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Racism: “Any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life.”

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

As more and more people discover *Islas*, their reaction to our articles on race and race relation problems, particularly in Cuba, range from amazement to complete disbelief. Older African Americans who remember Fidel Castro’s initial rise to power, his visits to Harlem, and his support of South Africa initially refuse to accept that Cuba could have succumbed to this malady. Other African Americans express sadness that yet another branch of their black family is living through a night-

marish experience.

Cubans’ reactions to *Islas* have been equally mixed. Some white Cubans living here in the United States (U.S.) politely comment that we are mistaken. They point out, that “we have no riots in the streets, no lynchings, nor white supremacist groups.” They often reiterate José Martí’s phrase “.... to be Cuban is to be more than White, more than Mulatto, more than Black.” Further, they go on to explain that Cubans have no white and black race issues.

In contrast, most of the Afro-Cubans, raised in Cuba but now living in the U.S., that we spoke with speak of a different reality. A reality.....

- where they are not free to discuss race without fear of reprisal or being ostracized.
- where they have less access to well paying employment and adequate housing as compared to their white neighbors, friends, or family members.
- where, without access to currency, they are not able to obtain adequate food and other basic necessities.

- that excludes blacks from Cuba's political, cultural, and economic powers.
- that places more value on white complexions, narrow noses, straight hair, and "fine lines" as opposed to the typical features of African descendants.

These are the experiences that Afro Cubans have relayed to us. These are the experiences that we, the founders of *Islas*, understand all too well. So, what is the real Cuba? Where does reality begin and illusion end? Does racism exist in Cuba?

The article, *Points of View of the New Black*, included in this issue of *Islas* was written by Gustavo Urrutia, an Afro-Cuban journalist, in 1935. In this article, Urrutia talks about being black in Cuba and the rise of the "New Black." Some of the issues he discussed in 1935 are still relevant today, as evident in his and other articles that discuss the harsh reality of Afro-Cuban living conditions with respect to employment, the penal system, housing, politics, and the overall culture in present day Cuba. Additionally, both black and white Cuban writers, who contributed articles to our journal, have pointed out the same issues. Still, as presented in past issues of *Islas*, other authors question whether racism exists or denies that it is a valid topic for discussion.

So, with regard to the question, does racism exist in Cuba? Read this issue of *Islas* and let us know what you think. If you possess a different reality, please share your views of this reality with us. We welcome a broad spectrum of perspectives on the topics discussed in each issue of *Islas*.

Does racism exist in Cuba? I guess you will have to be the judge.

*"You're not to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality.
Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it or says it."*

Malcolm X
Black American Nationalist

Your assistance is requested.

In an upcoming publication we will be highlighting the accomplishments of people of African descent. Therefore we humbly request assistance from our readers. Please send us the name and brief description of a noteworthy individual who you believe should be recognized. Specifically, we are looking for inventors, scientists that have made a significant contribution, humanitarian and civil rights leaders, composers, musicians, writers and politicians. This information can be emailed to jenkinsdl@afrocuban.us