay *and* the U.S. Naval Station at Guantánamo

Bay.<sup>45</sup> No wonder Abdala's leaders were drawn toward ideologically disparate political currents within and without the United States—the aforementioned YPSL, strains of the anti-Somoza Sandinista movement in Nicaragua, even the IRA and the PLO—representative of a militantly anti-imperialist, anti-Communist, and/or simply nationalist politics they themselves hoped to embody.<sup>46</sup> In the case of Puerto Rico, however, despite stated sympathy for the island's right to become independent, nationalists' ties to revolutionary Cuba—particularly within the island's Popular Socialist, or Communist, Party—made any collaboration a bridge too far. Outright hostility between both groups prevailed as a result.<sup>47</sup>

In the end, Abdala's criticism of the United States even went beyond the alleged hypocrisies of superpower *détente*. In some abdalistas' views, the U.S. government had not only forgone any reasonable moral leadership on the international stage; Washington *from the start* had conspired to prevent Cuban exiles from continuing to identify as such. Describing the programs of financial and resettlement assistance offered to Cuban arrivals in the United States since the 1960s, one editorial characterized such comparatively red carpet treatment as a ploy to

induce Cubans desperate to return to a free Cuba into accepting the new social system to which they had been introduced, putting aside their demands relative to the Cuban problem in order to orient them towards a new American life. In this new life arose the regime of materialism and convenience that has kept most Cubans ignorant of the realities and struggles for the re-conquest of our homeland.<sup>48</sup>

If the argument bordered on ingratitude and conspiracy theory, the effects of time, work, resettlement, and previous exile failures were real enough: a slow turn on the part of many Cubans in the United States to the practicalities of life in a new country, if not straightforward “melting pot” integration. For Abdala members clinging to the hope of active anti-Castro struggle and committed to rejecting the temptations of acculturation, exiles who preferred to “spend \$50 on a Saturday night to go to a party, buy a color TV, or a new car” could hardly justify still calling themselves Cuban.<sup>49</sup>

### VIOLENCE AS NECESSITY

Talk, of course, was one thing; putting published ideas into practice proved quite another. As we have seen, Abdala devoted a good part of its associational life to diverse forms of consciousness-raising. Public

actions—whether chaining themselves to the Statue of Liberty, participating in a “March of National Reaffirmation,” or shouting down Cuban diplomatic officials at public appearances—sought to bring attention to the anti-Castro cause or directly oppose perceived Castro regime propaganda.<sup>50</sup> National congresses and retreats provided occasions for not only bringing new recruits into the fold, but organizing letter writing campaigns to the island. In addition to its newspaper (published for fifteen years), the organization ran a clandestine radio broadcast beamed toward island listeners.<sup>51</sup> And yet, very much like the exile mainstream they often criticized, *abdalistas* also employed tactics resembling the butt of a contemporary Miami joke: “Here in a democracy, we have the right to not permit communists to speak.”<sup>52</sup> In 1972, for example, thirty *Abdala* members infiltrated an exhibition of “Communist” Cuban cinema in New York City, releasing concealed mice and stink bombs to cause panic in the theater.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, far from consistent practitioners of peaceful protest, *Abdala*’s leaders saw violence—within Cuba, above all—as a necessary, unavoidable tool in the long struggle against Castro’s tyranny. But rather than a straightforward or simply nefarious impulse of a trans-historical “Cuban right,” this position grew out of a particular triumvirate of overlapping influences: the dilemmas of the *détente* era; alleged betrayals of U.S. leadership; and the group’s knowledge of the violent, arguably terroristic actions that had characterized Cuban insurgent politics in the 1950s.<sup>54</sup>

The broad outline of exile violence in the 1970s is well known. By mid-decade, exile militants linked to various small groups—some led by embittered former U.S. military and intelligence assets from the 1960s—had accumulated a considerable record of attacks on Cuban diplomatic, commercial, and, infamously, civilian targets. Most notoriously, on October 6, 1976, a bomb aboard Cubana Airlines Flight 455 exploded while the plane was in mid-air, killing all seventy-three passengers on board. Bomb detonations and outright assassinations also hit closer to home, targeting *émigrés* who supported rapprochement with the island or who were alleged to have abused the community’s trust. Between 1973 and 1976, more than one hundred bombs detonated in Miami alone, and in 1975, *Abdala*’s newspaper reported that the city of Miami had claimed the third highest number of bombings in the world the previous year, exceeded only by Belfast and Buenos Aires. Jimmy Carter’s moves to improve U.S.–Cuban relations after taking office in 1977 (lifting the travel ban and opening embassy-like U.S. and Cuban “Interests Sections” in Havana and Washington) only increased

the perceived justification for going rogue. By decade's end, Miami had cemented its reputation as "terrorist capital of the United States."<sup>55</sup>

Tracking Abdala's contacts with, let alone precise involvement in, such secretive activities remains a tall order. Abdala's leaders no doubt harbored sympathy for "nationalist" exile organizations working actively to assault Cuban government targets and said so openly in their published literature. We know, too, that sometime after October 1973, one contingent of the group—convinced of the need to "internationalize the war" in Cuban hands—joined the so-called Frente de Liberación Nacional de Cuba (FLNC; Cuban National Liberation Front). Unified less by political philosophy than a belief in the necessity of sustained anti-Castro action, the FLNC would claim responsibility for bombings at Cuban embassies in Mexico, Jamaica, and Spain over the course of late 1973 and early 1974. One Abdala member, Leonardo Viota, served as spokesman for the group in Miami.<sup>56</sup> According to FBI informants, moreover, Marín Duarte himself took part in a raid on a pair of Cuban government fishing boats in October 1973, and he considered a plan (never realized) to attack a Cuban consulate in Canada in early 1974.<sup>57</sup> Other FBI memos report the existence of a particularly active underground Abdala cell in Puerto Rico that same year, allegedly responsible for bombing two theaters (for showing Cuban films) and a Mexican airline office.<sup>58</sup>

Whatever one makes of these reports or their accuracy (and, indeed, often it is impossible to tell whether informers were reporting on firsthand



Figure 4: Student militancy, on a bumper sticker: "Not one more minute on our knees" (no date). Courtesy of the Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, FL.

knowledge or hearsay), it may be necessary to distinguish the actions of specific Abdala circles from the activities or knowledge of the organization's membership as a whole. Abdala's initial participation in the FLNC, interviews reveal, not only was undertaken without informing or receiving the consent of the group as a whole; it also provoked the resignations of several early leaders who were apprised.<sup>59</sup> For the readership of its newspaper, meanwhile, the organization maintained a public posture of denial.<sup>60</sup> Without explicitly acknowledging Abdala's ties to the FLNC to his broader rank and file, Marín justified FLNC actions in a 1975 speech as a valuable tool for garnering short-term recognition of Cuban exile belligerency.<sup>61</sup> Some of those in the know, however, clearly doubted the chances of success in an environment where Abdala was presumed—correctly as it turned out—to be infiltrated not only by the FBI but also Cuban intelligence.<sup>62</sup>

Even Marín himself acknowledged that such a strategy could not substitute for genuine insurrection on the island in the long run. Thus, as FLNC affiliates continued acting outside of Cuba's borders, expanding their range of targets to include more non-Cuban and plainly civilian entities, the political costs of getting into business with other militants grew.<sup>63</sup> In early 1976, FLNC head Frank Castro—a Bay of Pigs veteran—united with noted exile and former CIA contact Orlando Bosch to form the terrorist front *Coordinación de Organizaciones Revolucionarias Unidas* (CORU; Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations).<sup>64</sup> It is widely thought that CORU is responsible for the unsolved bombing of Cubana Flight 455 that October. Former Abdala members today firmly deny any affiliation with the group (despite some Cuban sources alleging the contrary), and Abdala's own newspaper, significantly, featured a long piece criticizing the Cubana attack.<sup>65</sup> Still, even if Abdala's leaders broke ties with the FLNC relatively quickly (as early as November 1974, according to one FBI report),<sup>66</sup> the decision to make common cause with such a group for a time no doubt muddled the organization's claims to progressive bona fides. Infamously, several FLNC members went on to collaborate with the intelligence services of Chile's Pinochet government—a regime Abdala opposed on social-democratic principle.<sup>67</sup> Later, FBI informants implicated René Fernández del Valle—former secretary of propaganda for Abdala in Puerto Rico and later suspected CORU action cadre—in a number of terrorist plots against Cuban and pro-independence Puerto Rican targets.<sup>68</sup>

What remained unique, however, was the Abdala leadership's evolution *away* from the most extreme manifestations of violent exile action precisely at the time (the mid- to late 1970s) that Cuban exile violence writ large



was on the rise. If little could be done to prevent onetime members from developing parallel networks and questionable associations on their own, within the organization, the legitimate parameters, targets, and pacing of violence do seem to have been up for debate. Thus, while Abdala never renounced the need for “revolutionary” action in the long run, a 1977 article dismissed Cuban exile terrorism as the “consequence of the CIA’s training of hundreds of Cubans who now do not see any other way to achieve their aspirations”—a relic, in other words, of the era of exile dependence rather than an autonomous or viable path to anti-Castro victory.<sup>69</sup> By the early 1980s, Marín Duarte would argue publicly that the only legitimate attacks were those aimed against clearly Cuban military targets on the island. “It is there, within Cuba,” he idealistically asserted, “where we must forge the coming insurrection.”<sup>70</sup>

### ENEMIES CUT FROM THE SAME GENERATIONAL CLOTH

Abdala’s relationship to one prominent set of exile voices targeted for attack—those gathering around the leftist journal *Areíto*—only serves to confirm the organization’s persistent distinctiveness. First published in April 1974, *Areíto* brought together a unique network of Cuban young adults profoundly marked by interactions with the U.S. New Left, the Civil Rights and anti-war movements, and Puerto Rican nationalism at campuses from Gainesville, Florida, to New York City and San Juan. Mentored by the mixed-race intellectual and former *Nueva Generación* contributor Lourdes Casal, writers for *Areíto* echoed Abdala in seeking to break free of the right-leaning political mores and nostalgic passivity of their forebears. The present increasingly demanding *these* activists and young scholars’ attention, however, was what one *Areíto* editorial pragmatically labeled “the concrete Cuba that exists”—revolutionary Cuba, that is, where the apparent consolidation, stability, and Third World reputation of Cuban Socialism by the mid-1970s seemed to demand, at the least, a more objective effort to better understand its origins, inner life, and ostensible sources of legitimacy.<sup>71</sup>

For most Cubans in the United States, abdalistas included, open flirtation with revolutionary Cuba represented nothing short of heresy. While not devoid of a critical or analytic spirit,<sup>72</sup> *Areíto*’s identification with the Havana government became increasingly full-blown as the 1970s progressed, placing its authors squarely in the crosshairs of diverse exile constituencies. Worse, group members directly indicted their elders’ supposed sacrifices

on their behalf. Phrases like “they sent us off to an unknown country” not only conjured a collective sense of loss and incurable alienation; they transmuted the generic claim of “forced” migration at the center of prevailing understandings of exile identity into a stinging condemnation of their parents’ *choices*.<sup>73</sup> The response, needless to say, was swift. As early as 1975, Eliseo Pérez-Stable, brother of *Areíto* editorial board member Marifeli Pérez-Stable, complained to the FBI after finding a pipe bomb outside his Miami apartment.<sup>74</sup>

Animosity only increased as members of the *Areíto* group began traveling back to the island to explore revolutionary society for themselves. Most prominently, in December 1977, key contributors organized and participated in the initial fifty-five-member Antonio Maceo Brigade (or BAM, the Spanish acronym), the first contingent of Cuban exiles to travel to the island as a large group.<sup>75</sup> Fashioned after the “Venceremos Brigades” of American leftists visiting Cuba since 1969, the Maceo Brigade’s three-week visit received prominent attention in Cuban state media, thus intensifying the animosity participants faced back home. While not all BAM members shared the ideological commitments of its leaders, Abdala joined the wider chorus of the group’s critics, dubbing so-called *maceítos* “lacayitos” [lackeys] of Havana.<sup>76</sup> One issue of the University of Miami’s collection of *Areíto* even offers visual testimony of this acrimony, having been defaced by Abdala members. “Devil’s Brigade Against Human Rights. Abdala,” they scrawled.<sup>77</sup>

Nonetheless, participants in *Areíto*, BAM, and Abdala circles shared considerable generational sentiments that, in various ways, undergirded their contrasting positions toward Cuba’s revolutionary regime. Abdala members’ anti-assimilationist, anti-United States points of view, for one thing, replicated the *Areíto* group and BAM’s own, the product of parallel, if ideologically opposed, estrangements from Main Street USA. “It is illusory,” noted *Areíto*’s first editorial, “to think that our national traditions can be maintained for an indefinite period of time in a piece of Miami, New York, or New Jersey. Our national tradition is intimately rooted in Cuba, its history, its heroes, its martyrs, its people.”<sup>78</sup> Echoing such sentiments, a draft flyer found in a vertical file of Abdala ephemera went so far as to ask: “Are you a Yankee Cuban? Be Cuban. Try It.”<sup>79</sup>

More significant, however, were the enduring ways both abdalistas and BAM members traced their preoccupation with Cuba to the common dislocations they endured as children. Nowhere is this clearer than in each group’s portrayal of Operation Pedro Pan—the clandestine, U.S. government-backed,

Catholic Church-supported airlift of fourteen thousand-plus unaccompanied Cuban children to the United States between 1960 and 1962, future BAM members and abdalistas among them.<sup>80</sup> Operation Pedro Pan was depicted by BAM participants as a swindle—a propaganda ploy on the part of the CIA to drum up anti-Communist fervor on the island by spreading false rumors of Cuban government plans to send children to Russia.<sup>81</sup> To this day, the emphasis of such allegations on pain and manipulation strikes many veterans of the program as Castroite blasphemy.<sup>82</sup> And yet, without duplicating the intensity of BAM members' views, abdalistas, too, denounced the adverse consequences of their parents' actions. In May 1971, twenty-one-year-old Abdala member Luis Reina described his own exodus as part of the secret children's exodus. If Reina was sent to live with an American family in order to escape "Murderous and Traitorous Communism," the cultural confusion clouding his upbringing represented a tragic loss for the nation—a loss, that is, until Reina took hold of the "personal will" denied to him as a child, recuperating "the Cuba he carried within."<sup>83</sup>

Common grievances notwithstanding, by the fall of 1978, young Cuban exiles in pro-Havana circles had upped the ante considerably by playing high-profile roles in a series of direct political dialogues between high officials of the Cuban government (Fidel Castro included) and preselected "representatives of the Cuban community abroad." The goal, ostensibly, was to negotiate two weighty issues: the release of political prisoners and the right of more Cuban exiles to return to the island as visitors. Yet despite the inclusion of moderate, anti-Communist exiles willing to deal with the Cuban government on issues of mutual concern, the so-called *diálogo* struck most Miami organizations as a brazen, despicable effort of the Castro regime to court a full normalization of U.S.–Cuban relations while Jimmy Carter appeared disposed to doing so.<sup>84</sup>

Once again, though, Abdala stood apart from the most uncompromising forms of opposition and violence that so-called *dialogueros* faced. In a pair of strongly worded editorials, the group made clear that their skepticism stemmed not from any intrinsic opposition to negotiating with the Cuban government, but rather from the perception that what was happening was not true negotiation or dialogue at all. Welcoming the potential release of political prisoners but describing the process as more "monologue" than equal exchange, editorials intimated that the exile–government meetings were but a pretext to announce an accord already reached between Havana and Washington. As it turned out, they were essentially right: the basic outlines of the Cuban government's eventual commitment to releasing three

thousand-plus detainees *had* been previously agreed upon in a series of secret negotiations with U.S. officials, stalled at that point over Cuba's military involvements in Angola. Thus, by arranging the public exile dialogue, the Cuban government had effectively forced the United States' hand on an established piece of the roadmap to improved relations. Veterans of the process subsequently acknowledged as much, and when they did, some participants in the diálogo concluded that they had been used as pawns.<sup>85</sup>

Abdala also distanced itself from those groups hung up on the diálogo as a potential smokescreen for Jimmy Carter's normalization agenda. Why cause a fuss, they reasoned, if effective "coexistence" had already been U.S. policy for years? "We have never fallen victim to the almost neurotic preoccupation that sees the formalization of [U.S.–Cuban] relations as the end of all efforts to defeat the Castro tyranny," they argued.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, when the dialogue made it possible for some 100,000 exiles to visit the island on expensive package tours in 1979, abdalistas did not lament the end of isolation, but urged travelers to spread anti-Castro ideas.<sup>87</sup> "It would be tragic to think," the group had previously asserted, "that quarantining the Castro government could get us anywhere. . . . The moment calls for penetration of national territory."<sup>88</sup>

Most importantly, Abdala spokespeople disassociated the organization from the threatening campaigns and, at worst, direct assaults carried out against those exiles facilitating renewed contacts with the island. On April 28, 1979, Carlos Muñoz Varela, a twenty-six-year-old BAM member and travel agency owner, was gunned down brutally in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while en route to his mother's home. Such actions not only wasted time and money, Marín Duarte argued; they also helped make insignificant pro-Castro acolytes into international martyrs.<sup>89</sup> Backhanded opposition hardly represented a firmly moral stance against murder. But this position did put distance between Abdala and the most hard-line militants of the era.

The animosity between Abdala and Areíto/BAM was real. Yet in hindsight, the inter-generational, anti-American animus brewing in both collectives stands out as much as their differences. In the context of the wider exile anti-imperialism of the 1970s, BAM's criticisms of the instrumentalization of Cuban children during Operation Pedro Pan did not, in the abstract, represent such a dramatic departure from Agrupación Abdala's own indictments of Washington's historic duplicity. When it came to assessing the actions of their parents, moreover, Abdala members' expressions of resentment at times surpassed Areíto's own. While *Areíto* contributors at least cushioned the blame by in part portraying their parents as victims of U.S. government

propaganda, abdalistas on occasion directly impugned an older generation for not just leaving the island but taking, effectively, the cowardly way out. A July 1971 article, for instance, had this sardonic advice for prospective attendees at Abdala's First National Congress: "If [your parents] ask . . . why you're wasting time doing something for Cuba, tell them that you want what is yours and what they did not want to give to you. Your parents were born and raised in a Cuba that had many problems—economic depression, robber politicians, and ambitious military men." The author, Antonio García-Hernández, continued: "But when it was their turn to fight for what was theirs, they took the easiest decision: FLEEING CUBA."<sup>90</sup> Whatever Abdala's involvement in still-buried histories of Cuban exile violence, indictments of exile choice in light of prevailing narratives of the community's involuntary origins represented nothing short of sacrilege.

### CONCLUSION, *A LO AMERICANO?*

Despite its record and longevity, Abdala petered out in the mid-1980s after several years hemorrhaging members. Veterans remember 1980 as a key turning point. The exodus of 125,000 working-class and, often, mixed-race Cubans from the port of Mariel that year—a veritable social explosion from the ranks of the Revolution's chosen people—may have vindicated the organization's less-than-sanguine take on life under Castro. Yet after years of unpaid work, tensions between founders in the Zona Norte and their increasingly conservative Miami colleagues compounded pressures to make a life, especially as members aged into their thirties.<sup>91</sup> Much like what occurred within Puerto Rican and Chicano student groups of the era, FBI infiltration, personality conflicts, and stress—not to mention the inherent difficulty of sustaining militant long-distance or diasporic nationalism from within the United States—eventually took their toll.<sup>92</sup> Within a year, a crop of Abdala's longtime organizers had resigned.

Thereafter, Marín insists that Abdala remained faithful to its founding principles. Evidence suggests, however, that new political winds subtly began reshaping the group's work. Whereas Abdala had spent the 1970s attempting to sever the exile community's umbilical cord to Washington, the organization's remaining superiors were soon making inroads into the U.S. Capitol building. Indeed, though Abdala's first, short-lived DC presence dated to 1971, in 1981, the group began calling for a "lobbying effort that might influence the foreign policy of this country toward Cuba." Notes began to appear in Abdala's newspaper reporting on Gustavo Marín Duarte's

meetings with U.S. congressmen, and leaders happily relayed news of attending events at the Reagan White House.<sup>93</sup> Given Abdala's links to the YPSL and its parent body, Social Democrats USA—both organizations where future neoconservatives cut their political teeth—some members may very well have been swept up in the Reagan revolution. Or, having been burned by the 1978 diálogo, not to mention the Mariel crisis (a dent to exiles' reputation on the U.S. national stage), perhaps abdalistas, like many newly minted "Cuban American" strivers, came to prize a seat at the proverbial table above all else. To wit, in 1985, an Abdala delegation participated with White House support in an International Youth Conference conceived as an ideological counterpoint to long-running youth festivals convened by the Soviet bloc. Hosted in Jamaica by the government of staunch U.S. ally Edward Seaga, the gathering of (among others) Young Republicans, Latin American centrists, anti-Sandinista Nicaraguans, Soviet dissidents, and even Afghan guerillas relied on the Reagan administration for half of its \$2 million in funding.<sup>94</sup>

And yet Abdala could still surprise. In a long piece on U.S.–Cuban relations published in late 1984, the organization firmly restated its goal of gaining "direct access" to the White House—something never of much concern in the past, particularly given the group's aversion to "Plattismo." Still, it would appear their intent, unlike the recently founded and eventually better-known Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), was to *change* the direction of U.S. policy rather than stay the course. "The policy of containment applied to Cuba in the form of the 'embargo' and no diplomatic ties has resulted in the freezing of Cuba's internal and external situation," they argued. "If current policy has failed, we must conclude that a fundamental change is needed."<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, it remained unclear whether that meant advocating for a unilateral lifting of economic sanctions, a hands-off policy on exile covert action, or both.

Ultimately, the maligned strategy of U.S. isolation stayed intact, island-based insurgency remained a pipe dream, and other Cuban exiles—above all, CANF's Jorge Mas Canosa—mastered working with Washington rather than against it. Abdala's history, though, recalls a time when "Cuban American" and "Cuban exile" were not yet the synonymous or situationally deployed terms they tend to be today, when Cuban expatriates clung to "revolutionary" imaginaries of their own, however questionable their methods or allies. Such dynamics recast Gustavo Pérez-Firmat's description of U.S. and Cuban cultures as fundamentally "appositional" in his seminal study *Life on the Hyphen*.<sup>96</sup> For while the intersection of Cuban émigré and American political

concerns undoubtedly proved generative, tensions between exile and U.S. government approaches to the island's predicament remained as important as their synergies. Abdala's youthful criticisms of exile elders, meanwhile, serve as a powerful corrective to simplified portraits of an island bifurcated by revolution. Particularly during the era of détente, divisions among Cubans never mapped so easily onto the basic geography of the Florida Straits. Beyond a straightforward tale of anti-Communist flight—"beyond," in the words of critic Ricardo Ortiz, "the neatness of the two-Cuba split"—"far messier" contests over historical memory, political legitimacy, and strategy defined the fabric of Cuban exile life.<sup>97</sup>

## NOTES

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1. "Por que fue a la ONU la Agrupación Abdala," *Abdala*, April 1971: 7. All translations from *Abdala* and other Spanish-language materials are by the author.

2. "Editorial: el futuro será nuestro," *Abdala*, April 1971: 4.

3. Gustavo Marín Duarte, "El verdadero subdesarrollo cubano," *Abdala*, December 1972: 4.

4. For a partial exception, see Orlando Gutiérrez Boronat, "Cuban Exile Nationalism" (PhD diss., University of Miami, 2005).

5. For example, see Sam Verdeja and Guillermo Martínez, eds., *Cubans: An Epic Journey: The Struggle of Exiles for Truth and Freedom* (Miami, FL, 2011).

6. María Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959–1994* (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 137–45; María de los Angeles Torres, *In the Land of Mirrors: Cuban Exile Politics in the United States* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999), 84–104.

7. Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 3.

8. Important entries in this historiography include George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican-American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York, 1993); Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York, 2005); Sandyha Shukla, *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England* (Princeton, NJ, 2003).

9. See, for example, Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley, CA, 2005); Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA, 2006); Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez, eds., *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora* (Philadelphia, 1998).

10. Gustavo Marín Duarte, telephone interview with Michael J. Bustamante, October 10, 2013; Marín Duarte, interview with Michael J. Bustamante, Miami, FL, December 2, 2013; Marín Duarte, email message to Michael J. Bustamante, March 4, 2014.

11. The phrase comes from Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2012), 37.

12. Marín Duarte, interview with Michael J. Bustamante, December 2, 2013; Elia Rosa Encinosa, Enrique Encinosa, Eduardo Fermoselle, José Antonio Font, Vicente Lago, Emilio Polo Núñez, Fernando Álvarez Pérez, Maria de la Roza, collective interview with Michael J. Bustamante, Coral Gables, FL, December 1, 2013.

13. Ruben G. Rumbaut, “The Agony of Exile: A Study of the Migration and Adaptation of Indochinese Refugee Adults and Children,” in *Refugee Children: Theory, Research, and Services*, ed. Frederick L. Ahearn, Jr., and Jean L. Athey (Baltimore, MD, 1991), 61.

14. Lisandro Pérez, “Cubans in the United States,” *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Science* 487, no. 1 (September 1986): 126–37; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population. General Social and Economic Characteristics* (Washington, DC, 1983).

15. “That 70s Show,” *Gotham Gazette*, May 9, 2005, <http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/open-government/2759-that-70s-show>.

16. José Antonio Font, telephone interview with Michael J. Bustamante, September 25, 2013; Marín Duarte, interview with Michael J. Bustamante, October 10, 2013, and December 2, 2013; Encinosa et al., interview with Michael J. Bustamante. On Abdala’s ties to Rustin, see “Cuba entre los países que violan D. H.,” *Abdala*, October/November 1977: 5. On New York in the 1960s and 1970s, see Joseph P. Viteritti, ed., *Summer in the City: John Lindsay, New York, and the American Dream* (Baltimore, MD, 2014); Jerald E. Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven, CT, 2004); Jonathan Mahler, *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Bronx Is Burning: 1977, Baseball, Politics, and the Battle for the Soul of a City* (New York, 2005). On the YPSL and the Socialist Party of America, see Peter Drucker, *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist’s Odyssey through the “American Century”* (Amherst, NY, 1993); Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York, 2001). On Cuban Miami and New Jersey, see Yolanda Prieto, *The Cubans of Union City* (Philadelphia, 2009); Alejandro Portés and Alex Stepick, *City on the Edge: The Transformation of Miami* (Berkeley, CA, 1993).

17. Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (Austin, TX, 1994), 3–5; Marín Duarte, “Un yanqui llamado José,” *Revista Abdala*, April 1970: 20–25.

18. Marín Duarte, interview with Michael J. Bustamante, October 10, 2013, and December 2, 2013.

19. Gustavo Pittaluga, *Diálogos sobre el destino* [Dialogues about Destiny] (1954; 1960; Miami, 1969); original editions published in Havana.

20. Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *Cuba no debe su independencia a los Estados Unidos* [Cuba Does Not Owe Its Independence to the United States] (Havana, 1950). Subsequent editions: 1960 (Havana) and 1975 (Santiago de Cuba).

21. Rosario “Tati” McClain, personal communication with Michael J. Bustamante, November 1, 2013.

22. Marín Duarte, interview with Michael J. Bustamante, December 2, 2013; Encinosa et al., interview with Michael J. Bustamante; Enrique Encinoza [sic], “Nuestra ruta,” *Abdala*, August 1971: 12.

23. Agrupación Abdala Poster Collection, Cuban Heritage Collection, University of Miami Libraries, Coral Gables, FL; “Recital canción protesta,” *Abdala*, October/November 1975:



2; Gisela Cardonne, "The New Tourists," *Abdala*, August 1971: 8; Eric Zolov, "Expanding Our Conceptual Horizons: The Shift from an Old to a New Left in Latin America," *A Contracorriente* 5, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 47–73; Van Gosse, "A Movement of Movements: The Definition and Periodization of the New Left," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (London, 2002), 292.

24. "Ideología de Abdala: hacia una nueva sociedad, aspectos sociales," *Abdala*, May/June 1979: 7; "Pensamientos revolucionarios sobre una nueva sociedad, presentados y aprobados durante el Primer Congreso Nacional de ABDALA," July 1971, <http://www.abdala.info/files/76900599.pdf> (accessed November 11, 2014).

25. "Delegaciones Abdala," <http://abdala.info/delegaciones.html> (accessed July 8, 2014).

26. "Editorial: Por qué somos revolucionarios," *Abdala*, May 1971: 3.

27. Those identified as "political prisoners" have included peaceful dissenters and active armed conspirators supported by the CIA, those linked to anti-Castro organizations with origins in the anti-Batista struggle, as well as former Batista allies. The discursive and legal construction of the category "political prisoner" in the Cuban case—from within the prisoner community, on the part of exile solidarity networks, and in conjunction with the rise of international human rights jurisprudence—merits further study. For an example of cases, see Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Sexto informe sobre la situación de los presos políticos en Cuba," December 14, 1979, <http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/Cuba79sp/indice.htm>.

28. On the DRE, see Ramón L. Bonachea and Marta San Martín, *The Cuban Insurrection: 1952–1959* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1974). Also, see the November 1971 issue of *Abdala*, dedicated to the one hundredth anniversary of the November 21, 1871, assassination of eight Cuban medical students by Spanish colonial forces. This occasion was long important to Cuban student movements and incorporated into revolutionary Cuba's official commemorative calendar.

29. See Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil en el Exilio (DRE) Records, Cuban Heritage Collection; "Editorial," *Nueva Generación* 1, no. 2 (September 1965): n.p.

30. "Editorial: Por qué somos revolucionarios."

31. Marín Duarte, "Revolución," *Abdala*, September 1971: 2.

32. For the classic "betrayal thesis," casting the "true" revolution's aims as procedural in nature, see Theodore Draper, "Castro's Cuba: A Revolution Betrayed?," *New Leader*, March 27, 1961: 11.

33. FBI Watergate Files, Part 63 of 100, 133, <http://vault.fbi.gov/watergate/watergate-part-63-64-of-1/view> (accessed September 29, 2013).

34. For expressions of exile frustration, see Haynes Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs: The Leaders' Story of Brigade 2506* (New York, 1964); Mario Lazo, *A Dagger in the Heart: American Foreign Policy Failures in Cuba* (New York, 1968). Also, Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2009), 170–212; James G. Blight and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Politics of Illusion: The Bay of Pigs Invasion Reexamined* (Boulder, CO, 1998).

35. *Zig-Zag Libre*, March 1, 1973: cover.

36. "El pueblo cubano declara y establece," *Abdala*, April 1973: 6–7; Teishan Aaron Latner, "Take Me to Havana! Airline Hijacking, U.S.–Cuba Relations, and Political Protest in the Late Sixties' America," *Diplomatic History* [online], January 4, 2014, <http://dh.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2014/01/04/dh.dht129>.

37. "Marcha de la soberanía a Washington," *Abdala*, June 1972: 5–6.
38. "Editorial: Por qué somos revolucionarios"; "Editorial: Abdala 1968–1977," *Abdala*, January 1977: 3. Passed by the U.S. Congress in 1901, and forcibly incorporated into the text of Cuba's first constitution, the Platt Amendment authorized the United States to intervene in Cuban affairs, by military occupation if need be (as would occur from 1906–1909), "for the preservation of Cuban independence."
39. "Editorial: El 17 de abril y la mentalidad cubana," *Abdala*, April 1973: 3.
40. "Editorial: ¿Dónde, quién, cómo, y cuando?," *Abdala*, May 1981: 3.
41. "Editorial: El 17 de abril y la mentalidad cubana."
42. "Editorial: Girón, catorce años después," *Abdala*, April 1975: 3.
43. "Rechaza acusación," *Abdala*, May 1976: 1.
44. Jorge Domínguez, *To Make the World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 61–78; Piero Gleijeses, "The View from Havana: Lessons from Cuba's African Journey, 1959–1976," in *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, NC, 2008), 112–34.
45. "Editorial," *Abdala*, December 1974: 3. The Soviets began construction of a nuclear submarine base at Cienfuegos in 1970. Quiet negotiations with the Nixon administration led Moscow to change its plans. See Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, 251–54.
46. "Nicaragua, un pueblo en lucha," *Abdala*, October/November 1978: 5. In the 1980s, however, *Abdala* would abandon this position, supporting Contra leader and former Sandinista Edén Pastora. Marín Duarte, interview with Michael J. Bustamante, December 2, 2013. See references to the IRA and PLO in Calixto Sosa, "Vale la pena el terrorismo?," *Abdala*, March 1975: 1, 4; "Discurso de Gustavo Marín en Union City," *Abdala*, March 1976: 6–7.
47. "Abdala y los problemas internacionales," *Abdala*, August/September 1977: S5; "Tratan agencias de inteligencia de Estados Unidos y Cuba de destruir la oposición anti-castrista," *Abdala*, May 1975: 7. Other inconsistencies in *Abdala*'s anti-imperial allegiances are notable as well. While not overtly sympathetic to South Africa's apartheid government, the group remained mum as South African forces overran Angola's borders in 1975, focusing instead on Cuban adventurism as a façade for Soviet expansionism. The group also embraced the fiction that the anti-Marxist Angolan UNITA under Jonas Savimbi (contending for power with the Soviet and Cuban-backed Angolan MPLA) operated independently of Western and South African support. See "Unita gana territorio en Angola," *Abdala*, September/October 1977: 1; "Editorial: África sí, Castro no," *Abdala*, June 1978: 3.
48. Eduardo Fermoselle, "Nuestra posición," *Abdala*, June/July 1975: 8.
49. Rolando Fera, "Este exilio," *Abdala*, May 1971: 9.
50. "14 de Abdala se encadenaron a la Estatua de la Libertad," *Abdala*, June 1972: 1, 4; "Marcha por la reafirmación nacional," *Abdala*, April 1974: 1; "Abdala confronta Alarcón," *Abdala*, April 1973: 1.
51. Encinosa et al., interview with Michael J. Bustamante; Marín Duarte, interview with Michael J. Bustamante, December 2, 2013.
52. The line comes from "Doctor Álvaro Álvarez," a fictional YouTube personality created to satirize conservative Miami exile radio. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfDmf\\_aHe9E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfDmf_aHe9E) (accessed April 16, 2009; video subsequently made private).
53. "Cancelado festival castrista," *Abdala*, March 1972: 6–7.
54. The urban underground of Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement engaged in "Action and Sabotage" operations. While generally avoiding civilians, such actions did target public

places identified with Batista Era vices: hotels, casinos, sugar plantations, shopping districts. The DRE, for its part, had assassinated several Batista administration officials in addition to carrying out the failed 1957 attempt on Batista himself. See Giraldo Mazola, “La noche de las cien bombas,” *Bohemia*, November 15, 2012, <http://bohemia.cu/2012/11/15/historia/La%20noche%20de%20las%20cien%20bombas.html>; Bonachea and San Martín, *Cuban Insurrection*, 73–75.

55. García, *Havana USA*, 140–45; Sosa, “Vale la pena el terrorismo?” 1; Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, 291–302.

56. Report, SA Robert James Dwyer, Anti-Castro Activities, March 27, 1974, FBI Case File 109-584, House Select Committee on Assassinations Subject Files—Max Lesnick, NARA Record Number: 124-90102-10172.

57. Report, Re: FRANK CASTRO, May 20, 1975, FBI Case File 105-22478, FOIA-obtained, [foia.state.gov](http://foia.state.gov); Report, GUSTAVO BIENVENIDO MARIN Y DUARTE, ENRIQUE GILBERTO ENCINOSA, June 9, 1975, FBI Case File Unknown, FOIA-obtained, [foia.state.gov](http://foia.state.gov).

58. Memo, San Juan to Director, Miami, FRENTE DE LIBERACION NACIONAL DE CUBA (FLNC), INTERNAL SECURITY—CUBA; M-7, INTERNAL SECURITY—CUBA, October 29, 1974, FBI Case File 105-256571, FOIA-obtained; Memo, Miami to Director, San Juan, FRENTE DE LIBERACION NACIONAL DE CUBA (FLNC), INTERNAL SECURITY—CUBA; M-7, INTERNAL SECURITY—CUBA; ABDALA, INTERNAL SECURITY—CUBA, November 1, 1974, FBI Case File 105-256571, FOIA-obtained. The author is grateful to Raúl Alzaga Manresa for making these documents available.

59. Font, telephone interview with Michael J. Bustamante; Encinosa et al., interview with Michael J. Bustamante.

60. Enrique Encinosa, “En nombre de la nueva guerra,” *Abdala*, April 1974: 7–8. Encinosa today admits being apprised of FLNC matters. Encinosa et al., interview with Michael J. Bustamante. Yet the cited article describes FLNC activity without any mention of Abdala’s links to the group.

61. “Discurso de Gustavo Marín en Union City,” *Abdala*, March 1975: 6–7.

62. In 1976, Manuel de Armas, a one-time Abdala member, turned up at a press conference in Havana, revealing himself as a Cuban government agent. See “Rechaza acusación.”

63. See LHM, FRANK CASTRO, INTERNAL SECURITY—CUBA, March 29, 1976, FBI Case File 105-22478, FOIA-obtained, [foia.state.gov](http://foia.state.gov). This file references FLNC responsibility for bombing both the Soviet Embassy in Colombia and a Cuban film festival in Bogotá on September 27, 1975.

64. Jesus Arbolea, *The Cuban Counterrevolution*, trans. Rafael Betancourt (Athens, OH, 2000), 154–56; John Dinges and Saul Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row* (New York, 1980), 250–55.

65. Encinosa et al., interview with Michael J. Bustamante; Juan Clark, “Editorial: El terrorismo y la lucha contra Fidel Castro,” *Abdala*, November/December 1976: 3.

66. Memorandum, SAC (Miami) to Director (FBI), Re: BOMBING OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES BUILDING, December 5, 1974, FBI Case File 105-218964, FOIA-obtained, [foia.state.gov](http://foia.state.gov).

67. See comments on Pinochet in “Chamorro y la causa cubana,” *Abdala*, May 1978: 1, 7. The FLNC included among its ranks militants from the Movimiento Nacionalista Cubano (MNC), a proto-fascist group founded by Guillermo and Ignacio Novo Sampoll. In 1979,

the Novo brothers were convicted in the 1976 assassination of former Chilean ambassador to the United States Orlando Letelier at the behest of Chilean intelligence. Their convictions were reversed two years later on procedural grounds. See Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*.

68. See Report, SA James Patrick Laffin to [not specified], EULALIO FRANCISCO CASTRO PAZ, RENE FERNANDEZ DEL VALLE . . . ATTEMPT TO BOMB CUBAN AIRCRAFT ON TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, September 22, 1977, FBI Case File SJ 2-108, FOIA-obtained, foia.state.gov. Fernández is alleged to have taken part in a 1974 Frank Castro-led plot to detonate a bomb buried beneath a runway in Trinidad and Tobago upon the departure of a Cuban military plane bound for Angola. Yet something in the story, or the report, is amiss, as Cuban troops did not arrive in Angola until 1975. Fernández was also suspected of carrying out CORU-organized bombings in Costa Rica in 1976. See LHM, "Cuban Exile Terrorism," November 29, 1977, FBI Case File CR 1-9-584-5587X13, House Select Committee on Assassinations Subject Files—Antonio Veciana, NARA Record Number: 124-90152-11073. Finally, Fernández was arrested, tried, and acquitted for his alleged role in the 1980 bombing of the Puerto Rican Bar Association (a target for its criticism of the U.S. military presence on the neighboring island of Vieques). See Jane B. Baird, "Powerful Blast Shatters Doors at Bar Association," *San Juan Star*, January 8, 1980: 6; "3 Innocent of January Bombing," *Virgin Islands Daily News*, July 11, 1980: 3.

69. "El terrorismo cubano es hijo de la CIA," *Abdala*, June 1977: 2.

70. Marín Duarte, "Terrorismo, U.S.A.?" *Abdala*, March 1980: 7; Bruce McCole and Francis Maymer, "Las luchas anti-castristas desde el exterior," *Abdala*, March/April 1981: 2, 4.

71. "Areíto responde," *Areíto* 1, no. 3 (October 1974): 13.

72. See, for example, Marifeli Pérez-Stable, "¿Hacia dónde va la clase obrera cubana?," *Areíto* 2, nos. 2–3 (September/December 1975): 4–13; Albor Ruíz, "Canción frustrada para Juanin Pereira," *Areíto* 1, no. 1 (April 1974): 19.

73. "Editorial," *Areíto* 1, no. 1 (April 1974): 1.

74. "Editorial," *Areíto* 2, no. 4 (Spring 1976): 4, lists this among several other acts of aggression and intimidation group members faced.

75. See *Areíto* 4, nos. 3–4 (Spring 1978), for various reports on the trip.

76. "Compatriota: Si vas a Cuba . . . sé útil!," *Abdala*, February/March 1979: 1, 3; "Editorial," *Abdala*, April 1978: 3.

77. *Areíto* 4, nos. 3–4 (Spring 1978), front and back covers, held at the Cuban Heritage Collection.

78. "Editorial," *Areíto* 1, no. 1 (April 1974): 1.

79. Agrupación Abdala Vertical File, Cuban Heritage Collection.

80. See María de los Angeles Torres, *The Lost Apple: Operation Pedro Pan, Cuban Children in the U.S., and the Promise of a Better Future* (Boston, 2003).

81. Grupo Areíto, *Contra Viento y Marea* (Havana, 1978), 37–55.

82. See "Letter to CNBC from Board of Directors of Operation Pedro Pan, Inc.," June 15, 2010, <http://pedropan.org/content/letter-cnbc-board-directors-operation-pedro-pan-group-inc> (accessed July 8, 2014).

83. Luis Reina, "Mi despertar: Abdala," *Abdala*, May 1971: 2.

84. de los Angeles Torres, 100–02; Enrique Patterson, "Tres veces mariposa: María Cristina Herrera," *Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana* 37–38 (Summer/Fall 2005): 181–89.

85. "Editorial," *Abdala*, October/November 1978: 2; Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, 302–61; Robert M. Levine, *Secret Missions to Cuba: Fidel Castro, Bernardo Benes, and Cuban Miami* (New York, 2001); Adriana Méndez, "Metamorfosis de una mariposa," *Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana* 8–9 (Spring/Summer 1998): 172–84.
86. "Editorial," *Abdala*, February/March 1977: 3.
87. "Compatriota: Si Vas a Cuba."
88. "Editorial," *Abdala*, June 1977: 3.
89. Marín Duarte, "Terrorismo, U.S.A.?" *Abdala*, March 1980: 1, 7.
90. Antonio García-Hernández, "Lo que tus padres no te quisieron dar," *Abdala*, July 1971: 4.
91. Encinosa et al., interview with Michael J. Bustamante.
92. See Torres and Velazquez, *Puerto Rico Movement*; Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans* (Tucson, AZ, 1997).
93. Marín Duarte, interview with Michael J. Bustamante, December 2, 2013; Font, telephone interview with Michael J. Bustamante; "Se reúne Gustavo Marín Duarte con Congresistas de EEUU," *Abdala*, November 1981: 1; "Abdala invitada a la Casa Blanca," *Abdala*, July/August 1983: 1.
94. Joseph Treaster, "Jamaica Host for a Festival of the Young," *New York Times*, April 14, 1985: 11; "Triunfa Cuba libre en conferencia internacional," *Abdala*, September/October 1985: 1–3. The International Youth Year Commission, the U.S. body that helped organize the event, was later implicated in the diversion of funds to the Nicaraguan Contras. See Jack Anderson and Joseph Spear, "North Linked to '85 Youth Conference," *Washington Post*, April 9, 1987: B11.
95. "Qué hacer: el exilio y la política americana hacia Cuba," *Abdala*, December 1984–January 1985: 5.
96. Pérez-Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*, 5.
97. Ricardo L. Ortiz, *Cultural Erotics in Cuban America* (Minneapolis, 2007), 6.