Racial & Ethnic Problems & Challenges in Contemporary Cuba

Jorge Duany
Florida International University
Main Objectives

- Review racial & ethnic history of Cuba’s population
- Analyze prevailing racial discourse in Cuba
- Assess impact of Cuban Revolution on Afro-Cubans
- Examine continuing racial inequality on the island
- Compare racial profile of Cuba & its diaspora
Race of Cuba’s Population during 19th Century (%)
Race of Cuba’s Population since Independence (%)

- White
- Black
- Mestizo or Mulatto
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Andalusian, Canary Islander, Galician, Asturian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>Yoruba, Bantu, Arará, Carabalí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Haitian, Jamaican, Middle Eastern, Jewish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Decimation of Indigenous Population
African Slavery in Cuba
Spanish Migration to Cuba
Chinese Coolies in Cuba
The Jewish Diaspora
Folk Racial Terms in Cuba

- **White**
  - Blanco, rubio, blanco orillero, blanco lechoso, colorao, albino, blanco capirro

- **Brown**
  - Mulato, blanconazo, mulato color cartucho, mulato chino, moro, indio, mestizo, trigueño, moreno, jabao, chino

- **Black**
  - Negro, negro-azul, negro color teléfono, negro coco timba, negro cabeza de puntilla
# Racial Discourses in Cuban History

- National identity initially defined by Creole whites
- Attempt to “whiten” Cuba’s population
- Gradual inclusion of blacks & mulattos
- Ideology of white supremacy
- Dominant discourse of “racial democracy”
Enshrining the Guajiro
The Afro-Cuban Movement
Race Relations after 1959

- Legal prohibition of "institution-ized" racism
- Official ending of racial discrimination (1962)
- Upward social mobility of black Cubans
- Reassessing Afro-Cuban culture
- Declaration of Cuba as Afro-Latin American nation (1975)
- Cuba’s military involvement in Africa
Black Cubans or Cuban Blacks?
## Impact of Special Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development of “tourist apartheid”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing migration from rural areas to Havana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigmatizing “Palestinians”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Cuban concentration in poorest regions &amp; neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial differences in self-employment &amp; remittances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Racial Inequality in Today’s Cuba
Prominent Afro-Cuban Dissidents

Guillermo Fariñas

Manuel Cuesta Morúa

Berta Soler
Racial Challenges on the Island

- Persistence of racist attitudes & practices
- White overrepresentation in upper social strata
- Ambivalent policies toward Afro-Cuban culture
- Silencing race from public & academic debates
The Zurbano Affair
The Cuban Hip Hop Movement
Racial Classification of Cubans in the U.S. (%)
Cubans in Tampa, Late 19th Century
Cuban Exiles after 1959
Cuban Population by Race, 2010–12

U.S.

Cuba

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

White
Black
Other
Some Other Race
Two or More Races
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correlation between race &amp; class in prerevolutionary Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of revolutionary programs for black Cubans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular awareness of U.S. racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-American Cuban propaganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for family reunification in U.S. visa system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Yucas”
A “Marielito”
The Recent Cuban Diaspora
## Conclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History of racial &amp; ethnic mixture in Cuba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular taxonomies beyond racial binary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved race relations after Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensification of racial inequality since 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White overrepresentation in Cuban diaspora</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>