

Dear Editor:

It was with great pleasure that I read the fourteenth issue of *ISLAS*. As always, your issues balance journalistic, scholarly, and personal ruminations on the concerns that face Cubans of African descent. This mixture gives me, and I am sure the rest of your readers, a dynamic understanding of Afro-Cuban politics that touches both the heart and mind. Issue 14 highlighted what I see as the most important part of your journal's mission statement: the promotion of public discussion from "individuals of African descent from throughout the world." The series of letters, essays and articles published around Dr. Darsi Ferrer's unlawful imprisonment gave this injustice a hemispheric and global scope. I was particularly happy to see in print "Acting on our conscious: A Declaration of African-American Support For The Civil Rights Struggle in Cuba." This letter brought home for me the intertwined concerns that blacks in America have with blacks in Cuba, the Caribbean and the rest of the Americas. Anti-black racism continues in societies despite the declarations of a 'post-race' present. That African-American civil rights leaders, scholars and professionals would write such a declaration of support suggests that we still need to bring awareness to the persistent fact of anti-black racism in the Americas and the Caribbean.

I want to thank you and your staff for continuing to raise awareness of Afro-Cuban concerns. I also want to thank you for letting your readers gain glimpses into Afro-Cuban ways of life (exemplified in your articles about Afro-Cuban hip-hop culture), which is just as important. The commonalities many young people share through hip-hop present one of the best ways to enlighten the next generation of young diasporic blacks to the issues facing Afro-Cubans.

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## Translating for Social Change

In the United States and across the world, many documents, television shows, and movies are being translated all the time, to reach a more global audience. Two of the most translated languages are English and Spanish. However, translation is more than simply finding words with similar syntax. It is about capturing the original meaning and conveying that *full meaning* in the translated language. This is even more important when the source text is about social change in the midst of political struggle.

This semester, 17 Spanish students at Carnegie Mellon had the opportunity to translate for *ISLAS*, a publication devoted to raising awareness about racism in Cuba, which the government fails to recognize. We worked on translating four articles about Orlando Zapata Tamayo, an extraordinary individual who was a political prisoner who died tragically after an 86-day hunger strike protesting on behalf of human rights in Cuba.

While the topic alone was meaningful, translating for a cause impacted us, too. Danielle Rosenfeld, a Business and Spanish major, said: "It was great to apply all we have learned to an actual project." Dannel Jurado, originally from Peru, also had a special connection: "because we were actually making an issue known to a different demographic, not only to the people who experience it in Cuba, but also to friends, family, and relatives who otherwise might not have access to this information." Others felt fortunate to be part of a real translation project that makes a difference: "What I really like about *ISLAS* is that it deals with a real issue. Ours was not just an assignment with no meaning, but something more tangible," said Courtney Sutter, a Linguistics and Writing major.

Others shared their thoughts about having Juan Antonio Alvarado, the editor, present. Carolyn Johnson, a Civil Engineering and Spanish major, said: "It was beneficial to have Juan actually here with us, to help us see what he expected from our translations." Damian Valdés, a Business major, explained: "Not only could we learn from what he wanted, but we were able to see what he had done in the past. This was particularly helpful," he said. Karalyn Baca, a Computer Science major, explained: "When I was translating my part, I actually had to look up a story on Cuban history to understand the meaning, which helped me to connect how past events affect current culture in Cuba."

Experiences like these transform students from outsiders studying Latin America to quasi-anthropologists and historians who want to contribute to another society. It is an experience we will never forget. As many of us graduate, and move on to the next stages our lives, we will become conscious citizens and maybe even political activists for social change. This change is not only part of Cuban society, but also within the workings of a translation assignment.

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