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Cuban Studies 21 (1991)

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The Cuban Experience in the United States, 1865–1940: Migration, Community, and Identity

ABSTRACT

Contrary to popular perception, the Cuban experience in the United States is not an exclusively post-1959 phenomenon. Cubans have lived in the United States since at least the 1820s, and well-defined integrated communities emerged during the 1870s. This article provides an overview of the Cuban experience from 1870 through 1940, tracing the migration process, community formation, and changing identity. While the initial characteristics of Cuban community life in the United States reflected an exile status (1870–1900), after Cuba's separation from Spain emigre communities increasingly became immigrant centers with a Cuban-American identity.

RESUMEN

Muy al contrario de las percepciones populares, la experiencia cubana en los Estados Unidos no es un fenómeno con orígenes exclusivamente después de 1959. Cubanos han vivido en los Estados Unidos desde los 1820s y comunidades integradas y definidas surgieron durante los 1870s. Este artículo reseña la experiencia cubana en los Estados Unidos desde 1870 hasta 1940, rastreando el proceso migratorio, la formación de comunidades y los cambios de identidad. Si es verdad que las características iniciales de las communidades en los Estados Unidos reflejaron su realidad como exiliados (1870–1900), es también el caso que después de la independencia de Cuba las comunidades en los Estados Unidos pasaron a ser centros de inmigrantes con una identidad cubanoamericano.

Contrary to popular perception, the Cuban experience in the United States is not an exclusively post-1959 phenomenon. Cubans have resided in the United States since the 1820s, and well-defined and integrated communities emerged during the 1870s. For the most part, however, scholars dedicated to the study of Cuban Americans have considered this early experience colorful and exotic, but essentially irrelevant to the contemporary scene. In fact, Cubans in the United States have themselves been generally unaware of the longstanding migratory tradition that has linked Cuba to the United States. Perhaps this is true because the history of Cubans in the United States has never been synthesized in a readable fashion for a scholarly or general audience.

After three decades of preoccupation with their homeland, however, comtemporary Cubans in the United States are viewing themselves increasingly as integral members of North American society. Within the scholarly community, social scientists have recently suggested that Cubans in the United States during the 1970s were ready to change their self-imposed identity as "exiles" and to assume their place within the world of North American ethnicity.[1] They have lacked, however, a consciousness of the historical context of their experience.

This essay contends that the Cuban experience in the United States should be understood from its origins in the nineteenth century. The broad historical context of Cuban migrations north during the last 150 years needs to be understood in a holistic fashion despite the sometimes dramatic differences in the various stages of emigration. The popular impression that the Cuban-American experience represents a conservative elite tradition does not stand up to close examination. Contemporary stereotypes should not usurp an entire historical tradition. As with all other immigrant groups to the United States, Cubans are a heterogenous group, and generalizations are not always useful.

Migration

During the final third of the nineteenth century, socioeconomic changes and political turbulence in Cuba, together with developments in the United States, gave birth to a Clear Havana (100 percent Cuban tobacco) cigar industry in New York, Key West, and Tampa. This created pressures for emigration from Cuba, a situation that continued until the second decade of the twentieth century.

Changes in the international cigar market during the mid-nineteenth century precipitated Cuban migration to the United States. Until the late 1850s, Cuban cigar exports expanded throughout Europe and the United States. Havana cigars established a solid reputation that seemed unassailable in the open market. Beginning in the 1850s, however, Cuba began to lose export markets. Protectionist pressures in France and Germany led to tariffs that caused an overall decrease of Cuban cigar exports. To compensate, Cuban manufacturers increased exports to the U.S. market on which they became highly dependent.[2]

Cuban cigar exports to the United States increased through the 1880s, but signs of trouble for the island's manufacturers emerged during the U.S. Civil War when tariffs began to rise.[3] Increasing tariffs on cigars and relatively low duties on tobacco leaf enabled entrepreneurs to recreate a genuinely Cuban industry within the borders of the United States.[4]

Many Cubans who arrived in the United States during the Ten Years' War took advantage of this favorable economic situtation. With the outbreak of the insurrection. Cubans emigrated to New York, New Orleans, and Key West. A Spanish cigar entrepreneur, Vicente Martínez Ybor, built a factory in New York, and later in Key West, but he appears to have been the only Havana-based manufacturer to transfer to the United States at this early date.[5] Cubans entering the business in the United States tended to be middle-class, with no substantial experience as cigar manufacturers. Some cigarworkers also became manufacturers by first establishing small storefront operations employing two or three workers. Many of these shops prospered during the 1880s, and several eventually employed 200 and more workers. Using Cuban tobacco leaf and employing Cuban workers, these factories produced the so-called Spanish-style cigars. For the first time, a U.S.-manufactured cigar competed with the Cuban product.

The opposition of U.S. manufacturers to President Chester Arthur's effort in 1884 to enact in Congress a reciprocal trade agreement with Spain illustrates their reliance on the tariff. Tallahassee's *Weekly Floridian* described their reaction: "Cigar makers in New York City have decided to hold a mass meeting to protest the 50 percent reduction on duty on Spanish cigars, as provided by the contemplated treaty with Spain. . . . There is much anxiety in Key West on the subject, as the reduction of the duty would tend to break down the manufacture of cigars, the principal industry in the city and chief source of its prosperity."[6] The reciprocal trade agreement never passed Congress, ensuring the continued growth of the domestic Spanish-style industry. But if the tariffs were not prohibitive to the Cuban industry during the 1870s and 1880s, they became so with the passage of the McKinley Tariff in 1890.[7] Even higher duties gave U.S.-based Clear Havana factories a distinct edge which they maintained until changes in tastes and cigar production techniques after 1915 initiated changes in the industry. A fairly integrated cigar-related labor market emerged that extended from Havana to New York, and workers migrated freely in response to periodic economic fluctuations in local markets.

Besides conditions in international markets, a variety of local social and economic developments in Cuba contributed to dislocations and migration. The Ten Years' War weakened sugar production during the 1870s. Destruction of sugar plantations in Cuba and the growing beet sugar industry in Europe led to a reduction of exports and loss of markets. These troubles were compounded by decreasing sugar prices during the mid-1880s. Cuba fell into depression. Rural workers wandered in search of employment; some became day laborers and others bandits. Still others moved to the cities where they contributed to the growing unemployment problem. Many left the country. Caught in the general economic decline, and affected by the protected and growing cigar industry in Florida and New York, production in Cuban cigar factories declined in the late 1880s. Cuba's general economy plummeted further as a result of the McKinley Tariff in 1890 and the outbreak of the war of independence against Spain in 1895.[8] As a result, during the 1890s emigration from Cuba increased dramatically

Preferential treatment for Spanish immigrant workers in the Havana factories between the late 1880s and early 1900s created additional pressure forcing Cuban workers to migrate. Spaniards owned and managed many of the factories in Cuba and preferred to hire compatriots as employees. Throughout the 1880s, the Cuban emigré press in Florida criticized these discriminatory policies and, in fact, demanded that Florida's factories hire only Cubans in retaliation. During the early 1890s, Cuban vigilantes patroled the docks in Key West to prevent Spaniards from disembarking.[9]

After the establishment of the republic, Spanish immigration to Cuba increased. Once again, Spaniards received preferential employment. Many Cuban emigrés returned home form the United States after independence, but could not find jobs since the managers and foremen in the factories continued to be Spanish.[10] Although Cuban workers demanded equal employment opportunities and one union program declared, "Cuban workers in general should enjoy the same advantages and guarantees enjoyed by foreigners in different industries in the country,"[11] most Cubans who had been cigarmakers in the United States found little opportunity in Havana. Additional thousands of workers left Cuba during the first decade of the century.

Labor strife in the cigar factories also kept workers on the move. Militant anarchist labor organizations appeared in Cuba in the mid-1880s and, after the turn of the century, Marxist-oriented unions protected workers interests.[12] Unions also formed in Cuban communities in Tampa, Key West, and New York. Solidarity was strong. During strikes in one locality workers in the other centers customarily provided economic and moral support.[13] In fact, strikers usually left their homes en masse for one or another of the cigar centers. As one cigarworker in Tampa remembered, "I arrived in Tampa in August, 1912. A strike among cigarworkers in Havana forced me to leave Cuba in search of work elsewhere." He vowed he would return to Cuba within a year, but

he never did.[14] Labor unrest contributed to the highly mobile character of the cigar industry work force.

The penetration of the North American tobacco trust into Cuba during the late 1890s and the early twentieth century was the final factor spurring emigration from the island. The McKinley Tariff had initiated the collapse of cigar exports, a phenomenon aggravated by the independence war. As a result, many large Cuban cigar establishments sold out to North American tobacco interests, which were able to consolidate their position during the U.S. occupation of Cuba. The American Tobacco Company bought up tobacco lands and many cigar and cigarette factories, including the most prominent such as La Corona, Cabañas y Carvajal, Henry Clay, Murias, and La Legitimidad. After an initially rapid expansion between 1902 and 1905, Cuban cigar exports to the United States began a decline from which they never recovered. The Cuban industry failed to compete with the U.S. factories, which were controlled by the same trust. Slowly, the trust transferred production for the U.S. market to Florida, causing Cuban workers to seek work in the United States in record numbers until the early 1910s.[15]

This accelerated migration did not last long in the new century, however. Technological changes in the North American cigar industry, as well as shifts in fundamental market demand for cigars, reduced migratory pressures. After World War I, mechanization revolutionized the U.S. cigar industry. Machine operators replaced the skilled cigarmakers; the traditionally highly regarded workers from Cuba were no longer needed. Moreover, consumer tastes shifted dramatically: cigarettes increasingly displaced cigars. As demand for cigars declined, so too did production and employment. The longstanding North American cigar labor market closed down, and by the 1930s migrations of workers from Cuba had slowed considerably.[16]

These trends in the United States also affected the Cuban industry. Cigar exports from Cuba declined, plunging the industry into crisis and retrenchment. Increased U.S. productivity led to a cheaper cigar, which displaced the Cuban product on the international market. While Cuban cigar exports declined, exports of tobacco leaf used to produce competitive products in the United States increased. At the same time, organized labor in Cuba successfully combated mechanization of the home industry, and cigarmakers on the island continued to work in their traditional manner, albeit for a much restricted domestic market. Indeed, the number of cigar and cigarette workers in Cuba declined by more than half between 1899 and 1944. Formerly a world leader in cigar manufacturing, Cuba was reduced to providing leaf to a highly mechanized and productive North American industry with which it could not compete. The vibrant labor markets for handmade cigars that encompassed Havana, Key West, Tampa, New York, and other cities no longer existed. The traditional workers not only lost jobs in the United States, dramatically altering the nature of Cuban communities there, but lost jobs in Cuba as well.[17]

Migrations from Cuba to the United States between 1865 and 1940, then, reflected the socioeconomic dynamic that converted Cuba from a cigar manufacturing center to a net exporter of tobacco leaf. This process culminated in the obsolescence of hand-rolled cigars for mass markets that slowed the migration of cigar workers to the United States after 1910. The decline in migration was a temporary phenomenon, however. The immediate postwar period brought about a resurgence of Cuban migration to the United States, a subject not yet adequately studied. Cubans traveled to New York and, increasingly, to Miami, as a result of a new set of socioeconomic relationships unconnected to cigar markets, but clearly within the economic framework that tied Cuba to the United States.[18]

Cuban Exile Communities in the United States

Cuban communities emerged during the nineteenth century as a result of both the rise of the U.S. hand-rolled cigar industry and Cuba's economic and political problems. By the 1870s the first integrated communities, with distinct leaders, institutions, and economic traditions, reflecting the class and racial composition of Cuban cities, had appeared in New York, New Orleans, and Key West. Although Cubans arrived and lived in the United States before the Civil War, they probably did not number more than about 1,000 and did not generally reside in distinct communities. Instead, they were scattered primarily in New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, Philadelphia, and New York and were, for the most part, white professionals, businessmen, and students, many of whom were exiles who interacted primarily within a political context.[19] In the mid-1870s an estimated 12,000 Cubans lived in the United States; some 4,500 in New York, 3,000 in New Orleans, 2,000 in Key West, and perhaps another 2,500 in other cities such as Jacksonville, Savannah, Washington, Boston, and Galveston.[20]

In New York a broad cross section of Cuba's urban population took hold. Among those living in New York during the 1870s were members of Havana's *criollo* elite, middle-class entrepreneurs and professionals, and a significant multiracial (white, mulatto, black, Chinese) working class employed in the tobacco factories.[21] After the Ten Years' War in 1878, many middle-class Cubans returned home and more workers arrived, strengthening the community's working-class character. During the 1880s, the Cuban population fluctuated between 2,000 and 3,000, but increased with the outbreak of the war of independence in 1895.[22]

Cuba's political problems and the difficulties in the cigar industry also gave rise to a Cuban community in Key West. Exiles and migrant cigarworkers quickly gave the town a national reputation for its anti-Spanish political agitation and high-quality Havana cigars. While the first cigar factories in Key West belonged to non-Cubans, during the 1880s many Cubans entered the trade and soon dominated it. By 1885 almost 100 Key West cigar factories of various sizes employed some 3,000 workers. At the end of the 1880s, Key West produced some 100 million cigars annually. In 1885, some 5,000 Cubans resided on the isle.

The cigar industry employed the mass of Cubans in Key West. Of employed Cubans fourteen years of age and over in 1880, 79 percent worked in the cigar establishments. Of these, some 18 percent were black and mulatto and 9 percent were women. The remaining 21 percent of working Cubans included unskilled laborers, service workers, artisans, and professionals. The Cuban social structure in Key West included a wide variety of occupations, but it was an overwhelmingly working-class community that relied heavily on the cigar industry.[23]

Until 1886, Key West contained the only important Cuban community in Florida, although a small colony of some 300 Cubans lived in Jacksonville, which also focused on the cigar trade.[24] The second major Cuban center in Florida appeared in Tampa during 1885 when a powerful labor movement in Key West prompted Martínez Ybor to search for an alternate site for his cigar operations. He and Ignacio Haya, a Spanish manufacturer from New York, obtained tracts of land on the town's outskirts where they constructed their factories in 1886. But it was a fire in Key West during the closing days of March that launched the Tampa cigar industry toward becoming the most important cigar center in the United States. The fire destroyed eighteen cigar factories and forced hundreds of homeless Cubans to migrate again in search of work—to Havana, but mostly to Tampa. During its first decade as a manufacturing center, Tampa grew from less than 1,000 inhabitants to almost 20,000, surpassing Key West's population. Factories moved there from Key West, New York, and Philadelphia. By 1900 Tampa had clearly supplanted Key West as the primary producer of Havana cigars in the United States and was home to a vibrant Cuban community.[25]

While the Cuban communities in New Orleans, New York, Key West, and Tampa developed separate identities, leaders, and institutions, they all operated within the context of the cigar industry labor market. Cuban families usually had economic and social ties in more than one community, and connections with Havana were often strong since political disturbances, strikes, and economic cycles produced considerable movement in both directions across the Straits of Florida. Indeed, for many Cubans, Key West and Tampa were mere extensions of Havana.

At the inception of Cuban enclaves in the United States, emigrés were concerned more with developments in Cuba than with the North American society around them.[26] Their daily routines intersected with Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain. Despite the fact that many Cubans arrived in the United States primarily to seek employment, they were influenced by the nationalist ambience that characterized the communities. Throughout the nineteenth century, opponents to Spanish colonialism assumed leadership in Cuban centers. As one activist noted in 1886, "A man that is occupied with the grand task of freeing his nation [cannot] at the same time become involved in questions of another diverse country which require special attention. . . . Our politics here, as long as we struggle for independence," he argued, "should be that of our revolution."[27] Despite the fact that the political activists were in the minority, they usually controlled community organizations and published the newspapers. Accordingly, Cubans who arrived in the communities seeking employment, but without a general political awareness regarding Cuba's colonial situation, often were politicized and enrolled in the independence cause.

Cubans born in the United States were also raised with a similar awareness. Tampa-born writer José Yglesias notes in his autobiographical novel that after the Ten Years' War many veterans moved to Florida where they recounted their experiences and exhorted emigrés to support the idea of Cuba Libre. This inspired his grandfather, who as a child spent many evenings at the Sociedad de Cuba: "The notion that there was an island called Cuba ninety miles from their pebbly shore determined to be an independent nation, that *he* was a Cuban by virtue of his parents and the language he spoke, was a revelation he owed to these men who did not play dominoes but sat on the balcony on the second floor and relived old campaigns and speculated about new ones. He was a Cuban. This sudden knowledge became one with his experience of working in the factory."[28]

In Key West, the most important community institution, Instituto San Carlos, served not only as a mutual aid society, educational facility, and social club, but also as a center of nationalist activity. The Instituto provided moral and financial support to dozens of patriotic organizers who passed through Key West during the final thirty years of the century. When Cubans founded Ybor City, similar nationalist organizations appeared. In New York, El Ateneo Democrático, La Sociedad Republicana de Cuba y Puerto Rico, and the clubs Liga Patriótica, Artesanos de Cuba, La Auxiliadora de Cuba, La Sociedad de Independencia, functioned primarily to promote Cuban independence from Spain during the 1850s through the end of the century.[29]

A more important source of influence in the community was the exile press. The newspapers served broad community interests to be sure, but their primary purpose was to further the cause of Cuban independence. Newspaper titles were a poignant reflection of the emigrés' fundamental concern: *El Eco de Cuba* (1850s), *El Filibustero* (1850s), *El Cubano* (1850s), *La Voz de América* (1860s), *La Independencia* (1870s), *El Republicano* (1870s), *La Voz de la Patria* (1870s), *El Separatista* (1880s), *La República* (1880s), *El Yara* (1880s–1890s), *El Porvenir* (1880s–1890s), *Cuba* (1890s), *Patria* (1890s). These newspapers played a central role in developing and defining nationalist thought and in identifying the communities with these ideas.[30]

So intense was the nationalist sentiment among Cubans in the United States that it dissipated only slowly after the termination of the war with Spain in 1898. Cubans who participated in the struggle and remained abroad continued to identify with their homeland after it had become a republic. The important role of the emigré communities in cultivating nationalist thought and promoting the insurrection assumed legendary proportions as the history of the Cuban insurrection was written. Key West and Tampa became known as the "cradles of Cuban independence," and Cubans from those towns, the progenitors of that tradition. Cubans in Florida were justifiably proud of their history, which they associated more with Cuba than the United States.

Instituto San Carlos continued as the primary community institution in Key West, which gained official recognition in Cuba for its contributions to the independence war. In fact, the Cuban legislature appropriated funds to rebuild the institution when a hurricane destroyed it in 1919. The legislature had earlier approved a monthly stipend for the San Carlos school, which was used to pay its teacher. Furthermore, San Carlos' identity became even more closely linked with Cuban nationality when it occupied its new Cuban-owned building that also served as the Cuban consular office. Travel between Key West and Havana was frequent, and through the 1930s, the Cuban community in Key West maintained its deep sense of *cubanidad*. In Tampa, Cuban organizations also maintained a strong nationalist flavor. The Círculo Cubano and Unión Martí-Maceo, two of the most important community organizations in Ybor City, reflected a similar pride and commitment to a Cuban identity.[31]

From Exiles to Immigrants

When Cuba finally separated from Spain, emigrés in the United States faced the critical decision of whether or not to return to their homeland. Political exiles generally returned and usually found a place within the new republic. The absence of employment opportunities in Cuba, however, meant that most Cubans employed in the cigar industry had little choice but to remain in the United States. Those who stayed, and their descendants, slowly shed their exile identity. The nationalist intensity that had historically molded community identity and values dissipated as Cubans turned from patriotic endeavors to the challenge of carving out a permanent livelihood in their immigrant communities. Along with others who arrived in subsequent years, Cubans in the United States became immersed in what became a Cuban-American experience.

This process of refocusing from an exile to an immigrant identity is evident in the experiences of Tampa and Key West. Many who lived through the pre-1900 experiences remained committed to their nationalist feelings, but the end of the war also removed the factors that had traditionally sustained nationalist fervor. The separatist press ceased to exist, patriot clubs disbanded, and the romanticism associated with the desire for self-rule declined as the political realities of the Cuban republic caused disillusionment.

The veterans of expatriation wrote books and memoirs to recount their experiences and transmit their nationalist feelings to the next generation, but personal experience, not the reminiscenes of the elders, formed identity. By the 1920s the first and second generation of Cubans in Key West found themselves having to lecture a new generation regarding the merits of the *patria*. "To place the fatherland in second position, to repudiate it, forget it . . . is a felony and treason," wrote Raoul Alpízar Poyo, the son and grandson of Key West patriot leaders, in 1920. "It may not be as grand as we would have liked, perhaps its sons have defects as well as virtues, but it is our nation." Alpízar concluded by reminding his fellow Cubans what Jose Martí had declared: "Our wine may be bitter, but it is our wine."[32] Despite their efforts, however, they failed to inculcate the same nationalist intensity into their children.

One prominent Cuban, Juan Pérez Rolo, noted in the late 1920s that financial gain had superseded patriot sentiment in the functioning of the San Carlos Institute. "And in this way the spirit of *cubanidad* declined . . . because the mentors of our people, those who so often with their beliefs infiltrated the hearts of their compatriots with the love of *patria* . . ., no longer exist."[33] José Yglesias tells a poignant story of this process of "de-Cubanization." The central historical figure for Cubans in the United States was the independence leader José Martí. "He was a simple, great man," Yglesias's grandfather had told him often. "Before I started grammar school in Tampa," Yglesias noted, "I used to think . . . that everyone knew about José Martí. [But] Martí's name was not mentioned in junior high or in high school either, and one of the things I learned in shcool was that there were many things you were expected to forget. . . . My father was born in Spain and my mother was wholly of Cuban descent," he added, "but I claimed neither. I was stubbornly intent on being American, a singular view of myself that no one in or outside that anomalous southern community shared."[34]

A WPA report on San Carlos Institute offers another illustration of what Cubans underwent: "The most significant thing about San Carlos at the present is that its students are taught to be good Cuban-Americans—to become Americanized and yet to maintain their cultural identity as Cubans and Spanish-speaking people. They are taught to be proud of their race, language, and culture." But, the report also noted, "San Carlos cannot compete with the public schools in moulding [*sic*] the present generation of Cuban children in Key West. For the public schools are intent upon a program of complete Americanization; their only concern with Cuban culture is to obliterate it entirely."[35]

At the same time that increased interaction with U.S. society weakend the emigré sense of *cubanidad,* socioeconomic realities threatened the viability of the communities and intensified radicalism, which had strong roots in the communities. Cuban centers had evolved in the nineteenth century within an environment of class differences and antagonisms. From the 1870s, when Cubans first entered the Key West cigar factories, until the 1930s when Tampa's hand-rolled cigar industry entered a crisis, a working-class, and often radical, culture associated with the tobacco industry was an inseparable aspect of Cuban identity in the United States. Just as with nationalism, community institutions, newspapers, and activities reflected this cultural and ideological reality. On arriving in Key West during the early 1870s, workers from Havana did not find established labor organizations. They created their own, based on experiences and traditions from home; and once established, they had no need to embrace North American unionism when it finally arrived in Florida after 1880. Workers from Cuba in Florida maintained their own perspectives and looked to their homeland for values and ideas.[36] They embraced anarchism, socialism, and, later, communism, as tools for defending their interests in the evolving industrial communities.[37]

One of the central institutions which promoted this radical identity was the *lectura,* a practice in the cigar factories whereby workers hired individuals to read to them while they labored. As Abelardo Gutiérrez

Díaz, a *lector* in Tampa explained, "We continued in Tampa the system that had accompanied the cigar industry from Cuba. . . . It was a veritable system of education dealing with a variety of subjects, including politics, labor, literature, and international relations."[38] The *lectura* served as one of the important vehicles through which radical thought was disseminated and became associated with the Cuban experience in the United States.

In fact, Cuban radicalism in the United States had transformed nationalism from an initially liberal ideal in the early 1870s to one relevant to a popular audience by the 1890s. The immigrant unions succeeded in organizing the workers in defense of their economic interests and in placing a socioeconomic agenda before the nationalist community. Workers remained nationalist, but they also motivated the political leaders to evolve a popular nationalist ideal that spoke to the social concerns of the workers.[39]

After 1900, with the exodus of the patriot leaders to Cuba, radical activists took the place of the nationalists as Tampa's primary immigrant leaders. "Let me say it right out—" reminisced José Yglesias in 1977, "Ybor City was a radical, trade-union town." So much so, Yglesias insisted, that with the onset of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 "most Latins in Ybor City were *fidelistas*. . . . For the old-timers the embargo was further proof of the barbarity of *americanos*—the 'crackers' with hair on their teeth who once broke up their union meetings and called them 'Cuban niggers.' "[40] Cubans organized to defend their traditional prerogatives and they acted in solidarity with Spanish and Italian radicals, producing a dynamic immigrant community that was in periodic conflict with their Anglo-American neighbors through the 1930s.[41]

While Cubans turned to radical concepts to defend their communities against the ravaging forces of change, they were eventually overwhelmed by developments that undermined the cigar industry and thus the traditional framework of their community. The seeds that eventually destroyed the hand-rolled cigar industry in Tampa gestated in the 1910s, matured in the 1920s, and flowered during the Depression. Changing tastes and mechanization eliminated jobs, forcing tobacco workers to return to Cuba or to find work in environments where social solidarity was of little importance. Furthermore, the educating and unifying roles of the *lectura* were lost in 1931, when the cigar manufacturers abolished the practice despite a bitter strike over the issue.[42] Finally, the economic crisis in tobacco loosened the traditionally close ties between the Cuban center in Tampa and Havana. United States–based unions with conservative ideologies increasingly displaced the radical labor organizations that had traditionally set the agenda for Cuban workers in Florida. The disruption of traditional employment patterns and, thus, processes of ideological socialization, in addition to the inevitable effects of public school education on longstanding value systems, led to a dissipation of the radical culture that had influenced tobacco workers in Key West, New York, and Tampa for a generation.

The end of the nationalist era in 1900 also brought changes that deeply influenced the centers' racial dynamics. Since their foundation, Cuban communities in the United States reflected the multiracial character of Cuban society, which included whites, mulattos, blacks, and an occasional Chinese. While the various races understood the reality of racial differences and the political and socioeconomic implications of being one race or another, they all recognized that Cuba was, in fact, a multiracial society. This would seem self-evident, except that earlier in the century many white Cubans interpreted *cubanidad* to be a white phenomenon. As far as they were concerned, being Cuban meant participating in a Hispano-Cuban cultural tradition. *Criollo* nationalism was deeply racist, highly exclusive, and did not easily accommodate the island's mixed racial character. In fact, one dimension of the *criollos'* opposition to the slave trade and encouragment of Spanish immigration in the 1830s and 1840s was their fear of black influence, which threatened to undermine their interpretation of Cuban culture.[43]

In time, Cubans accepted the inclusion of nonwhites and non-Europeans in notions of *cubanidad*. Cuban communities in the United States, and particularly Florida, were in the Vanguard of accepting and promoting a multiracial version of *cubanidad*. The emigré centers' guiding ideologies, in fact, required the building of unified communities. The defeat of the Spanish could never be accomplished without the support of an overwhelming number of the island's inhabitants. This was recognized by Cubans in New York during the mid-1860s, who called on slaves and mulattos to join in the creation of the Cuban nation-state. Two decades later, José Martí called on compatriots of all races to build a nation devoid of harmful distinctions. These ideas persuaded Cubans in the United States that they were all Cuban, regardless of race.

This process was not, of course, exclusive to the Cuban communities in the United States. A similar process was occurring in Cuba. The relatively small size of the emigré communities, engulfed as they were by North Americans and other various ethnic groups, acted to highlight their *cubanidad*, despite racial differences. Nationalist solidarity cut across racial lines in the Cuban centers.[44]

Racial attitudes of Cubans in the United States, particularly in Florida, appear to have changed after 1900. The acceptance of a multiracial identity in theory and in practice before 1900 gave way to a dichotomized racial identity, as Cuban whites and blacks adhered to the institutionalized racism of the U.S. South. While racism and discrimination existed in the communities between 1870 and the end of the century, formal and required separation between the races did not. Black Cubans did establish their own organizations, but, for the most part, the communities were integrated.[45] With the advent of the South's Jim Crow laws toward the end of the century, however, white Cubans went along with the new racial restrictions. After independence and the dissolution of the traditional patriot organizations, new clubs formed and from their inception allowed only white Cubans to join.

The Sociedad Cuba in Key West and the Círculo Cubano in Tampa both opened its doors only to whites. Black Cubans in Tampa established the Unión Martí-Maceo as the central institution of their group and slowly they became detached from the larger white emigré community. Moreover, as black Cubans increasingly joined U.S.-based unions, they faced discrimination and marginalization, which they had not faced in the immigrant unions. Unwilling to lose their identity within the North American black community and unable to share fully in the life of the larger white Cuban community, Afro-Cubans in Tampa faced special problems of involvement and belonging in the United States. The broader significance, of course, was that the Cuban community and its identity became fragmented. The dynamics of race changed as Cubans sought to accomodate to a new social reality.[46]

The change in Cuba's political status after 1898 also altered the internal dynamics of the Cuban centers in the United States. Issues of local origin replaced concerns for the island. Emigré strategies, individual and collective, began to reflect conditions in the local communities. Indeed, children raised in a different environment identified more with the United States than Cuba, from which emerged a new Cuban-American identity.

Conclusion

This brief interpretative synthesis of Cubans in the United States between 1865 and 1940 suggests the existence of a dynamic exile and immigrant experience prior to 1959. Historical research on the formation and evolution of Cuban communities during this period is still in its formative stage, and future research will no doubt modify many of the generalizations offered in this essay. New perspectives will emerge as the histories of the individual communities come to light. Nevertheless, the current state of research makes it abundantly clear that the tendency to view the Cuban-American experience as solely a post-1959 phenomenon is a distortion of history and a promotion of an inaccurate view of the experience of Cubans in the United States.

NOTES

I would like to thank Louis A. Pérez, Jr., and an anonymous reader for their comments and criticisms.

1. See Rafael J. Prohias and Lourdes Casal, *The Cuban Minority in the U.S.: Preliminary Report on Need Identification and Program Evaluation* (Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University, 1973); Andrés R. Hernández, ed., *The Cuban Minority in the U.S.: Final Report on Need Identification and Program Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: Cuban National Plannning Council, 1974); and Lourdes Casal and Andrés Hernández, "Cubans in the U.S.: A Survey of the Literature," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 5 (July 1975), 25–59. Useful overviews that give little or only marginal treatment to the historical context include Antonio Jorge and Raul Moncarz, "Cubans in South Florida: A Social Science Approach," *Metas* 1 (Fall 1980), 37–87; Silvia Pedraza-Bailey, "Cuba's Exiles: Portrait of a Refugee Migration," *International Migration Review* 19 (Spring 1985), 4–34. Two recent full-length studies that compare Cubans and Mexicans in the United States also do not consider the Cuban historical experience: Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985); and Silvia Pedraza-Bailey, *Political and Economic Migrants in America: Cubans and Mexicans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985). The most current bibliography on Cuban Americans, which also excludes the historical dimension, is Lyn MacCorkle, *Cubans in the United States: A Bibliography for Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, 1960–1983* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1984).

2. Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860–1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 76–77. For general information on the United States and Cuban cigar industries, see Willis N. Baer, *The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry in the United States* (Lancaster, Pa., 1933); and José Rivero Muñiz, *Tabaco: su historia en Cuba,* 2 vols. (Havana, 1941–1965).

3. Baer, *The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry,* pp. 106–07.

4. Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery,* 18–21; Baer, *The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry,* pp. 106–07.

5. For background information of Martínez Ybor, see "Don Vicente Martínez Ybor. The Man and His Empire: Development of the Clear Havana Industry in Cuba and Florida in the Nineteenth Century," Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1977.

6. *Weekly Floridian* (Tallahassee), December 9, 16, 1884; January 13 and February 3, 1885. See also Tom Terrill, *The Tariff, Politics and American Foreign Policy* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), pp. 72, 85.

7. Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery,* p. 23.

8. Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba Between Empires, 1878–1902* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), chap. 1.

9. Gerald E. Poyo, *"With All, and for the Good of All": The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1898* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1989), pp. 106–09.

10. José Rivero Muñiz, "La primera huelga general obrera en Cuba republicana," *Islas* (May–August 1961).

11. Stubbs, *Cuba on the Periphery,* p. 111.

12. Ibid., pp. 97–123; José Antonio Portuondo, *"La Aurora" y los comienzos de la prensa y de la organización obrera en Cuba* (Havana: Imprenta Nacional de Cuba, 1961); Aleida Plasencia, ed., *Enrique Roig de San Martin: Artículos publicados en el periódico El Productor* (Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura, 1967); José Rivero Muñiz, *El movimiento obrero durante la primera intervención* (Santa Clara: Universidad de Las Villas, 1961); *El movimiento laboral cubano durante el periodo 1906–1911* (Santa Clara: Universidad de las Villas, 1962); and *El primer partido socialista* (Santa Clara: Universidad de Las Villas, 1962).

13. Gerald E. Poyo, "The Impact of Immigration from Cuba on Labor Organizing in Florida," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 5 (Spring 1986), 46–63; and "The Anarchist Challenge to the Cuban Independence Movement," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 15 (Winter 1985), 29–42.

14. Quoted in Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "Ybor City Remembered," *Tampa Bay History* 7 (Fall/Winter 1985), 170.

15. Leland H. Jenks, *Our Cuban Colony* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), pp. 157–58; Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery,* pp. 30–32.

16. Baer, *The Economic Development of the Cigar Industry,* 145–274; W. D. Evans, *Mechanization and Productivity of Labor in the Cigar Manufacturing Industry,* U.S. Department of Labor, Bulletin 660 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1939).

17. Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery,* pp. 28–42; Martin Duarte Hurtado, *La máquina torcedora de tabaco y las luchas en torno a su implantación en Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Ciencias Sociales, 1973); José E. Perdomo and Jorge J. Posse, *Mecanización de la industria tabaquera* (Havana, 1945).

18. See demographic data in Lisandro Pérez, "The Rise and Decline of the Cuban Community of Ybor City, Florida, 1886–1930," manuscript, 1983 (in author's possession), table 1.

19. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1975), 1:117–18.

20. These estimates are based on the following sources: *El Pueblo* (New York), August 9, 1876; "Expediente por nuestro consúl en New Orleans," *Boletín del Archivo Nacional,* 1920, p. 66; Aleida Plasencia, ed., *Bibliografía de la Guerra de los Diez Años* (Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, 1968), pp. 186–231; National Archives Microfilm Publications, "Schedules of the Federal Population Census of 1870," Monroe County, Fla. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States,* 1:117–18; Arturo Cuyas, *Estudio sobre la inmigración en los Estados Unidos* (New York: Thompson Y Moreau, 1881), p. 15; Pérez, "The Rise and Decline of the Cuban Community in Ybor City," table 3.

21. "Libro índice de cubanos residentes en Nueva York—Documentos procedentes de la Junta Revolucionaria de New York, 1868–1878," Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Donativos y Remisiones, leg. 40, no. 54. See Poyo, *"With All, and for the Good of All,"* 21–51. Little is known about the community in New Orleans.

22. Lisandro Pérez, "The Cuban Community of New York in the Nineteenth Century," Manuscript, 1985 (in author's possession), table 2; and Gerald E. Poyo, "Cuban Communities in the United States: Toward an Overview of the 19th Century Experience," in *Cubans in the United States,* ed. Miren Uriarte-Gastón and Jorge Cañas Martínez (Boston: Center for the Study of the Cuban Community, May 1984), pp. 47–50.

23. Poyo, *"With All, and for the Good of All,"* pp. 70–94; L. Glenn Westfall, *Key West: Cigar City USA* (Key West, Fla.: Historic Key West Preservation Board, 1984).

24. For information Jacksonville's Cubans, see Gustavo J. Godoy, "José Alejandro Huau: A Cuban Patriot in Jacksonville Politics," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 54 (October 1975), 196–206.

25. George Sánchez, "West Tampa—Pioneer," *Literary Florida,* April 1948, 47–49; José Rivero Muñiz, "Los cubanos en Tampa," *Revista Bimestre Cubana* 74 (January–June 1958), 5–140; and "Tampa at the Close of the Nineteenth Century," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 49 (April 1963), 332–42; Durward Long, "The Historical Beginnings of Ybor City and Modern Tampa," ibid., 45 (July 1966), 31–44; Joan M. Steffy, "The Cuban Immigrants of Tampa, Florida," M.A. thesis, University of South Florida, 1975; Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "Cubans in Tampa: From Exiles to Immigrants, 1892–1901," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 57 (October 1978), 129–40; L. Glenn Westfall, "Don Vicente Martínez Ybor: The Man and His Empire: Development of the Clear Havana Industry in Cuba and Florida in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Immigrant World of Ybor City. Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885–1985,* ed. Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

26. The early studies of the Cuban emigré communities focused almost exclusively on their nationalist character. See Juan J. E. Casasus, *La emigración cubana y la independencia de la patria* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1953); Gerardo Castellanos García, *Motivos de Cayo Hueso* (Havana: Ucar, García y Cia, 1935); Manuel Deulofeu Lleonart, *Heroes del destierro. La emigración. Notas históricas* (Cienfuegos, 1904); Rauol Alpízar Poyo, *Cayo Hueso y José Dolores Poyo: Dos símbolos patrios* (Havana, 1947); Rivero Muñiz, "Los cubanos en Tampa." See also Gerald E. Poyo, "Cuban Revolutionaries and Monroe County Reconstruction Politics," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (April 1977), 407–22; "Key West and the Cuban Ten Years' War," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 57 (April 1979), 289–307; "Cuban Patriots in Key West, 1878–1886: Guardians of the Separatist Ideal," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 61 (July 1982), 20–36; *"With All, and for the Good of All";* and "Tampa Cigarworkers and the Struggle for Cuban Independence," *Tampa Bay History* 7 (Fall/Winter 1985), 94–105.

27. *El Yara* (Key West), February 6, 1885.

28. José Yglesias, *The Truth About Them* (New York: World Publishing, 1971), pp. 32–33.

29. For information regarding specific organizations, see Poyo, *"With All, and for the Good of All."*

30. For information on the emigré press, see ibid.; and Teresita Batista Villarreal, Josefina García Carranza, and Miguelina Ponte, eds., *Catálogo de publicaciones periódicas de los siglos XVIII y XIX* (Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí), 1965.

31. For information on the community organizations, especially after the turn of the century, see "Instituto San Carlos," and "Sociedad Cuba, Inc." in Key West Writers Program papers, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida; and "Círculo Cubano," and "Unión Martí-Maceo," Tampa writers Program papers, Special Collections, University of South Florida; see also Gary R. Mormino and George Pozzetta, "The Cradle of Mutual Aid: Immigrant Cooperative Societies in Ybor City," *Tampa Bay History* 7 (Fall/Winter 1985), 36–58.

32. Raoul Alpízar Poyo, "La patria," in *Cuba: Organo Anunciador de la Inauguración de la SOCIEDAD CUBA* 1 (October 1920).

33. Juan Pérez Rolo, *Mis recuerdos* (Key West, 1928), 49.

34. Yglesias, *The Truth About Them,* pp. 40, 60.

35. "Instituto San Carlos," Key West WPA papers, Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

36. For material on labor activism among Cubans, see Poyo, "The Impact of Cuban Spanish Workers on Labor Organizing in Florida, 1870–1900," pp. 46–63; Durward Long,

"La Resistencia: Tampa's Immigrant Labor Union," *Labor History* 6 (Fall 1965), 193–214; "Labor Relations in the Tampa Cigar Industry, 1885–1911," *Labor History* 8 (Fall 1971), 551–59; "The Open-Closed Shop Battle in Tampa's Cigar Industry, 1919–21," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 47 (October 1968), 101–21; George E. Pozzetta, "Immigrants and Radicals in Tampa, Florida," ibid., 57 (January 1979), 337–48; Gary R. Mormino, "Tampa and the New Urban South: The Weight Strike of 1899," ibid., 60 (January 1982), 337–56; George E. Pozzetta, "Italians and the Tampa General Strike of 1910," in *Pane e Lavoro: The Italian American Working Class,* ed. George E. Pozzetta (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1980); and "Alerta Tabaqueros! Tampa's Striking Cigar Workers," *Tampa Bay History* (Fall/Winter 1981), 19–30. See also Mormino and Pozzetta, "Italians and the Radical Culture: From Contadini to Compañeros," in their *The Immigrant World of Ybor City,* pp. 143–174.

37. For information on Cuban labor activism in Florida between 1870 and 1900, see Gerald E. Poyo, "The Impact of Cuban and Spanish Workers on Labor Organizing in Florida, 1870–1900," and "The Anarchist Challenge to the Cuban Independence Movement."

38. Louis A. Pérez, Jr. "Reminiscences of a *Lector:* Cuban Cigar Workers in Tampa," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 53 (April 1975), 443–49.

39. See Gerald E. Poyo, "Evolution of Cuban Separatist Thought in the Emigré Communities of the United States, 1848–1895," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 66 (August 1986), 485–508; and "José Martí: Architect of Social Unity in the Emigré Communities of the United States," in *José Martí: Revolutionary Democrat,* ed. Christopher Abel and Nissa Torrents (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1986), pp. 16–31.

40. José Yglesias, "The Radical Latino Island in the Deep South," *Tampa Bay History* 7 (Fall/Winter 1985), 166.

41. See Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City;* and Robert P. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes in the New Urban South: Tampa, 1882–1936* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

42. Mormino and Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City,* p. 131.

43. See Gordon K. Lewis, *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in Its Ideological Aspects, 1492–1900* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983), 286–94. See also José A. Fernandez de Castro, ed., *Medio siglo de historia colonial de Cuba, 1823–1879* (Havana: Ricardo Veloso, 1923), p. 94.

44. This ideology was best expressed by José Martí. See John Kirk, *José Martí: Mentor of the Cuban Nation* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1983), pp. 107–12.

45. For information on Cubans of color in the 1870s–1890s, see Poyo, *"With All, and for the Good of All,"* pp. 70–94.

46. See Susan D. Greenbaum, "Afro-Cubans in Exile: Tampa, Florida, 1886–1984," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 15 (Winter 1985), 77–93; and *Afro-Cubans in Ybor City: A Centennial History* (Tampa: University of South Florida, 1986).

ADA FERRER

Social Aspects of Cuban Nationalism: Race, Slavery, and the Guerra Chiquita, 1879–1880

ABSTRACT

This article examines the popular character of the Guerra Chiquita of 1879–1880, focusing on various forms of participation among Afro-Cubans and slaves in particular. Reactions to that participation among Spanish and Cuban opponents of the insurrection and among the white separatist leadership are discussed. It argues that the significant presence of people of color as leaders and supporters of the insurgency, along with the withdrawal of support from some elite white sectors involved in the insurrection of 1868–1878, signals the beginning of a transformation in the Cuban nationalist struggle from a political movement to a broader movement for social change.

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina el carácter popular de la Guerra Chiquita en 1879–1880, enfocándose en un análisis de las distintas formas de participación entre afrocubanos, y entre esclavos en particular. Se discuten las reacciones al papel de los afrocubanos entre españoles y cubanos blancos opuestos a la insurgencia y entre la dirigencia blanca independentista. Se considera que la mayor presencia de personas de color como líderes, combatientes y simpatizantes de la insurrección del 79, así como el retraimiento de algunos sectores blancos y elites que habían apoyado a la del 1868–1878, señala el principio de una transformación en la lucha nacionalista cubana, que de un movimiento político se convirtío en un movimiento social en busca de profundos cambios sociales.

I

On February 10, 1878, after ten years of armed insurrection in pursuit of independence and abolition, Cubans signed a peace treaty that granted them neither of their objectives. The insurrection had failed, and now Spanish and Cuban liberals hoped that the Pact of Zanjón would bring political peace and economic recovery to the island. A year and a half after the signing of the treaty, however, a second separatist insurrection