



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

In my hands I hold a worn out issue of *ISLAS*; that is the condition in which publications we get from abroad end up. This is the added value that those materials that circulate among us in Cuba attain, almost miraculously, thanks to the contributions of our generous colleagues. We read the journal with an eagerness that results from our sense of “discovery” and urgency upon knowing that others are looking out for us. Perhaps I should make myself clear: only on the rarest of occasions are Cubans –from the physical and not literary island– allowed to purchase computers or have Internet service. Thus, it is practically impossible to access *ISLAS*’ website. Similarly, seldom can we purchase foreign publications; their prices –in foreign currency– are generally more than our resources can bear.

Whether or not we agree with the format and editorial perspective of the journal –which is every reader’s prerogative– the fact that there is a publication on Afro-Cuban issues and, that it unambiguously deals with race issues, is absolutely outstanding and should be of interest to all Cubans, wherever we are, without distinction to ethnicity, economics, politics or anything else.

The multiplicity of perspectives that I have seen in *ISLAS*, expressed, as they are –within the variety of disciplines from which their analyses are offered, in the ideological heterogeneity of its contributors and in the fact they are island Cubans or Cubans living abroad, and even African Americans and Afro-Europeans (if don’t know if some are from yet other places)– is one of the reasons the journal has already earned its merit. *ISLAS* is of a great instrumental value to those of us who insist upon making perfectly clear that our nation, through its plural ethnic founding and capacity for incorporation and synthesis, is more prone to plurality than to forced homogenization and dichotomous polarization, both characteristics the continue to be purposefully imposed as the narrative of Cubanness by those in the power and economic elite.

To those of us who are interested in the subject, *ISLAS* refers us to the lamentably silenced Dr. Walterio Carbonel and the text of his inclusive reading of Cuban history, which continues to be denied to us despite its recent republication, because only certain people have access to it. We are also presented with Dr. Esteban Morales –whose book on the subject of race, which was presented at the latest Feria del Libro de La Habana [National Book Fair] (2007), is still not available at libraries–, and to the young historians Manuel Cuesta Morúa and Leonardo Calvo, who present an updated reading of racial issues among Cubans. Similarly, this issue of *ISLAS* offers us a piece by Professor Lucas



Letters to the Editor

Garve, whose privileging of national identity over specific ethnic elements is reminiscent of the often-cited notion of the “ethos-nation.”

This is not about being in agreement. What is important here is that we express ourselves with respect, and that we learn from each other—all of us who without reservation make up what has come to be known as the “Cuban nation.” Building bridges amongst its different components, regardless of their distinctive ethnic origins, is no doubt a positive and essential thing, particularly at this specific historical juncture. We should remember that Cuba’s isolation is not solely due to the fact it is an island. External and internal embargos and blockades that affect all aspects of life also do their part. May it be God’s will—who or whatever He is—and the continued desire of Eleggua that ISLAS become a veritable archipelago for the unification of absolutely all Cubans, so that we can engage with each other both through our similarities as well as our differences. This interaction should be made available to all African descendants, anywhere, and, of course, to our African-American brethren.

A reader who does not reject her blackness or her Cubanness, and who cannot, for obvious and lamentable reasons, put her name to this letter, as would have been her wish.

Havana, Thursday, July 26, 2007.