

# Cuba, the Face of Power

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**T**owards the end of last April, a member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), Juan Carlos Robinson Agramonte was being removed from his position, accused of “arrogance, dishonesty and abuse of power” by Cuban authorities. Robinson, a black man, would have been removed from his position during the brink of a structural reorganization of the PCC. Stephen Gibbs, the Havana correspondent for the BBC, reports that this reorganization of the PCC “includes the reestablishment of the Secretariat which was an entity of the Soviet era dissolved in 1991, and which now will be in charge of overseeing the fulfillment of party oriented politics in the entire country as well as the eradication of disorderliness.”

Soon afterwards, in June of this year, the black ex-leader was sentenced to 12 years in prison for “the continued traffic of influences of character”<sup>1</sup>. As recently published by the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*, “for the first time since 1965 when it was founded, the Cuban Communist Party has sentenced a member of their party to 12 years in prison.”

Amongst other issues and putting two and two together, the fall and subsequent imprisonment of Robinson Agramonte resurrects the issue of the black presence, or lack thereof, in high government positions. While

the black and mixed population of the Island probably nears or already surpasses 50% of the total population, their representation in positions of power is scarce; barely visible if one takes that percentage into account.

The numbers speak for themselves. Focused on the highest Cuban government organizations (the PCC Political Bureau, the Minister Council, the provincial governments), the numbers indicate minimal participation of the black and mixed population.

Currently, the Cuban Communist Party’s Political Bureau is comprised of 21 members, of which only 4 are black or of mixed race, a level of representation of less than 20%. Frankly speaking, this situation becomes scandalously worse in the Council of Ministers, in which only 3 out of 39 members are not white, a miniscule 8% black or mixed-race presence in this governmental organization.

Meanwhile, the provincial capitals are also mostly in the hands of white leaders. The Entities of Provincial Governments have 15 presidents of the so called “Provincial Assemblies of Popular Power,” of which only 2 are black (13% of the total). One must also mention here the nonexistent feminine presence, because there is not a single woman present within the 15 provincial presidents.



*Members of the Council of Ministers*



*Presidents of the provincial governments*

All of this is happening in a country where the black and mixed population ceased to be a minority a very long time ago and where the government has taken pride in say-

ing that they have a direct and concluding role in the eradication of racial and gender discrimination.

**POSTSCRIPT:**

The reader must take into account that the racial phenotypes accepted in Cuba significantly differ from those in countries like United States. In contrast to the white American (Anglo or Caucasian), the “white Cuban” comes from a more heterogeneous racial background, which is the Hispanic or Spanish, mixed in large part with Mediterranean, Arab, and even Gypsy roots. A white Cuban, by mixture, can be a descendant of Syrian or Lebanese immigrants who settled on the Island during the previous century. One must add to this phenomenon, the mixture between whites of European origin and black Africans and their descendants, which is sometimes too intricate to seem sufficiently clear after several generations, and which has been in force since the Colonial period.

**NOTE:**

1- In the context of the “revolutionary neo-language” officially used in Cuba, “traffic of influences” could be defined as corruption, abuse of power, nepotism, etc.