

The CIR in 2011

The following report prepared by the *Citizens' Committee for Racial Integration* (CIR) is a brief recounting of its activities this year for the readership of the journal *ISLAS*, during which time we celebrated our third anniversary. We have contextualized the initiatives and tasks it carried out essentially to broaden our sphere of action, and strengthen the different forums where exchanges about the issue of race can take place, as well as those linked to other projects.

The CIR has been extending itself to provinces and towns, especially those with a large black population, such as the provinces of Holguín (in the municipality of Antilla), Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo, where there are now groups that have begun to work towards the expansion of our project.

One basic goal is to forge an identifying and civic identity, cultural and civic consciousness which can serve as a base for active citizenship—reviving them wherever necessary and strengthening them where they already exist. Such work has already made headway in Havana. For example, a pilot project just beginning in the municipality of Old Havana is seeking to reconstruct citizens' civic identity and sense of citizenship from a position of marginality. We are working with people of color who for a variety of reasons—particularly socio-cultural—have been in prison or have repeated problems with the law. We believe that the quality of a person's citizenship depends on recovering a sense of citizenship

from a position of marginality. Through this work we connect with the *Nuevo País* [New Country] platform, a political proposal focused on the value and role of citizens.

Another of the CIR's primary actions has to do with the *Citizens' Observatory Against Discrimination* (OCD), which seeks to document, denounce and solve cases of discrimination of all sorts—not just racial. With its own headquarters for dealing with these cases, the OCD is establishing an important profile in a society with a well-defined tendency to commit injustices against its citizens.

Producciones Palenques [Palenque Productions] (PdPa) is another initiative that has taken off in 2011. As it attempts to complete the creating of a very small technology park, PdPa has produced its first DVD, which contains the most important moments at the *First Forum on Race and Cubanness* (2010). It is also co-producing a documentary on the issue of race with young rap artists, and was begun through the initiative of Dr. Darsi Ferrer Ramírez.

The CIR has also begun its own project: a socio-graphic map of racism. An experimental, preliminary article has been sent to the current issue of the journal *ISLAS*. The map attempts to cover racism in real time and through different communities, towns, and provinces. Structural racism is primarily found in the farthest and most traditional communities. Generally, the basic focus of the race issue centers on sociology, large ur-

ban centers, theoretical cultural and anthropological studies, and political-institutional discussions with a focus on legal matters. The structural nature of racism in Cuba rarely focuses on snapshots of communities with traditional societies, where racial differences and quite a few cases of segregation bear the mark of time and being hidden. This map will allow us to capture even specific regional differences in the way racism is manifested. This socio-cultural action took place in Batabanó.

We continue to work in our traditional sites of exchange. Due to the International Year for African Descendants, the CIR revealed its 2011 Agenda. This 2011 includes Debate Workshops (every two weeks), a systematic distribution of information about our institution to citizens, presentations of different issues of *ISLAS*, and the Call for Papers for the second Race and Cubanness Forum, slated for November. Further, even civic actions such as the citizen demand that the monument to José Miguel Gómez, the Cuban president implicated in the massacre of blacks in 1912, be removed reflect this agenda.

With *Nuevo País*, the CIR also announced the Tolerancia Plus Awards for 2011. We are still strengthening our permanent exchange with other groups. In addition to *Nuevo País*, there is now our work with the *Club de Escritores de Cuba* [Cuban Writers' Club]. CIR headquarters is the primary place where these organizational activities and events take place. We also work with the *Progressive Arc Party*, and have signed a work agreement with the *Cuban National Liberal Party* to offer conferences and workshops at its locale. We have initiated an exchange relationship with the *Observatorio de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales*

y *Transgéneros* [Observatory for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgendered people] (LGBT), an independent organization with an increasing and important profile within the anti-discrimination movement in Cuba.

The CIR maintains avenues of fluid communication with other groups that fight against racism, such as the *Cofradía de la Negritud* [Black Brotherhood] and the *Fundación Afrocubana Independiente* [Independent Afro-Cuban Foundation]. We also attend debates and discussions that official institutions organize concerning the problem of race. For the CIR to socially and intellectually intervene is something it tries to sustain wherever and whenever possible.

This year, we have gained international recognition. We began to have contact and exchanges with the United Nations' *Comité contra la Discriminación Racial* [Committee Against Racial Discrimination] (CERD), and we were invited to participate in the *First World Congress for African Descendants* in Honduras, although we were not able to attend.

The *Citizens' Committee for Racial Integration* has thus consolidated this year its presence and credibility not only as a high-profile, anti-racist organization, but also as one of our civil society's essential organizations. Nonetheless, we must work with greater determination and intelligence on our basic weaknesses: citizen involvement and the way in which we spread our message in a structurally racist society constructed upon a basic ethnic fear that empowers and nurtures prejudices.

Citizens' Committee for
Racial Integration