

The present issue of *ISLAS* begins with an *URGENT CALL* from the *Citizens' Committee for Racial Integration* and *Citizens' Observatory Against Discrimination* that denounces to the entire world the Cuban government's violent and humiliating actions against the peaceful work of civil activists. Hopefully, dignified voices will speak out against these highly objectionable practices.

In the article "1912: The Resistive Cabala of the *Criollo* Nation," Manuel



Cuesta Morúa turns to the *Independent Party of Color's* armed uprising to delve into something he considers key to understanding the "mystery" of the permanent crisis the Cuban national model has been and is undergoing. He implores us to totally and seriously reconsider the notion "race," and offers various foci with which it is possible to immerse ourselves in history and rethink the problem. Cuesta Morúa focuses on culture, which allows us to examine important thinking, mentalities and behavior that model current circumstances in Cuba, whose hypotheses have not yet been critically studied.

In "From the Commotion to the Crime," Jorge Amado Robert Vera also turns to the events of 1912 and describes

one of many tragic and shameful chapters in that year's history. He includes testimonies about the Cuban Constitutional Army's actions to repress and sadistically deal with Cuba's black population. A number of examples serve to illustrate how racist hysteria caused even men from the ranks to commit crimes so horrendous against their own comrades that they would shame any civilized society.

Yet, there continue to be perturbing shadows, which is evident in José Hugo Hernández's article "The Mute Says What the Blind Man Sees." He recalls a bloody act intentionally attributed to the Abakuá Secret Society, to then launch into a study of the racist aberrations that distort the life and image of Cuba's Afro-descendant population. There are always phobias cropping up all over the place in Cuba that not only contradict Abakuá traditions, but are also evidence of how much resistance there is to the country's complete integration and, most definitively, of many of its citizens' historical "fear of blacks."

It is in this overcast panorama that Cuba's governing officials continue their alarming lack of perspective on the subject, unable and politically unwilling to shed light on the problem. This is more than evident in "*Criollo* supremacy's Last Alibi," about the educational television program "Universidad para todos" [University for All]. One of the courses offered through this program, "Los que pensaron Cuba" [Those Who Imagined Cuba], which essentially reiterated the scarcity of people and events that might serve to prove that Afro-descendants actively participated in the formation and develop-

ment of the culture and shape of Cuba. As that weren't enough, another program called "Presencia negra en la cultura cubana [Black Presence in Cuban Culture," which even in its title suggests vices and stereotypes commonly associated with blacks that in no way serve to better see a social problem that is the epicenter of a reality vital to Cuba's present and future.

Along these very same lines, in "Tensiones en el panorama del pensamiento afrocubano" [Tensions in Future Afro-Cuban Thought?], María Ileana Faguaga emphasizes the ineluctable need and responsibility to define and document Afro-Cuban thought about Afro-Cubanness. She calls us to challenge the unacceptable, iterative, official practice there is to keep any discussion of the problem behind closed doors and spaces, under government control, only to end up folklorizing cultural expressions that really describe undeniable attributes of our national culture.

Hildebrando Chaviano uses the example of Havana's carnival feasts and their development to explore anti-social behavior and the dangerous environment in which current celebrations take place. He argues that the fact an important part of the Cuban population—in which black Cubans are a majority—developed under very marginal circumstances and conditions has generated anti-social habits and practices commonplace in today's festivities.

The "Art and Literature" section offers us past and present experiences involving Cuba rap. Nilo Julián González's articles, written to mark the 25th anniversary of the emergence of this cultural

phenomenon in marginal neighborhoods influenced by what was already happening in the United States, focuses on rapper Anderson and some of his primary work. Anderson constantly invites us to reflect upon the here and now of Cuban society.

Similarly, Alina Guzmán marks the First Festival of the Cuban Rap Movement, a true trial by fire for its organizers and performers. She discusses the innovative and critical nature, and cultural value of the event, a venue that has had to face so much official censure to the point there is no visual or auditory documentation of it for the music's followers. She helps us see the importance of her work and her commitment to photographing it, to ensure this artistic expression's reach and impact through its socialized and positive poetry. It bares the nation's body—its beauty and blemishes. For her part, Yoslainy Pérez Derrick writes about something equally lamentable: the decline of Cuba's National Lyric Theater, and the reasons for its loss of quality and prestige.

On the subject of rap again, the "Profiles" section is dedicated to one of the best representatives of Cuban hip-hop: Raudel Collazo Pedroso, whose publications—every one of them—moves its audience with its revelations about the concerns of an entire people that suffers and dreams. It is this very same social commitment that has convinced Raudel to share with the journal's readers many reflections about what is going on in Cuba. Raudel, himself, is the author of "De mi realidad a tierras de libertad" [From My Reality to Lands of Freedom: A Transforming Experience], which includes his experiences in and impressions on his recent tour in the

United States as the undeniable ambassador of the Cuban Rap Movement—as he calls himself. He is an independent and contestatory, alterative artist that is critical of the Cuban people’s situation today.

In “Mujeres coraje” [Women of Courage], Juan Antonio Madrazo pays homage to three, female, Cuban artists and intellectuals—actress and pedagogue Elvira Cervera; writer-researcher Inés María Martiatu; and troubadour María Teresa Vera (the first two died in 2013). Elvira Cervera was always convinced that racism was a challenge that she had to confront at every moment in her life, and via her life’s artistic work. She did so with dignity, dedicating an important part of her work to analyzing African influences in Cuban culture, racist practices, gender and class discrimination. Forty-seven years after her passing, we also render homage to María Teresa Vera, a vocalist who left her distinctive mark on Cuban music. We acknowledge all three of these women.

Pedro Cubas offers us a review of *Ecorie Akakuá* so we can explore through the book’s author, Tato Quiñones, the mysterious world of that “secret,” male society, and help us appreciate how rich and diverse a phenomenon we owe to the African presence in our land. After reading his review, we can contrast Quiñones’s exploration with that of “The Mute Says What the Blind Man Sees.”

About history, Jorge Camacho offers us “The African Wet Nurse,” in which he revives the identity and constant presence of African women who were used as a commodity, nursing and even educating many children from white families. He describes the brutal way in which they were

treated and causes us to reflect once again on the role black women who were domestic slaves, and how many aspects of their ancestral, African cultures went on to be part of the children as social beings.

In the Parallel View sections, and through his article “The Effect of Totalitarianism on Racism and Racial Discrimination in Cuba,” Armando Solar discusses with us the new conditions imposed after 1959 that broke with the traditional Cuban order and greatly affected race relations. Moisés Rodríguez presents his “Evidence for History’s Judgment,” about the permanent nature of all the evils, vices and injustices that Fidel Castro denounced in his published self-defense, in 1953, which became part and parcel of the program to be put in practice when his group took power. This program’s incompleteness is characteristic and representative of Cuba today and her problems.

With this issue we have reached the eighth anniversary of our journal’s publication. This issue also marks the end of my work as Vice-President of the Afro-Cuban Alliance and Editor-in-Chief of *ISLAS*. These have been fruitful years filled with a commitment to offer my best to a cause so important to the future of the Cuban nation.

With this, I would like to deeply thank all of our contributors; with their work, they have contributed concretely to our ability to do our jobs. I’d also like to thank our readers, for they have given us great support and encouragement in our continued work.

I would also like to acknowledge the work we did with the Afro-Cuban Alliance’s founding President, Jaqueline

Arroyo, and Dorothy Jenkins, another founder who was with us during *ISLAS*'s early years. I offer my sincerest thanks to the members of our team—the editors, translator, designer and publisher of our journal. The work of Kenya C. Dworkin as Assistant Editor stands out in that

group. Yet, my commitment does not end with these thanks and acknowledgement that I offer; I will also be committed, wherever I am.

Dr. Juan Antonio Alvarado Ramos
Editor-in-Chief