

Democracy: A Foundation Against Racial Discrimination

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Cuba's past and recent history has been infected by racial prejudice. The existence on the island of a colonial-slave system for many years has managed to corrupt Cuban society with racism and other forms of discrimination.

Racism is a form of social discrimination that includes any type of exclusion, restriction and limitation of the acknowledgment of all people to equality on the basis of a connection between their genetic characteristics and their intellectual abilities, social origins, obvious personality traits, culture, or other evidence.

The structural racism that exists in today's Cuban, in this era of dilapidated revolution, comes about when governmental policies encourage institutions to practice it, which officially turns prejudice into an extended ill. It turns political, cultural, economic and social institutions into mechanisms that perpetuate a discrimination that distinguishes differences among people due to their skin color. This helps make permanent the inequality that exists among Cuban citizens with different phenotypes.

Even if discrimination essentially results in exclusion, distinction, restriction or preferences based on racial or ethnic origin, or descendancy in Cuba, as well as everywhere it exists, it goes beyond this, because there are different types of discrimination, including exclusion based on gender, age, sexual orientation, political opinions, abilities, economic position, or religious beliefs.

There is an obvious distinction in what it is about the Cuban regime's discriminatory ability that determines its racist actions, and this goes beyond discriminating due to skin color. It has instituted the exclusion, restriction and limitation of the acknowledgment of everyone's right to equality for everyone, due to their natural condition as citizens. This means that Cubans are denied the right to obtain the benefits of freedoms that a black, white or mulatto can get without restriction—so long as he or she is foreign.

Cubans are discriminated anyway, due to their origins, white, black or mulatto.

This begs the question of why the regime refuses to discuss race relations in Cuba. It may be the most complex and difficult of all the issues in Cuba's contemporary social reality. No issue inspires more uncertainty, worry and caution. It is not difficult to find people who want to hear nothing of it, and avoid making any comments at all to others when the topic is race. The issue of race is intimately tied to others, such as the economy, human rights, inequality, social justice, marginality, religious discrimination, among others.

The minimal interest shown by the white, governing elite in Cuba reveals their racist nature and the prejudice it has always practiced upon situating blacks at the bottom of the ladder of opportunities. Any view of the supposed freedom of blacks after the 1959 revolution presents the power elite as superior, and as having the ability to control the destiny of all Cubans.

A future democracy is inevitable in Cuba. As a public space, it will offer the best opportunity for black Cubans to demand their rights. The current political situation in Cuba has created a new imperative, because there are many more dark skinned Cubans, who lack an official space, and are socially and economically marginalized. A new, more open and inclusive discussion about race relations on the island is emerging, which also touches upon the opportunities denied blacks in Cuban society's defining institutions.

A change in Cuban officialdom's racist attitude can happen only when the pending discussion of the subject allows for not only a correction to the wrong, but also the creation of legal and educational mechanisms to punish any and all discriminatory actions. Democracy is the foundation from which we can best create an opportunity to eliminate acts of exclusion.