

CALL FOR PAPERS *[Black] Cuban Revolutionaries Today*

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80-year-old Commandante Victor Dreke fought at the Bay of Pigs, was second in command to Che Guevara in the Congo and exchanged military strategy with Amilcal Cabral in Guinea Bissau. He served as an ambassador to Equatorial Guinea in West Africa and today is president of the Cuba-Africa Friendship Association. He is a socialist and he is black and in many ways his life represents the Black Cuban Revolutionary experience of the highest order. He is, rightfully, to regular Cubans and the state, a national hero.

This issue of Souls will examine the Black Cuban Revolutionary experience from the making of the Cuban Revolution, which was Victor Dreke's generation, to today. What has it meant over time and what does it mean now? For many in Dreke's generation to use the term "Black" when discussing the Cuban revolution was seen as problematic, which is why it is brackets. After all, the early revolution argued that racism had been eradicated. And indeed, if using a class-based analysis alone, this made sense. Cubans of color did gain equal rights to healthcare, education, employment and housing unlike anything seen anywhere in the Americas and they were proud. Moreover, the African heritage of the Island was publically embraced and the Island's support for African Liberation Movements, especially in Angola, was a sign of this. This kind of open state acceptance of the Americas tie to Africa was also a first in the hemisphere.

And yet, the impact of hundreds of years of enslavement, and colonial and neo-colonial racial capitalism was not as easy to eradicate as the Cuban's had hoped. Clearly, the revolution worried that any talk of racial difference might disrupt the required unity that the Island needed to fend off United States aggression. But given the historic power and continued international presence of white supremacy, to not address the super structural tentacles of racism from colorism (lighter skin is better) to culture (black culture is less civilized) to beauty (straight hair is more attractive than nappy hair) to historical importance (Europe contributed more to political and intellectual history than Africa) is actually to tacitly allow it to continue. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has called this "colorblind" racism; Devyn Spence Benson has called it in Cuba, raceless nationalism. It is important to note that while the revolution understood the necessity to continue to fight for women, youth and workers through mass organizations, it chose not to have a mass (multi-racial) organization with which to fight racism. Thus, many whites continued to hold racist ideas that were never challenged.

Thus, when Fidel stated at the third-party congress in 1986 and at the Riverside Church in New York City in 2000, that they had failed to solve the problem of racism in Cuba, it was a sign that there needed to be much more work done inside the revolution to tackle this. He said in 2000:

I am not claiming that our country is a perfect model of equality and justice. At the beginning, we believed that when we established full equality before the law.... [sexism

SOULS: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society

and racist phenomena] would vanish from our society. It was sometime before we discovered that marginalization and racial discrimination are not things that one gets rid of with a law or even with ten laws, we have not managed to eliminate them completely, even in 40 years.

While this was a significant admission, Fidel in both speeches suggest that the problem is largely a representational and material one, and does not address racism's ideological and cultural character as well. José Luciano Franco wrote clearly of this problem in pre-revolutionary Cuba in his seminal 1961 classic, *Afro-America* and according to many Cubans today, once sees racial "networks" occurring in hiring practices, media choices, and educational textbooks. This is becoming even more astute as Cuba unveils a new mixed economy, in which some will have more access to resources than others. The reality is this: one cannot get to the root of a problem, if one cannot engage in meaningful and rigorous discourse on it.

This issue of *Souls* intends to address this issue in numerous ways. What has it meant, and does it, mean to be a [Black] Cuban revolutionary? We also seek essays which look at how the early revolution handled race, and black revolutionary thought, and what it has done since. In addition, how have revolutionaries taken different positions on this question over time? There are now movements and groups that center the experiences of Afro-descendants whose purpose it is to tackle the racial problem. What have been their goals and how have they measured success? What has been the role of Hip Hop, film, African religions, and educational institutions? How has the US blockade and US aggression impacted this discussion in Cuba; and how do different lenses, such as that from African-Americans complicate and problematize this question? In addition, what has been the impact of the hundreds of thousands of Cubans that fought in and have worked in Africa on their sense of race? We seek essays, which address these types of questions in ideological, pedagogical, sociological, and political and cultural ways.

Final Submission Deadline is Midnight May 1, 2019

To submit to this special issue:

<http://www.editorialmanager.com/souls/>

To talk over ideas, contact lbrock@kzoo.edu; general questions please contact souls@uic.edu

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of such material in their articles. Authors are required to submit a three to five sentence bio, an abstract of their article of not more than 100 words, and a brief list of key words or significant concepts in the article.

Upload submissions here:

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CONTENT

DCP: In the pattern of the critical black intellectual tradition of W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls* articles should include the elements of "description," "correction," and/or "prescription": thickly, richly detailed descriptions of contemporary black life and culture; corrective and analytical engagements with theories and concepts that reproduce racial inequality in all of its forms; and/or an analysis that presents clear alternatives or possibilities for social change.

Originality: Articles should make an original contribution to the literature. We do not consider manuscripts that are under review elsewhere.

FORM OF ARTICLES:

Length: Articles published in *Souls* generally are a minimum of 2,500 words in length, but not longer than 8,500 words, excluding endnotes and scholarly references.

CMS and Clarity: All articles should conform to the Chicago Manual of Style. Scholarly references and citations usually should not be embedded in the text of the article, but arranged as endnotes in CMS form. *Souls* favors clearly written articles free of excessive academic jargon and readily accessible to a broad audience.

Critical: *Souls* aspires to produce scholarship representing a critical black study – analytical and theoretical works in the living tradition of scholar/activist W.E.B. Du Bois. *Souls* is an intellectual intervention that seeks to inform and transform black life and history.

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