

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2 • Fall 2022

# Boletín Martiano



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF TAMPA<sup>®</sup>  
CENTER FOR JOSÉ MARTÍ  
STUDIES AFFILIATE

# Boletín Martiano

Newsletter of the Center for José Martí Studies Affiliate  
at The University of Tampa

Editor: Denis Rey, Ph.D.

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# Message from the Editor

By Denis Rey, Ph.D.



It is with humility and unpretentiousness that the Center for José Martí Studies Affiliate (CJMISA) announces that we are recipients of another grant to host a 2023 NEH Summer Institute for Higher Education Faculty. Similar to the 2019 Summer Institute, we will bring 30 participants to our beautiful campus for a month where, together with sixteen visiting faculty, they will study the various facets of the Cuban immigrant communities of Florida and New York and their role in ushering Cuban independence. As we prepare to host this great event, I can't help but think back to 2019 and recall meeting our community of scholars, conversing and getting to know them, and hearing all the great accomplishments and ambitions that they cherished and shared. This time will be no different. As a matter of fact, it may be even more rewarding, having done this once previously. The articles in this issue of *El Boletín Martiano* serve as preliminary reading for anyone interested in this glorious history. We begin with *Tampa: From Cigar City to Post-Industrial Sunbelt City* by Robert Kerstein, Emeritus Professor of Government and World Affairs at the University of Tampa. Dr. Kerstein, who served as Tampa's official historian during his tenure, will start us off with a brilliant account of how Tampa developed from its heyday as a one-industry cigar town to what it has become today. Gabriel Cartaya's article, *El pensamiento democrático de Victoriano Manteiga*, provides an in depth examination of the political thought of this iconic Ybor City dignitary and explores the impact of his legacy as newspaperman and community leader. The Manteiga family and *La Gaceta*, which celebrates its 100th anniversary of continuous publication this year, have become, and continue to be, important fixtures in Tampa's Cuban community, and Professor Cartaya's piece helps us understand why. The third contributor, Zita Arocha, Emeritus Professor of Journalism and Communications at the University of Texas at El Paso and a 2019 NEH Summer Institute alumnus, is the recipient of the inaugural Eliud Martínez Prize for her recent book, *Guajira, The Cuba girl: A Memoir*. In the excerpt that she shares with us Professor Arocha describes growing up in Tampa. The final contribution, written by Andy Huse, Dr. Bárbara C. Cruz and Jeff Houck, offers a delightful account of the history of the Cuban Sandwich. As you imagine, Ybor City and West Tampa played significant roles in the development of this tasty lunch staple. I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *El Boletín Martiano* as much as we have.

## **TAMPA: FROM CIGAR CITY TO POST-INDUSTRIAL SUNBELT CITY**

Robert Kerstein, Ph.D.

Tampa, located in Hillsborough County, is now the third largest city in Florida, with a 2020 population of 384,959. Hillsborough County, with a population of 1,459,762, is the fourth largest in Florida. They are located in the second largest metropolitan area (Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater) in the state and the 18<sup>th</sup> largest in the United States. Tampa's general trajectory has been growth, but it has suffered periods of decline and the basis for its growth has changed over time. A narrative about the decline of the economic backbone of a city and efforts to reconstitute it typically focuses on a Snowbelt city, such as Pittsburgh. The story of decline and transition, however, is not unique to the Snowbelt. This article looks at Tampa during its era as the Cigar City and on the decline of the cigar industry. Its primary focus, however, is on efforts to replace this industry with a new economy and a new image.

Tampa grew from a frontier town of about 720 residents in 1880 to 15,839 in 1900, then to 51,608 by 1920. It was the fourth largest city in Florida at the turn of the century, and, by 1910, Tampa was the second largest city, behind only Jacksonville, and it remained so in 1920. The coming of Henry Plant's Railroad system to Tampa in 1884 contributed to growth, and the discovery in the 1880s of phosphate rock, used in the manufacturing of fertilizer, was a major factor in the expansion of Tampa's port commerce.

The development of the cigar industry beginning in 1886, however, was the primary stimulus for the growth of Tampa and West Tampa, which was incorporated as a city in 1895 and then became part of Tampa in 1925. Tampa's cigar industry attracted Italian (primarily Sicilian), Cuban and Spanish immigrants (all referred to locally as Latins) who worked in its factories. By 1900, 28 percent of Tampa's population was comprised of foreign-born whites; in 1920 they still constituted 21 percent of Tampa's residents. At both points, Cubans were the most numerous immigrant group, followed by Italians and then Spaniards. Tampa

also had a significant African American population; in 1900, 28 percent of Tampa's residents were African American, and in 1920 they comprised 22 percent of the city's population.

Latin workers and African Americans lived in neighborhoods separate from most of the Anglo population. Ybor City, named after Vicente Martinez Ybor, one of the founders of the neighborhood that was incorporated into Tampa in 1887; Palmetto Beach, located just south of Ybor City, and West Tampa housed the Latin cigar workers, including some Afro-Cubans, who, remarkably, lived in integrated Ybor City and West Tampa neighborhoods (Greenbaum: 63). The cigar workers hand-rolled "clear Havana" cigars using tobacco from Cuba and were generally well compensated. In 1900, their per-capita income was the highest of any workforce in Florida (Mormino and Pozzetta, 68; Hewitt, 47) And most, for a nominal sum, had access to quality medical care offered by several mutual aid societies.

African Americans were segregated in different neighborhoods, with only a few employed in lower-level jobs in the cigar factories. More typically, they were employed as bell boys in hotels, domestic servants, day laborers in construction, stevedores, and janitors in office buildings. Some were employed in such skilled trades as bricklayers and carpenters, but, even here, they were generally disadvantaged relative to their white counterparts. For example, the carpenters' union accepted no African Americans, and although both white and black bricklayers were in the same union, white union members often refused to work with African Americans (Raper 1927).

Blacks were essentially disenfranchised in local elections by the creation of the White Municipal Party before the 1910 local elections. Due to the fact that no strong opposition party competed in local elections, the winners of the primary of the Democratic Party would be elected to office. With the reorganization of the Democratic Party to the White Municipal Party, Blacks were forbidden to vote in the primary elections. In 1887, an African American man was elected to the Tampa City Council. No other African

Americans served on the city council until 1983. Latin males were not politically excluded in the same manner, but most Latins were not involved until the 1930s. Many were ineligible to vote, because they were not naturalized, but, in addition, they focused more of their attention on labor union activity in their workplaces and on the medical and other benefits offered by their mutual aid societies. Women gained the franchise in 1920, but still were largely excluded from leadership positions in the White Municipal Party. Many, however, including African American women, played a major role in local civic activities, and Latin women often played a prominent role in cigar union labor activity (Hewitt).

Tampa's politics through the 1920s can be characterized as consisting of competing factions of white males, who were typically members of the commercial-civic elite. Most were native-born, but others were immigrants. Some union leaders, however, generally outside the cigar industry, also were involved, and sometimes influential. In the 1912 mayoral election, the Socialist Party candidate secured 30 percent of the votes. Still, the major actors shared a general consensus that African Americans should be excluded from electoral politics. They also agreed that it was their legitimate role to engage in whatever means were necessary to squash striking workers in the cigar industry (Kerstein). For example, during a 1921 strike, a "citizens' committee" primarily comprised of members of the Board of Trade kidnapped several union leaders and sent them by ship to Honduras, with the warning that they would be killed if they returned to Tampa (Ingalls).

Corruption also stigmatized Tampa's electoral politics during this era, characterized by collaboration between organized crime and candidates for office. The winner of an election was due as much to which candidates and factions controlled the ballot boxes, as to the preferences of the voters. The fatal tarring and feathering of an unsuccessful mayoral candidate who dared to challenge the status quo in 1935 gained nationwide attention.

By 1930, Tampa's economic base was still heavily dependent upon the cigar industry, although the percentage of workers employed in cigar factories had decreased from more than 50 percent in 1910 to 25 percent. The industry suffered due to the economic downturn of the Great Depression, but other factors also played a role in the industry not being as dominant an employer in Tampa. More Americans were smoking cigarettes, decreasing the demand for cigars, and cigar factories increasingly used machines, decreasing the demand for skilled workers who hand-rolled the cigars.

The importance of the cigar industry in Tampa's economy continued to wane during the next two decades. The 1950 census recorded that only about 10 percent of employed civilian workers in Tampa worked in the cigar industry, and that more female workers were hired. About seven percent of male workers and sixteen percent of female workers were employed in the cigar industry. Manufacturing, although still significant in Tampa's economy, was becoming less prominent. About 21 percent of employed male workers and 22 percent of employed female workers in 1950 worked in the manufacturing sector.

During the ensuing decades, Tampa's cigar factories closed, similar to the deindustrialization in many Snowbelt communities. The national embargo of Cuba, initiated in 1962, after Castro's takeover, caused many of Tampa's cigar factories that relied on Cuban tobacco to close, with some moving to other countries (Newman). The 1970 city directory enumerated about 40 cigar factories, but most were small and employed few workers; in 1980, 15 remained and most of these had closed by 1992. The Hav-a-Tampa factory shut down in 2009, moving its operations to Puerto Rico, and leaving its 500 employees searching for jobs (Bhattarai). Now, only the J.C. Newman Cigar Factory, with about 150 employees, remains.

As employment in the cigar industry declined during the 1930s, Tampa's economy benefitted from New Deal funding for Works Progress Administration (WPA) programs, shipbuilding, and, especially, MacDill Army Air Base, now MacDill Air Force Base. At its peak, programs of the WPA employed about 9,000 people



in Hillsborough county. And shipbuilding companies received government contracts that provided jobs to about 1,500 workers at good pay. But in 1945, with the end of the war, most of those employed at the shipyards lost their jobs, and WPA projects ended (Mormino, 2001).

Tampa's Chamber of Commerce and some political leaders coalesced to attract employment. In 1943, business leaders organized the Economic Development Committee of Hillsborough County to help "carry the present war prosperity into the coming era of peace," but it had little success in attracting new companies. The Chamber president emphasized in 1948 that Tampa was competing against many other cities in the Southeast that were offering significant incentives to try to recruit industry. Chamber leaders in the late 1940s and early 1950s continued to bemoan their lack of success. Late in 1953, Chamber staff completed an analysis indicating that the cities that were perceived as competitors were allocating more financial resources to recruitment than was Tampa. Likely not enhancing Tampa's recruitment efforts were the hearings held in the city in 1950 by the U.S. Senate Committee on Organized Crime, headed by Senator Estes Kefauver, which concluded that political corruption involving organized crime still flourished.

The chief executive of the Chamber organized the Committee of 100 in 1954 to raise additional funding and support for recruitment efforts from Tampa's business community. Both Tampa and Hillsborough County also began to contribute more public funding, which enabled the Chamber to advertise and make recruiting trips. Some of the arguments that Chamber activists used to attract business were based on the economic assets of the area. For example, they contended that Tampa was the only major city in Florida where a firm could guarantee overnight truck delivery to any other Florida city, and they also noted that Tampa had good access to rail lines. Therefore, Tampa would be an ideal location to serve as a distribution center.

The recruiters also praised the efforts of the Port Authority and Aviation Authority. The state legislature in 1945 passed two acts, one establishing the Hillsborough County Port Authority (with the name

changed to the Tampa Port Authority in 1963) and the other the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority. The city purchased Hooker's Point terminal in 1948 from the War Assets Administration, an area with power lines, roads, and channels that it hoped to develop for commerce and industry. Mayor Curtis Hixon, who was initially elected in 1943, then transferred this property to the Port Authority, which agreed to try to recruit business to the area. Also, the city in 1947 bought Drew Field from the War Assets Administration and changed its name to Tampa International Airport (Drew had been used as an air base during World War II). Then, in August 1949, the City of Tampa officially deeded Tampa International Airport (TIA) to the Aviation Authority. TIA was designated an "international airport of entry" in 1951, joining Miami and Palm Beach as the three cities in the state having that designation.

In 1953, the state legislature, at the urging of Tampa's legislative delegation, annexed a large section of unincorporated Hillsborough County into the city of Tampa. Primarily due to this annexation, the city's population more than doubled, from 124,681 in 1950 to 274,970 in 1960, making Tampa the second largest city in Florida, just slightly smaller than Miami. After the annexation, the Tampa Chamber took pride in advertising nationwide that Tampa was the nation's fastest-growing major city.

Other arguments advanced by recruiters for the Committee of 100 were based on the supposed political advantage of Tampa, emphasizing the cooperative relationships between the public and private sectors. In fact, public officials would often meet with the prospective recruits at the Chamber's downtown building, where out-of-town business owners could avoid publicity. Further, recruiters would point out that Florida was a "right-to-work" state. The Florida legislature in 1943 passed a "right to work" amendment to the Florida constitution, which was approved by the voters in 1944, signaling to potential employers that the state was open to relatively low paying, non-union jobs. Thus, Tampa offered a desirable business climate and a workforce that, in spite of the history of labor strife in the cigar industry, would be less likely to unionize

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and bargain for higher wages than would workers in the North. Chamber officials and political leaders knew that the cigar factories were still important to Tampa's workforce, but they were trying to promote a new image, one fitting with a conservative, growth-oriented Sunbelt city.

Compatible with this antiunion emphasis, activists in the Chamber of Commerce often articulated conservative views on national labor issues and Mayor Hixon reinforced this perspective on local issues. For example, at a Chamber meeting in 1946, members expressed alarm about the number of labor strikes throughout the nation, and all those present agreed that the Chamber should issue a statement calling on Congress to pass legislation that would penalize striking unions. In March 1949, the Chamber president wrote to senators and representatives from Florida, informing them that the Chamber opposed the Fair Labor Standards Act amendments that established a minimum hourly wage of seventy-five cents, arguing that this would increase unemployment in Hillsborough County. Hixon did not hesitate to attack his campaign opponents on the basis of their having union support. For example, in his 1951 campaign, Hixon emphasized that his opponent was the candidate for organized labor. Hixon contended that the CIO was spending large amounts of money to try to defeat him because of his anti-union efforts during a bus strike. Before the Great Depression, cigar workers, as well as workers in other trades, were commonly union members. Tampa's economic and political leaders were now trying to leave that behind.

Indicating both the desire to move beyond the cigar city image and to incorporate tourism into the mix of Tampa's new economy was the urban renewal project in Ybor City. With the cigar industry waning, Ybor City by 1960 was a far different place than it had been before WWII. Now, by the 1960s, most of Ybor City's Latin population had moved elsewhere in Tampa and its growing suburbs. During the 1950s and early 1960s, Ybor City's African American population increased significantly, in part due to the razing of their homes by earlier urban renewal projects, as well as to blockbusting efforts by realtors. After the 1944 ruling of the

U.S Supreme Court that outlawed the white primary, Blacks could vote in all local elections, but they still lacked political influence. In 1965, Ybor City was designated as Tampa's third urban renewal area. Both mayors who served during this decade, Nick Nuccio, who was born in Ybor City and was Tampa's first Latin mayor, and Julian Lane, who grew up in the Tampa neighborhood of Seminole Heights, supported the urban renewal initiative, as did the Chamber of Commerce and Tampa's two daily newspapers. The project called for the demolition of more than 700 buildings. Latins lived in some of them, but the vast majority were occupied by African Americans. According to the plans, most of the land would be sold for private development that would include new townhouses and apartments, as well as motels, sidewalk cafes, and a needle tower from which one could view Tampa's waterfront. Officials envisioned that a revitalized Ybor City would become a tourist center that would draw visitors to Tampa. One advocate predicted that Ybor City would become a tourist center "second to none" in the nation. In fact, by the late 1960s, officials of the Urban Renewal Agency admitted that they were having little success in attracting developers into Ybor City. In the early 1970s, the largest tract was sold to a community college for a branch campus and other public facilities were located there.

Florida's population almost doubled between 1960 and 1980 and the population of the Tampa metropolitan area more than doubled, but the Sunbelt boom did not extend to the city of Tampa. After the dramatic increase in its population during the 1950s due to annexation, Tampa's population stagnated during the next two decades, increasing slightly from 274,970 in 1960 to 277,753 in 1970, then decreasing to 271,523 by 1980, leaving Tampa with fewer people in 1980 than it had in 1960. Tampa's White population decreased during this period, while the number of Blacks increased; the African American share of Tampa's population rose from 16.8 percent in 1960 to 23.4 percent in 1980.

During this same era, the suburban areas of Hillsborough County were growing rapidly. The county

included only two, relatively small, incorporated suburbs so the vast majority of the growth was in unincorporated areas, governed by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). In the 1960s, while the population of Tampa stagnated, the population of the unincorporated suburbs, which had been predominantly rural, with an economic base comprised of dairy farms, agriculture, and phosphate mines, grew from 101,531 to 189,714. And by 1980, its 347,201 residents far exceeded Tampa's population. Developers rapidly built subdivisions such as Carrollwood in northwest Hillsborough County, a "lovely land of woods and water," where they promoted "happiness for sale" to families moving to the area from outside Florida, and to Tampa residents looking for a suburban home. And the "happiness" of the new residents was likely enhanced by the provision of air conditioning in most of the new suburban homes, a feature offered in only a small percentage of Tampa homes in 1960 (Mormino, 1983).

The City of Tampa gained private-sector employment during this period, many of them filled by suburban commuters, whose commute was eased by the construction of Interstate 4 and I-275 (initially known as I-75) in the 1960s, construction that razed more than 3,000 homes in Tampa (Kerstein: 345). Even in the late 1970s, the clear majority of jobs in Hillsborough County were in Tampa. Still, the county's suburban area gained jobs more rapidly. As was typical in America's central cities during this period, service jobs increased as a proportion of total jobs while manufacturing's share of employment decreased. A similar pattern developed in the growing suburbs. Some manufacturing did locate in the city and unincorporated county. For example, in 1956, Hillsborough County Government secured title to land in the county from the federal government near the area soon to be developed as the University of South Florida (USF). The county then deeded the land to the Chamber. The Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company became the first tenant of the Tampa Industrial Park in 1957 and other tenants followed. Other employers, including Westinghouse and Honeywell, opened manufacturing facilities, with Westinghouse located in Tampa and Honeywell in suburban

Hillsborough County. Honeywell was the single largest private employer in Hillsborough County by 1969. Both Westinghouse and Honeywell, however, closed during the 1980s.

Companies headquartered outside of the South increasingly considered Tampa and Hillsborough County as possible sites for their back-office operations and sometimes for their regional headquarters. Metropolitan Life Insurance Company moved about seventy-five employees to Tampa from New York in 1969, and then moved two years later into a facility near the West Shore area, about ten miles west of downtown, which served as a regional service office. Metropolitan then located its southeastern headquarters in Tampa, and in 1978 it began an expansion that resulted in it having about 1,000 employees by 1990. Recognizing these relocations, The U.S. News & World Report designated Tampa one of the “star cities” of the Southeast in October 1978. The recruitment of an NFL franchise, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, whose first season was 1976, likely contributed to this designation.

New developers moved to Tampa to take advantage of growth opportunities in this growing Sunbelt region. For example, The Lincoln Property Company from Dallas opened in Tampa in the 1970s and Trammell Crow, headquartered in Dallas, started its central Florida office in Tampa in 1981. And Hillsborough County continued to attract corporate relocations and expansions of back-office and finance operations during the next two decades. Several of the largest private sector employers were back-office operations by the mid-1990s, including Time Customer Service and Continental and Delta Airlines’ reservation centers. An expanding West Shore business district and suburban office parks accommodated many of these businesses. Relocating companies sometimes benefited from financial incentives, but low labor costs were the primary attraction. Fortune magazine’s study of fifty cities in 1990 noted that Tampa’s drawing card was that it had the “lowest overall salaries in all 50 areas and an affordable cost of living.”

Although business recruiters generally cultivated a countywide focus, Tampa’s mayors and

business activists also focused on downtown development. One early project involved the successful effort to purchase the downtown land owned by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL) on the east side of the Hillsborough River, on the western edge of downtown. Mayor Nuccio and a task force of business leaders reached an agreement in 1959 for the purchase of 4.4 acres of the 14 acres of ACL property. Then, in 1961, during the Lane administration, the city purchased the remainder of the land. Several public projects were later completed on the property included an auditorium/convention center named after former mayor Curtis Hixon (1965) and the Tampa Museum of Art (1976).

The downtown component of the Riverfront urban renewal project, initiated in 1963, resulted in only limited development for decades, primarily the construction of an office building and a hotel north of the former ACL property. In July 1987, however, The Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center was completed on some of the property acquired by the Riverfront project. The arts center was considered as a magnet for new businesses that were considering moving to Tampa and was seen as an important addition to “America’s Next Great City,” the advertising slogan that the Chamber had adopted for Tampa in 1985. The next public-private initiative in downtown, the Tampa Convention Center, opened in 1990. The center was designed to bring business tourism to Tampa, a different segment of the tourism market than visited Busch Gardens, Tampa’s major tourist draw, which had opened near the Tampa Industrial Park in 1959. Several office buildings and a Hyatt Hotel were also completed downtown during the 1980s. Just south of downtown, Seddon Island, formerly used to load phosphates, was renamed Harbour Island and transformed into a mixed-use residential and commercial community.

Tampa was drawing more nationwide attention. For example, in 1982, John Naisbitt’s book, Megatrends: The New Directions Transforming our Lives, included Tampa among the ten “new cities of great opportunity,” all of which were in the Sunbelt. Naisbitt quoted local developers as noting that “Tampa (and

Hillsborough County) is a magnet for both in-state and out-of-state businesses seeking to take advantage of the state's massive population growth." A 1984 report by the Fantus Company, commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce, declared, "Tampa is clearly one of America's cities of the future." It stated that "elected officials, businessmen, and the community at large have adapted to, and actively support, the explosion of new investment that has brought jobs and capital to Tampa and the surrounding area." Tampa's hosting of the 1984 Super Bowl strengthened this optimism.

The Fantus report pointed to a variety of factors that were likely to contribute to further growth. Among these were a supply of qualified labor available at "competitive" wage levels, a strong transportation network, including the port and the airport, which had been expanded and improved in the early 1970s, and a good quality of life at reasonable prices. The study concluded that economic development was supported by economic and political leaders and by virtually every section of society and praised the fact that 'no growers and environmental zealots are significantly less evident and enjoy much less support than in many other Florida communities.'" Thus, according to Fantus, Tampa was advantaged by traditional cost-related factors, by its hospitable economic and political leaders, and by the pro-growth attitude of most of its citizens.

This perceived consensus on the existing pattern of growth was overstated, especially regarding Tampa's rapidly developing unincorporated suburban territory. During the 1950s and 60s, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) adopted a perspective that associated growth with progress, and, in effect, deferred to the profit concerns of developers. Some of the early developers of Ybor City were also land developers, building factories and also homes for their workers to buy or rent. Land development in the unincorporated county, conferring profits to the developers and jobs and income in the construction, real estate, and finance industries, occurred far from the mostly razed, empty, or converted factories of the cigar era. The BOCC imposed minimal taxes, and only limited regulation of growth. It required no impact fees on developers to



share in the cost of building more roads, parks or other facilities. In fact, the county's provision of these facilities was minimal. The county began developing water and sewage systems in the 1960s, and some developers were able to connect to the city of Tampa's water and sewage systems. For the most part, however, developers provided their own private water and waste-water systems, or home buyers relied on wells and septic tanks.

By the 1970s, several environmental and civic groups called for stricter planning of growth, so development would not continue to overwhelm the still limited infrastructure and cause environmental degradation. Some elections to the five-member BOCC reflected the displeasure with unplanned growth and also highlighted the emergence of women activists in the county's politics. Voters elected Betty Castor to office in 1972 and then Fran Davin in 1974. Castor served until 1976, and Davin continued on the BOCC until 1982. Each had been president of the League of Women voters and was critical of the costs of unregulated growth. Jan Platt, another supporter of growth management, was elected to the BOCC in 1978. However, only two of these three environmentalists served on the BOCC at the same time, and they were often outvoted on the five-person commission. The majority of the BOCC appeared to share the perspective of one landowner, who contended that it was "inherently wrong" to tell a property owner what to do, and complained that "when you place community rights over individual rights you are bordering on socialism or communism." Tampa's civic elite supporting the cigar factory owners during strikes by the workers often emphasized the "un-American" socialist or anarchist views of the strikers, justifying their use of vigilante activity. The landowner's perspective did not lead to environmentalists being kidnapped and kicked out of town, but merely overwhelmed infrastructure and enhanced environmental degradation.

In the mid-1980s, the BOCC was comprised of Platt and one other elected commissioner. The other three members, including E.L. Bing – the first African American to serve on the BOCC since reconstruction,

had been appointed in 1983 by Governor Bob Graham. Tampa's tradition of political corruption had reemerged. Graham made the appointments because one of the elected commissioners had pled guilty, and two others had been found guilty, of various crimes related to an effort to extort a \$100,000 bribe in exchange for rezoning.

This commission adopted impact fees, although relatively low, for parks and transportation, passed certain environmental protection measures, and increased the budget of the Planning Commission, which the previous BOCC had cut. Then, in the early 1990s, most of the members of the now seven-member BOCC shared this general perspective, and adopted additional environmental protection measures. They also approved the expenditure of large sums of money to extend the road network in the unincorporated county, which serviced further growth. Also, the chairperson of the BOCC often worked with the Chamber in recruiting new businesses. During the 1990s, the population of the unincorporated county increased from about 515,000 to 614,000, compared to Tampa's significantly more modest gain from 280,000 to 297,000.

During the first decades of the twenty-first century, population growth in suburban Hillsborough County continued to outpace Tampa, but Tampa's growth was significant. It increased by 10.6% from 303,447 in 2000 to 335,709 in 2010, and then 14.7 percent to 384,959 in 2020. Tampa is now a growing Sunbelt city. Much of this occurred in New Tampa, a previously undeveloped area that was annexed to Tampa in the 1980s and 1990s. Two residential towers were built downtown that opened in 2007 and 2009. But significant development occurred elsewhere in the city, including in the Channel District, located between downtown and Ybor City. The owner of the Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team spearheaded this effort and partnered with an investment fund controlled by Bill Gates. Large numbers of condominiums and rental units have been built there, along with the USF medical school, considerable office space, and an entertainment complex called Sparkman's Wharf. Increasing numbers (pre-Covid) of passengers arrived and

departed from the cruise ship port in the district, contributing to Tampa's effort to expand its tourism sector. And cruise ship passengers and Channel District residents can view the nearby commercial port in operation. They might be surprised to learn that phosphate still is its major export, as had been the case (although at a different location) early in the twentieth century. In fact, the Fortune 500 phosphate corporation, The Mosaic Company, is headquartered in downtown Tampa and is Hillsborough County's largest public company (measured by revenues).

Tampa is clearly a post-industrial economy. In 2020, only 4.7% of civilian workers were employed in manufacturing. More significant were jobs in most other census categories, including education, health care, social assistance, retail trade, finance, and insurance. Some of these are fueled by business relocations, others by the expansion of "home-grown" enterprises, including "eds and meds." The average wages among these categories vary dramatically, which has contributed to significant economic inequality. Countywide, in 2019, the lowest quintile of households in Hillsborough County earned 3.18 percent of total household income, while the highest five percent earned 22.82% (planhillsborough.org). The city of Tampa likely has more disparity, with a poverty rate of 17.5% in 2020, compared to 11.9% for all of Hillsborough County (US Census, "Quick Facts.") Many have done well in the new economy. Others are struggling in a city whose housing prices and apartment rents have climbed dramatically.

Tampa's population is still diverse, as it was during the peak of the cigar industry, including, in 2020, an African American population of 23.3 percent, and a Hispanic population of 26.2 percent. (US Census, QuickFacts). West Tampa still includes a sizable Hispanic population, native-born and immigrant, but many Cubans and other Hispanics moved to Town 'N Country in the unincorporated county, as well as other areas. According to some estimates, Puerto Ricans now exceed Cubans as the primary Hispanic group. Racial and ethnic economic disparities are pronounced. The median income for White households was 52% higher than

Black households, and 33% higher than Hispanic households (planhillsborough.org). The Brookings Institution's "Metro Monitor, 2021" ranked Tampa only 41st of the 53 largest metropolitan areas in its "inclusion" index, which measures economic inequality.

Tampa's one remaining operating cigar factory now includes a museum and provides tours to visitors wanting to learn about Tampa's cigar history. But Tampa has moved on, just as have most U.S. cities that grew during the industrial era. Earlier this year, the Tampa City Council granted approval to a developer who proposed converting an empty cigar factory in West Tampa to apartments and townhouses (Mechanik). Purchasers of an abandoned cigar factory nearby have plans to open a bar and winery.

The "new" Tampa has been discovered. Recruiters for the Tampa Bay Economic Development Council, the successor to the Committee of 100, now have an easier time selling the area to companies (Morey). Certainly, they still tout traditional cost factors, including Florida's low corporate tax rates, as their primary lure, but they can also point to amenities like the Tampa Riverwalk, which connects the Channel District to downtown and continues even further north. Recruiters now espouse the goal of attracting high-wage jobs, and suggest that one of Tampa's strengths is its diverse population. What remains to be seen is how this Sunbelt city, characterized by significant increases in housing costs and high levels of economic and racial disparity, copes with these challenges (Plan Hillsborough, "Nondiscrimination"). The days of relatively high-paid union labor benefiting from health care provided by mutual-aid societies are long gone. Economic and social trends, as well as national, state, and local policy choices, will influence the future directions of Tampa and Hillsborough County.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank David Clough, Robin Jones, Scott Keeter, Rodney Kite-Powell, Gary Mormino, and Rich Piper for their comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript. David Mechanik, Steve Morey, and Eric Newman generously granted me interviews that provided valuable information.

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## El pensamiento democrático de Victoriano Manteiga

Gabriel Cartaya

### Note from the Editor/Nota editorial

*The following excerpt is taken from Gabriel Cartaya's latest book, Victoriano Manteiga: Chungas y no chungas (Surco Sur, 2022), published to commemorate the 100th anniversary of La Gaceta. The book includes an extensive prologue detailing the life and work of this iconic Tampa newspaper's founder Victoriano Manteiga, along with a selection of his most important columns. The following excerpt addresses Manteiga's political thought, his defense of liberal democracy, and controversies surrounding his historical position toward the Cuban Revolution of 1959.*

*Esta selección está tomada del último libro de Gabriel Cartaya, Victoriano Manteiga: Chungas y no chungas (Surco Sur, 2022), publicado para conmemorar el centenario de La Gaceta. El libro incluye un extenso prólogo que detalla la vida y obra del fundador de este icónico periódico de Tampa, Victoriano Manteiga, junto con una selección de sus columnas más importantes. El siguiente fragmento aborda el pensamiento político de Manteiga, su defensa de la democracia liberal, y las controversias en torno a su posición histórica frente a la Revolución Cubana de 1959.*

Desde su aparición en 1922, *La Gaceta* se consolidó como una importante fuente de información y su director, Victoriano Manteiga de los Ríos, fue alcanzando una reputación que pronto desbordó los límites locales, extendiéndose especialmente hacia los dos países de habla hispana más relacionados con la propia población de la ciudad: Cuba y España. Aunque atento a la atmósfera internacional y crítico con diversos gobiernos autoritarios que en su tiempo se establecieron en países hispanoamericanos (la Nicaragua de Somoza, Venezuela con Rómulo Betancourt y Marcos Pérez Jiménez, República Dominicana en el tiempo de Trujillo, el Perú de Augusto Leguía, Alfredo Stroessner en Paraguay, Getulio Vargas en Brasil) en el ejemplo de Cuba y España fue un continuo batallador contra regímenes autocráticos que perjudicaron el modelo político de democracia liberal en que él creía.

En el caso de Cuba, se vinculó a la lucha contra el gobierno de Gerardo Machado hasta su caída, el 12 de agosto de 1933, y no solo a través de sus escritos condenatorios al mismo o esclarecedores en torno a la propaganda ejercida contra sus oponentes, sino también con su incondicional servicio personal a quienes desde Tampa enfrentaron a aquel régimen. Su amistad con Eduardo Chibás, nacida desde su primera visita a esta ciudad en 1928, fue hasta siempre, así como su apoyo a Fernando Ortiz cuando desde Washington



encabezaba el Consejo Cubano Americano de Amistad desde el que combatía al déspota. En sus (no) Chungas, advertimos su posición al intento de aquel Mandatario de cambiar la Constitución para extender su tiempo en el poder, así como su condena a la violación de la libertad de expresión y de prensa. El 6 de enero de 1930, cuando encarcelaron en La Habana a Roger de Lauria y Carlos Dellundé, escribe. "Para todos los cubanos es una afrenta que su Presidente encarcele a dos periodistas por opinar estos como ciudadanos y no ser gratas sus opiniones al gobierno".

En los últimos días de la crisis política que provocó finalmente la caída de Machado, en Manteiga vemos diversas acciones que muestran la agudeza del periodista, pero también el compromiso con un pueblo que es también suyo. Al producirse la mediación entre el gobierno y la oposición, encabezada por el embajador estadounidense Summer Wells, Victoriano defendió continuamente una solución al país que impidiera la intervención de las tropas estadounidenses y durante el período turbulento de los varios y efímeros gobiernos que sucedieron a Machado, no se cansó de invocar a la unidad de las fuerzas políticas que él consideraba podrían garantizar un curso democrático a la débil república cubana. Así lo vemos en el apoyo a Grau San Martín durante el llamado Gobierno de los Cien Días (4 de septiembre de 1933 al 15 de enero de 1934). El 20 de noviembre de 1933 publica: "A los cubanos de Tampa: El acto de esta noche en el Palacio de las Logias Unidas, organizado por el Comité Apolítico Pro-Grau San Martín, con la entusiasta cooperación de este periódico, tiende a unir a los cubanos de buena voluntad, no a desunirlos". Cuando cae este gobierno por un golpe militar, donde ya Fulgencio Batista es la figura militar más influyente, condena el rumbo político que toma el país a través del gobierno Caffery-Batista-Mendieta, en el que las piezas clave son el embajador estadounidense y el jefe castrense, más que el (su)puesto presidente Mendieta. Al año siguiente hay elecciones, pero el presidente electo (Miguel Mariano Gómez) es depuesto por un

jefe del ejército (Batista) que manda más que el presidente. El 28 de febrero de 1938 escribe Manteiga, quien años atrás le había dado la mano al temprano caudillo: “En Cuba no existe actualmente una verdadera democracia. Para que la democracia se establezca es necesario que el coronel se retire a ser exclusivamente el jefe del ejército, a las órdenes del presidente, no el presidente a las órdenes del coronel”.

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En esa fecha, llevaba dos años defendiendo a la República Española, no únicamente desde su periódico, sino en las calles de Tampa, organizando el Comité Popular Democrático de ayuda a España y participando en cuanto acto se desarrolló en esta ciudad encaminado a la salvación de la democracia en ese país. En “Chungas y no chungas”, hay cientos de páginas que exponen ese fervor, muchas de las cuales fueron resaltadas por la profesora Ana Varela-Lago en su lúcido ensayo “La retaguardia de Tampa: La respuesta de los inmigrantes latinos a la Guerra Civil Española (1936-1939)”. En las páginas que elegimos, se destaca la labor de Victoriano como director del periódico hispano que en Estados Unidos tuvo una mayor entrega a la causa española. El 14 de septiembre 1936, cuando en cada número de su diario hay un espacio para informar lo que pasa en España, incluye una reflexión filosófica precedida de una frase de Juan Jacobo Rousseau: “Si hubiera un pueblo compuesto de dioses, sería gobernado democráticamente”. Citando al enciclopedista francés, apunta él: “No somos dioses por acá, pero somos ciudadanos y para todo verdadero ciudadano el respeto a la democracia es un deber sagrado, ineludible (...) Democracia es respeto para el derecho ajeno, transigencia, bondad y amor a la libertad”.

Conocemos a través de las “Chungas y no chungas” la continua actividad desarrollada en Tampa a favor de la causa española, diversos acontecimientos del avance de la guerra procedentes de testigos, pues Victoriano recibía cartas del frente de batalla y noticias frescas como las enviadas por José García Granell, quien fue una especie de corresponsal de *La Gaceta* desde el campo de batalla.

Asimismo, apreciamos en ellos la visión internacionalista de un hombre que relacionó la defensa de la democracia española con la defensa de la humanidad e identificó como verdaderos españoles a quienes, sin importar la tierra en que hubieran nacido, eran capaces de defenderla. Sin embargo, no incluía en esa clasificación a quienes “se confabularon con los generales traidores, los fascistas, los nazis, los falangistas y hasta los falsos demócratas de Inglaterra, Francia y otros países de Europa y América”. Sabía, como el poeta Antonio Machado, que había dos Españas, una “inferior que ora y bosteza” y otra, la “España que nace, la España del cincel y de la maza”, con la que él se solidariza. Como vemos en su escrito del 11 de noviembre de 1937:

“Madre España: tú eres el ideal, la meta de redención, no aquella España anquilosada, reaccionaria, dominada por clérigos imbéciles y monárquicos que con sus balas derribara a José Martí en Dos Ríos”. De hecho, la España colonial que abatiera al Apóstol cubano, la misma que fusiló a los estudiantes de Medicina en La Habana en 1871 –que él también menciona– fue la retrógrada, no la de “los hombres libres, de los auténticos demócratas, porque es la España nueva, la ideal”, a la que él canta en ese artículo.

Como sabemos, la República Española cayó en 1939, porque “se confabularon los generales traidores, los fascistas, los nazis, los falangistas y hasta los falsos demócratas de Inglaterra, Francia y otros países de Europa y América”, como recordó Manteiga en el artículo del 14 de julio de 1944. Se imponía con Francisco Franco la España retrógrada que iba «a helarte el corazón», como alertó Antonio Machado en su poema «Españolito», dedicado a ese tiempo. A Victoriano también se le heló el corazón, como a miles de españoles que salieron a un largo exilio.

Mientras el director de *La Gaceta* se mantuvo fiel a su ideario democrático, algunos se plegaron al gobierno tiránico de Franco y gobiernos que combatieron al fascismo le reconocieron, entre ellos

Estados Unidos. Muchos ejemplos lo prueban, como cuando condena al senador por Florida George Smathers por defender al Mandatario ibérico y le pregunta desde sus líneas, el 11 de septiembre de 1952: “¿No sabe el joven legislador Smathers que la colonia latina de Tampa aborrece a todos los dictadores?”. En 1959, cuando el presidente estadounidense Dwight Eisenhower anunció una visita a España, Victoriano escribió en su columna, el 18 de diciembre de ese año: “El Presidente de los Estados Unidos de Norte América, que frecuentemente habla del mundo libre, del derecho de gentes, de democracia y justicia, perderá prestigio, se humillará, descendiendo hasta el punto de visitar al Monstruo que oprime a 30 millones de españoles”. El valiente periodista, que es muy consecuente con los actos a su palabra, increpa al Gobernante: “No puede hablar de democracia y “hacerle el juego” a los antidemócratas”.

En las páginas de profundo arraigo democrático que escribe Manteiga entre 1936 y 1939 como fiel defensor de la República Española, quiero resaltar finalmente el sentimiento de cubanía que aflora en muchas de ellas. En las que publica el 11 de noviembre de 1937, afirma que “no hay un solo cubano que no lleve en el corazón la causa de España”; y, como en los habitantes españoles de la ciudad algunos se pusieron a favor de Franco, a los que él llamó de frente “facciosos y traidores”, quiso dejar claro que eso no ocurría entre los procedentes de la Isla, pues para los cubanos “la causa de España es la suya, la de los leales, la de los internacionales”. Para que la palabra fuera avalada por la acción, declara: “Tampa mandó un grupo de cubanos a las trincheras del frente de Madrid y de ellos se siente orgullosa”.

Todavía, hay una vertiente del pensamiento de Manteiga que quiero destacar por las señales que ofrece a la interpretación del mundo de hoy, que es el mejor servicio de la historia. Cuando España está siendo bombardeada por tropas que recibieron armas, entrenamiento y aliento del naciente fascismo encabezado por Alemania e Italia, los países democráticos no prestaron el apoyo que requería la República, justificando su pasividad con la falacia de que el gobierno agredido era de filiación

comunista. Muy pronto, cuando el peligro del fascismo se hizo real con el estallido de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, esos mismos países –Inglaterra, Francia, Estados Unidos– se aliaron a la Unión Soviética para derribar a Hitler. Manteiga lo analizó con toda claridad y el 14 de julio de 1944 quiso recordar a los olvidadizos: "Los gobiernos de Londres y París, ciegos o 'debilitados', se limitaron a permitir que los fascistas aplastasen a los republicanos ibéricos".

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El 8 de abril de 1960, cuando en Cuba se ha establecido el gobierno de Fidel Castro, hay un artículo interesante de Manteiga que brinda diversas perspectivas de análisis. Lo escribe cuando va a celebrarse un aniversario más de la creación de la Segunda República Española, instaurada el 14 de abril de 1931. Quiere vindicar el carácter democrático de aquel gobierno y condenar una vez más a quienes a través de las armas lo sustituyeron por una dictadura, pero insiste en que fue un pretexto pintar de comunista a su gobierno para justificar la agresión, con la intención de comparar la propaganda que se estaba desarrollando contra la Revolución Cubana con lo ocurrido entre 1936 y 1939 en España. En esa fecha, Castro no había declarado el carácter socialista de la Revolución y el director de *La Gaceta* estaba firmemente convencido de que no existía esa posibilidad.

Algunos han afirmado (o insinuado) que Victoriano Manteiga estuvo a favor del comunismo, sin mostrar una acción práctica o teórica suya que respalde la tendenciosa aseveración. Dos orígenes pueden haber tenido las confusiones alrededor del pensamiento político suyo: uno, interesado y oportunista, la de quienes quisieron dañar la imagen del periodista por su actitud incorruptible hacia quienes, precisamente, no observaban el comportamiento democrático a que se comprometían en sus discursos. El otro, el apoyo que ofreció a figuras con cuyo proyecto político se identificó, como es el caso de su relación con Fidel Castro, la que más lo marcó en toda su ejecutoria como ciudadano comprometido con la democracia.

Aunque el verbo y programa del joven cubano de 29 años que conoció en noviembre de 1955

en Tampa se corresponde plenamente con lo que él quiere para Cuba, tiene por lo menos dos motivos más para creerle: primero, haber pertenecido a las filas de la ortodoxia de su amigo Eduardo Chibás y, segundo, ser quien dirigió a un grupo de jóvenes que intentaron tomar el Cuartel Moncada en 1953 para derribar al gobierno ilegítimo de Fulgencio Batista. Esas acciones le bastaban para encontrar en el nuevo líder las dos cualidades que rara vez se juntan a tan alto nivel: el pensamiento y acción. Simpatizó con él desde la primera conversación y enseguida se convirtió en uno de los organizadores principales del Club Patriótico 26 de Julio en Tampa, recién fundado en Cuba por quien en pocos años va a convertirse en el gobernante indiscutido de su país.

Se puede interpretar la posición de Manteiga frente a la Revolución Cubana a través de las publicaciones de *La Gaceta*, incluso en muchas que no corresponden a su columna. Conociendo la personalidad fuerte de Victoriano, no creo que fuera el magnetismo de Fidel Castro quien determinara su entrega apasionada al proyecto que explicó en Tampa. También Batista tenía una aureola de fascinación cuando él lo conoció físicamente, en 1938, pero supo discernir entre la palabra de tinte patriótico y la ambición desmedida de aquel hombre que entonces tenía 37 años.

Ambos personajes históricos se entrelazan en esta apreciación sobre Manteiga y para el cronista de la década de 1950 son polos opuestos en relación con su postura democrática ineludible. Uno, ya enriquecido con el dinero de la nación, viola una Constitución democrática que, irónicamente, se estrenó para abrirle paso a su gobierno legal inaugurado en 1940. Doce años después la mancilla a través de un golpe de estado con el que vuelve al poder. Aunque desde el primer día tuvo miles de opositores entre partidos políticos, organizaciones sociales o figuras prominentes de la intelectualidad, ninguno alcanzó la visibilidad lograda por el abogado de 26 años que se atrevió a asaltar la segunda fortaleza militar del país. La suerte le acompañó y sólo estuvo algo más de dos años en la cárcel, de la que salió cuando ya

estaba impreso el alegato con que se defendió en el juicio –La Historia me absolverá– y que, según confesó Victoriano el 8 de enero de 1959, él dio a conocer en Tampa antes que la prensa de la Isla lo publicara.

Todo el que lea ese documento puede comprender por qué Manteiga –como tantos prestigios políticos e intelectuales de su tiempo– se entregó a hacer realidad aquel proyecto de fuerte naturaleza martiana. La promesa de destronar al tirano para restablecer la Constitución de 1940, hacer cumplir sus postulados, abrir caminos a la industrialización del país, limitar los excesos del capital estadounidense y latifundista en Cuba y, además, hacer accesible a todos el derecho a la educación y la salud se identificaba como la legítima aspiración que defendió el propio Chibás. Como aquel discurso estaba respaldado con lapromesa de elecciones en que participarían las diversas fuerzas políticas del país y, para despejar cualquier duda, con continuas declaraciones de que “el verde de las palmas” –no el rojo alrededor de la hoz y el martillo– sería el color cubano del gobierno revolucionario, pues no había nada que temer.

Con absoluta confianza en ese programa, Manteiga se entregó a hacerlo triunfal. Si la caída de Machado no derivó en la república deseada, si el “no pasarán” del pueblo español fue ahogado por la superioridad de la maquinaria de guerra fascista, esta vez estuvo convencido de que, con un líder del calibre de Fidel Castro, a quien estrechó fuertemente la mano en Tampa, nada impediría el establecimiento de la república que José Martí había prometido en el Liceo Cubano de Ybor City, cuyas vibraciones vino a sentir otra vez en “La Historia me absolverá”. Antes de venir a esta localidad, ya Fidel tenía buenas referencias del periodista de Tampa, lo que se muestra en una carta que José Manuel Fidalgo escribe a Victoriano y éste publica el 21 de octubre de 1955: “Él [Fidel] tiene mucho interés, amigo Manteiga, en conocerlo a usted personalmente, pues en diversas ocasiones – tanto en Cuba como aquí– ha mostrado la admiración y simpatía que siente por su valiente pluma

en ese constante y continuo batallar de usted contra el déspota de Cuba, así como su simpatía a la ortodoxia y a Eddy". Claro que Eddy era un buen puente, pues era conocida la amistad de Chibás con el editorialista. En el acto del 27 de noviembre de 1955 en Ybor City, en el que habló Fidel, le precedió Manteiga en la tribuna, quien declaró que en todas las etapas de su vida había combatido a los dictadores y prometió que "continuaría combatiéndolos", como él mismo publica en su columna el 2 de diciembre de 1955.

Justamente, al año exacto de esas palabras desembarca Castro en las costas del suroeste cubano al frente de 82 hombres. A pesar del desastre inicial en que muchos mueren, son heridos o dispersados –Alegría de Pio, 5 de diciembre de 1956–, se interna en la Sierra Maestra con muy pocos hombres, pero la inmediata incorporación de campesinos y apoyo con recursos y combatientes desde las ciudades hicieron posible el desarrollo de una guerra contra las fuerzas armadas de Fulgencio Batista que, en dos años, dieron el triunfo a los rebeldes conducidos por Fidel. En toda esta etapa el apoyo de Manteiga a la causa cubana fue incondicional. Cuando el 1.º de enero de 1959 huyó Batista de la Isla y se proclamó el triunfo de la Revolución, el editor de La Gaceta, junto a su hijo Roland, tomó un avión para La Habana, en cuyas avenidas se sintió parte del triunfo popular. Con toda intención y credibilidad, uno de los primeros comentarios que hace en Chungas, el 9 de enero de 1959, relaciona el proceso que se está viviendo en Cuba con el triunfo de la democracia: "La victoria de Fidel Castro y sus compañeros sobre la tiranía de Batista, es la mejor prueba de que el pueblo cubano es sinceramente democrático". Enseguida le asegura a sus lectores que "Fidel Castro, el héroe de los héroes, va a dedicar su vida tan pronto como la paz tenga sólidas bases, a cumplir las promesas que hiciera en México, en Nueva York, en Tampa y en otras ciudades de los



Estados Unidos”; es decir, habrá una Cuba “digna de la ideología martiana”.

El 6 de febrero, con legítimo orgullo, declara que “no hay ningún periódico en la América Latina, ni en los Estados Unidos, que haya defendido con mayor vigor la causa de Fidel Castro”. En abril de ese año, cuando se está preparando la Primera Ley de Reforma Agraria y algunos medios de difusión comienza a alertar sobre un peligro comunista en la Isla, desde *La Gaceta* responde Manteiga: “Elementos con delirio de persecución en cuanto al comunismo, tratan de envenenar a la opinión pública de este país en perjuicio de Cuba libre” (17 de abril, 1959). Para enfrentar a los “amarillos” que insistían en el “enrojecimiento” del gobierno revolucionario, encontró un argumento eficaz en el hecho de que en las elecciones sindicales de ese año triunfaran los candidatos pertenecientes al Movimiento 26 de Julio sobre los comunistas. “En las elecciones sindicales verificadas en Cuba el domingo pasado, los comunistas fueron derrotados por los Democráticos”, explica en *Chungas* ese primero de mayo. Siete días después inserta una frase que cree concluyente. “No se puede pertenecer al movimiento 26 de Julio, políticamente hablando, y al mismo tiempo ser comunista”.

En junio de ese primer año de la Revolución volvió a Cuba y al regresar, asegura: “Hablamos con el Dr. Fidel Castro, primer ministro y hombre de extraordinaria generosidad”, pero lo que más quiere destacar es que “en Cuba se habla menos de comunismo que en este país”, con lo que enfrenta a “grupos interesados en hablar de comunismo con la esperanza de que su infamia sea creída” (12 de junio, 1959). En ese mismo escrito, Manteiga equipara al comunismo con el fascismo, porque para él “son dictaduras de diferente color, pero dictaduras con prensa amordazada, opositoristas perseguidos y asesinados, elecciones a gusto del gobierno y hacienda pública a disposición de los que mandan”, pero declara que eso no se corresponde con lo que ha visto en Cuba, un lugar donde “no hay comunismo”.

Todavía en diciembre de ese año, informa que “están vendidos todos los billetes de pasaje entre Tampa y La Habana para los días comprendidos entre diciembre 20 y 26”, porque “los tampeños no tragan las campañas de difamación que contra Cuba hacen los medios sobornados”. Unas líneas después, afirma con convicción que en el gobierno cubano “jamás dominarán los partidarios de Moscú”. Sin embargo, en 1960 debió advertir la creciente escalada de figuras de filiación comunista a cargos en el gobierno y la penetración que comenzó a tener la Unión Soviética en la Isla. Si el 4 de diciembre de 1959 afirmó que “no es comunismo, es justicia social para los cubanos y sus hijos” lo que pretenden las medidas revolucionarias, cuando en mayo de 1960 vuelve por última vez a su país natal, encuentra que en algunos “el tema del descontento es el comunismo” y, aunque todavía afirma que “Fidel no es comunista”, le llama la atención que “en el gobierno hay comunistas”. De todos modos, no lo ve como una amenaza, remitiéndose a una experiencia histórica cercana: durante el gobierno de Batista, entre 1940 y 1944, también hubo comunistas en el gobierno burgués.

Manteiga estuvo en el desfile del 1.º de mayo de 1960 e, incluso, fue invitado a la tribuna, a la que no pudo llegar por el mar de pueblo que había frente a ella, según nos cuenta. Pero le conmovió el espectáculo de ver a medio millón de personas gritando vivas a Fidel Castro. “Apoteósica demostración de apoyo al Gobierno” exclamo él, sintiéndose orgullosamente cubano en aquella “mañana gloriosa” que quizás nunca había experimentado ni volvería a vivir. A pesar de todo el entusiasmo, alguna decepción debió causarle sospechar que ventiscas comunistas pudieran interrumpir el sueño de elecciones libres que aseguraran la democracia, aun cuando era previsible que el triunfador indiscutido en unas urnas iba a ser el conductor de aquel proceso revolucionario.

Es muy llamativo que, acabado de regresar de este su último viaje a Cuba, Manteiga renunciara a la presidencia del Club Patriótico 26 de Julio en Tampa, si bien aclaró en un editorial del 20 de mayo que “no renunciamos por lo que vimos y oímos en Cuba”, sino por “enfermedad que no es grave”. Si

bien, en esas mismas líneas todavía afirma que “el pueblo cubano, individualista, que repele las imposiciones, no puede ser comunista”, es significativo que después de esa visita a La Habana “Chungas y no chungas” solo aparezca esporádicamente y su opinión como director del periódico se emita como Editorial. En todo el año 1961 no encontramos su vieja columna en La Gaceta, ni siquiera en los días dramáticos de Playa Girón.

A finales de 1960 crece un ambiente anticomunista en Tampa y algunos identificaron a *La Gaceta* con la ideología que estaban denunciando, lo que es comprensible cuando se observa la relación que tuvo su director con los líderes revolucionarios. El mismo Victoriano reproduce el 13 de enero un párrafo que ha publicado en Nueva York *Bohemia Libre*, una revista que intentaba ser la nueva Bohemia párrafo que ha publicado en Nueva York Bohemia Libre, una revista que intentaba ser la nueva Bohemia de los cubanos exiliados. “En Tampa se edita un periodiquito de cuatro páginas titulado La Gaceta, –dirigido por un aventurero de apellido Manteiga– defensor del régimen comunista de Fidel Castro. Este periódico recibió una respuesta de verdad la semana pasada, cuando jóvenes cubanos anticomunistas destrozaron los cristales de su edificio a ladrillazos. Sin embargo, este libelo comunista sigue saliendo en Estados Unidos”.

Pienso que el hombre que una vez ripostó con su revólver a esbirros que intentaron secuestrarle –presumiblemente enviados por Machado– tenía valor suficiente para enfrentarse a este tipo de ataques, así que no coincido con quienes han expresado que fueron aquellas amenazas las que lo apartaron de la Revolución Cubana, sino la dura comprensión del rumbo socialista –elegido u obligado– que había tomado, carácter declarado públicamente por primera vez el 16 de abril de 1961. Después de esa fecha, las notas que encontramos en La Gaceta sobre Cuba son cada vez más escasas. El 28 de abril, hay un breve texto titulado “No fusilará Cuba a los prisioneros”, aludiendo a los encarcelados en

Playa Girón; el 19 de mayo publica una carta abierta que enviaron algunos profesores universitarios occidentales enarbolando el Gran Garrote". A su vez, como creo sentía el propio Manteiga, "se declaran contra el comunismo, pero también contra una invasión a Cuba".

El 21 de julio del mismo año, *La Gaceta* publica un artículo de Alberto Baeza titulado "Perfil humano de Jorge Mañach", cuando ambos intelectuales se habían ido de Cuba al no simpatizar con el rumbo político del país. El 28 de julio da a conocer, sin una palabra de simpatía, que "será organizado un solo partido". El 8 de diciembre reafirma que "está formando Fidel Castro el partido único". Para juzgar el pensamiento de Manteiga, es útil conocer el comentario que acompaña a esta breve noticia: "Un partido respaldaba a Adolfo Hitler, el único que él permitía. Un partido, el único que él consentía, apoyaba a Benito Mussolini. Francisco Franco, dominado por el Opus Dei, es el "Santón" de la Falange, el único partido, o lo que sea, que él tolera. Stroessner, en Paraguay, celebró hace poco tiempo unas elecciones, las perdió y decidió "quedarse" .... También "posee" un partido que pierde y después gana por medio de la violencia. Los hermanos Somozatriunfan siempre, como un difunto padre, porque ellos son los "amos" de su partido y su país".

Los ejemplos con que el periodista ilustra el peligro del partido único constituyen una abierta denuncia al propósito cubano de seguir ese modelo. Y abiertamente expresa una opinión que es suficiente para entender su rechazo a un gobierno de naturaleza totalitaria: "Nosotros opinamos que un partido único, no importa el nombre que tenga, representa a una minoría 'selecta' que por medio de la fuerza se mantiene en el poder. Khrushchev domina a los rusos porque su partido, el comunista, es el único. Luego, es preferible el gobierno democrático en lo que respecta a la libertad individual y los partidos políticos, que un régimen basado en un solo partido".

Tres semanas después, el 29 de diciembre de 1961, en unas palabras de felicitación a sus lectores por el Año Nuevo, Victoriano promete a los tampeños "mantener la línea recta de siempre, laborando, en la

medida de nuestras fuerzas, por el progreso de la nación, de Florida, y especialmente de Tampa". Eso sí, les recuerda que este semanario "es opuesto a todas las dictaduras, no importa cuál sea su matiz". Y culmina con unas palabras que sintetizan su pensamiento político: "Nuestros principios políticos se basan en la libertad individual, en el dominio del Gobierno por la mayoría, previa la consulta al pueblo por medio del voto emitido, sin restricciones ni presiones antidemocráticas".

Una semana después, en la salida del 5 de enero de 1962, Victoriano deja de ser el director del periódico que fundó y dirigió durante casi cuarenta años, informándole a sus lectores: "A partir de la semana próxima pasará a ser Editor de *La Gaceta*, con las responsabilidades que esto entraña, el Sr. Rolando Manteiga Pedraza, hijo del actual editor y propietario".

Tenía entonces 68 años y durante décadas combatió desde las páginas de *La Gaceta* a los gobiernos dictatoriales de su tiempo, especialmente en América Latina y Europa. Sufrió el curso político que sucedió a la caída del gobierno de Gerardo Machado en Cuba, en tanto la tranquilidad democrática y elevación de los niveles de justicia social que esperaba para su pueblo no fueron entonces conquistados. En esa misma década, la derrota República Española —a la que tanto defendió—, le provocó dolor, pero nunca silencio. En la década de 1950, se entrega apasionadamente a la revolución cubana que organiza y conduce Fidel Castro, en quien ve un fiel continuador de José Martí y Eduardo Chibás, las dos figuras a quienes más apreció en el escenario político cubano de todos los tiempos.

Cree hasta el empecinamiento que el triunfo popular del 1.º de enero de 1959 en Cuba —del que con razón se siente parte— abrirá el camino a una república martiana-chibacista-fidelista, verdaderamente democrática, liberal, equilibrada, justa, respetuosa del pensamiento y la libertad, aun frente al fuego de graves enfrentamientos con sectores del gran capital cubano y estadounidense. Prometió a sus lectores una y mil veces que el gobierno revolucionario no se inclinaría hacia el comunismo soviético, no sólo por el

carácter dictatorial de ese tipo de gobierno, sino, también, por ser ajeno a la cultura, tradición y aspiraciones del pueblo de Cuba, afincadas en el imaginario de república alimentado por José Martí. Tal vez en su fuero interno el viejo periodista -que se enorgulleció de la amistad con Fidel Castro- creyó que el rumbo socialista fue la única opción que encontró el líder revolucionario al verse atenazado por Estados Unidos, y, quién sabe si esperó de Kennedy un cambio de política hacia la isla que permitiera corregir el rumbo errado. Su silencio posterior a 1961 con relación a su país natal, hasta su muerte en 1982, tal vez se relaciona con la ilusión de que la Revolución Cubana encontraría el cauce indicado por Martí y Chibás.

En su penúltima declaración como director del periódico, que por cierto es una felicitación por el Año Nuevo (1962) llama la atención la exclusión del proceso revolucionario cubano, al que con tanta efusión incluyó en nota laudatoria del año anterior. Y para que no hubiera dudas sobre la nueva dirección que correspondía a su hijo, aclaró que el semanario "es opuesto a todas las dictaduras, no importa cuál sea su matiz", con cuyo giro lingüístico final se está oponiendo a la tonalidad socialista que por Cuba entraba al continente. Y, como si hiciera falta, recalca que "somos demócratas y el nuevo editor lo es".

Con esas convicciones profundamente democráticas y de amor a la libertad, con las que vivió hasta su muerte, se retiró la semana siguiente de la dirección de La Gaceta.



Gabriel Cartaya holds a master's degree in Latin American, Caribbean and Cuban studies from the University of Havana, where he worked as a professor and researcher. He is a recognized Martí specialist, author of the books *Con las últimas páginas de José Martí* (Editorial Oriente, 1995), *José Martí en 1895* (Cuba, 2001), *Luz al universo* (Gente Nueva, 2006), *Domingos de tanta luz* (2019), and most recently, *Tampa en la obra de José Martí* (Ed. Surco Sur, 2021). In 2010 he founded the *Revista Surco Sur*, a journal dedicated to Latin American art and literature. Its digital edition is published by the University of South Florida. He is the Spanish editor of *La Gaceta*, the nation's only trilingual newspaper, currently celebrating its 100th anniversary (1922-2022) under the guidance of the iconic Manteiga family.

## Excerpt from "Guajira, the Cuba Girl, a Memoir."

Zita Arocha, Ph.D.

"Guajira, the Cuba Girl, a memoir" charts the journey of a Cuban American journalist to reclaim her missing past, uncover damaging family secrets and heal from the karma of exile. During some of her many return trips to the homeland, she is caught in the web of Cold War spycraft between her native land and adoptive country. Born in a small farming village outside Havana, where the locals are called guajiros, she, her parents, and a younger sister left Cuba in 1957 due to poverty. Still, they visited relatives on the island during the seismic Cuban Revolution of 1959 that later turned Communist. After a harrowing month of hiding in her grandparents' home, they were allowed to return to their new home in Tampa. For the following two decades, she was prevented from reconnecting with her family on the island because of the politically turbulent relationship between the U.S. and Cuba.

She has since returned to the island many times and now takes students on trips to learn about the history and culture of her beloved Cuba. She also teaches classes on Cuba.

Here are some selections from the memoir:



My 15 year old mother, Ogla converses with my great Aunt Carmen, who was visiting from Tampa. The photo is of the family home in Guira de Melena in the 1940s. Tia Carmen, who married a Spanish-born barber from Tampa, made it possible for my parents, sister, and me to emigrate to Florida in 1957.

### Excerpt #1

Even the West Tampa bungalow I lived in as a child felt incomplete like us, a bell missing a gong. It had an aluminum-covered pitched roof, a wide front porch where my sisters and I played in the sweltering summers, and wood slat walls. Ours was one of the thousands of similar houses built



for Cuban and Italian cigar-factory immigrant workers in the late 19th and early 20th Century in West Tampa and Ybor City. They were called cañones or shotgun houses because each one was the same: a front door and a back door and a series of skinny rooms in between; fire a gun or canon through the front door, and the bullet or canon ball exited out the back.

Our *cañon* had 1919 carved on the concrete driveway next to the porch and was less than eight blocks from the red brick Garcia y Vega cigar factory where my mother rolled cigars for a few years. My sisters and I jumped rope, played marbles, and plucked the back legs off grasshoppers in the driveway. We had an aggressive rooster and two chickens. After a neighbor complained about its crowing, Dad eventually got rid of the rooster, and I believe we ate the chickens. I returned from school one day to find the rooster gone and asked Dad where it had gone. He said he'd given it away to a farmer. I'm sure the bird ended up in Mom's *sopa de pollo*, just like the chickens.

Over time we remodeled the house ourselves. We covered the inside wood walls with planks of sheetrock and lowered the 14-foot ceilings—my sister, and I raised the planks of sheetrock way above our heads with long wooden poles and held them there so Dad could nail the plasterboard to the ceiling beams; we installed new aluminum windows and doors. One family project was to cover the floors with beige vinyl tiles, and I spent hours over several weeks on my knees helping Dad glue down the tiles. Later, we installed brown and tan shag carpeting in the bedrooms. Mom was proud of her modern yellow and avocado green appliances, a double oven, a cooktop, and a double-sided refrigerator from Sears.

After a pressure cooker of black beans exploded, smearing black crud over the ceiling and walls, we were able to have it repainted courtesy of the insurance company. Mom—who enjoyed rearranging tables, chairs, and sofas often—decided to divide the narrow living room and hired a handyman to build a divider. The carpenter friend built a four-foot medio punto, made to resemble a white

tbrick wall with an opening at the top for beach sand and plastic flowers. The separation was the focal point of family portraits, including one of me dressed in a baby-pink chiffon gown and beehive hairstyle just before leaving with my first high school date to the senior prom alone with a boy. Despite the improvements and other renovations, the house remained a termite-infested shack, sweltering in the summer and cold as a freezer in the winter. I always felt provisional inside its thin walls, just a ghost passing through.

Excerpt # 2

*January 1959*

*Tampa, Florida*

Mami totters at the top of the airplane stairs, gazing down at the shiny tarmac of Miami International Airport. It is nearly midnight on a brisk January day, and an icy wind pierces our flimsy tropical clothes. My dad is beside her; my sister and I have paused a few steps behind them. We clutch life-size dolls and gifts from Los Reyes Magos during our family vacation to Cuba.

Mom wears five-inch heels and carries a bag of oranges from my grandparent's backyard in Guira de Melena. As she wobbles down the metal stairs on her spikes, the paper sack bursts; the oranges tumble down the steps one at a time and roll onto the smooth landing strip.

My sister and I watch from the top of the airplane stairs as our parents scurry after the spinning orbs. We clutch dolls, Christmas presents from Los *Reyes Magos*, almost as tall as we are. The scene below us seems to unfold in slow motion: Mom and Dad scurry after the fruit, gleaming orbs spinning out onto an edgeless blacktop universe. Our parents scoop up the escaping oranges as if they were family diamonds. Dad stuffs some in his pants pockets and Mom inside her shiny patent-leather purse. A tall woman in a pencil-thin skirt runs after them with a bag in one hand and helps collect the rest of the

fruit. I watch from our perch at the top of the airplane stairs as the blonde woman hands a sturdy bag to my dazed mother.

She wears a little blue cap above her blonde bouffant and has perfect lips like a Kewpie doll. They remind me of the red Habanero pepper I plucked from a bush near my grandparent's house. The pepper looked like a Christmas ornament, and my mouth watered as I crammed it into my mouth, expecting to taste sugar. Instead, fire scorched the tip of my tongue, my throat, and windpipe, and no amount of water—I must have asked Abuela for at least a dozen glasses that afternoon—quenched the tormenting thirst. I remember Abuela asking me why I was so thirsty. Embarrassed over my mistaking a pepper for candy, I shrugged and lied: "I don't know."

After the spinning oranges have been retrieved, the blonde woman waves my sister Olga and me down the metal stairs to join our parents on the tarmac. The tarmac resembles a precipice in a universe of unexplored planets, shooting stars, and black holes.

"Welcome to Florida," she coos as I run my tongue over dry lips. The memory is flawed, like a cracked piece of prized family China hidden in the corner of an antique cupboard or broken stitches on a dress seam.

This arrival in Miami was in early '59 when Castro and his rebels declared victory over the corrupt Batista regime, smashed gambling machines and parking meters, and said adios to U.S. interference. Like other innocents abroad who soon lose touch with current events in their home country, we returned to reunite with relatives and pay overdue debts to the grocer and moneylender. Instead, we walked into a revolution and a government that had collapsed. After the rebels reopened the airport and allowed us to return to Florida, we lost sight of relatives for two decades.

This was our true exile.

## Excerpt # 3

Each trip home entails a slight shift in identity, a different outside image of “me” created by moving mirrors inside the kaleidoscope of U.S.-Cuba relations. The prism of politics and the lingering political, social, and historic Cold War forces beyond my puny control distorts my identity.

The kaleidoscope shifts with each major or minor news event—an early morning CIA-engineered invasion by exiles at the Bay of Pigs (Cubans call it Playa Girón); a showdown between the U.S. and the Soviets over missiles on the island; a Cuban exile pilot shot out of the sky by the Cuban military quashing hopes of a rapprochement with the U.S.; the young boy Elian Gonzalez brought to the U.S. by his mother who died during the crossing and was returned by force to his father in Cuba; the arrest of a Cuban spy caught working in the Defense Intelligence Agency, the arrest of an alleged U.S. spy in Cuba.

Another near-fatal blow to renewed relations was the Mariel Boatlift of the '80s when Cuba dumped 125,000 Cubans on an unsuspecting Washington. Although a few were ordinary prisoners and mental patients, Cuba called them all *escoria* garbage. Crafty exiles like Reverend Espinosa played both sides to the advantage. After the boatlift, when U.S.-Cuba relations soured and oversaturated tourism business to Cuba slowed, the now less cocky minister went on air in Miami to denounce by name the multitude of Castro spies living in their midst, most of them former friends and business acquaintances. He died a few years later of a heart attack.

Several years ago, under President Barack Obama, the archenemies kissed and made up, renewed diplomatic ties, reopened their embassies, and began cooperating on bilateral tourism, cultural, and education exchange. As a result of the new give and take, the U.S. eased travel restrictions for Americans to visit Cuba, allowed some U.S. businesses, including airlines and cruise ships, to enter the Cuban tourism market, and eased the cap on how much money in remittances Cuban Americans could send to their relatives.

Cuba, in turn, began to grant business licenses by the thousands to ordinary citizens who turned their homes into restaurants. Air B&Bs launched repair shops and home bakeries and started selling crafts, jewelry, and clothing.

A U.S. President visited the outlaw island for the first time in 60 years. Obama met with his counterpart, Raul Castro, and even accepted the Cuban President's invitation to a ball game. Friendly relations ended when Donald Trump assumed the Presidency and reversed most of Obama's more open policies. Joe Biden's election to the White House gave moderates and liberals hope that he would rescind Trump's punitive actions. But the global Covid pandemic, effects of climate change, shifting sands of geopolitical power in relations with China, Russia, and the Middle East—as well as the Cuban government's crackdown on street protesters on July 11, 2021—have prompted a stay the course approach by Biden.

The long-term outcome of the relationship is precarious for complex reasons—including future United States elections, partisan politics, and pandering to conservative Cuban Americans to obtain their coveted votes. Polls show that Americans support closer ties, as do younger Cubans. But the aging and dwindling number of anti-Castro die-hards continue to believe the U.S. has sold out to the Communists. Most Cuban American political leaders share their outdated ideology.

At the same time, the new generation of less ideologically minded Cuban leaders insists they are perfecting—not selling out—their hard-won revolution. As a tour guide once said to a group of visiting U.S. teachers and students: "We want Socialism with *pachanga*." Pachanga means party. We shall see.



Zita Arocha is a bilingual journalist, writer, and educator. Her award-winning memoir, "Guajira, the Cuba Girl," will be published in the fall of 2023 by Inlandia Institute, an independent press in Southern California. Born in rural Cuba to a poor guajiro (peasant) family, she immigrated with her parents and a sister to Tampa, Florida, in 1957. They visited relatives on the island in January 1959 when the ruling dictator fled, and Fidel Castro and his revolutionaries claimed victory. Eventually, she and her family were allowed to return home to Tampa. Arocha has a master's degree from the University of South Florida and an MFA in bilingual creative writing from the University of Texas El Paso, where she taught multimedia journalism for nearly two decades. She lives in Southern New Mexico with her photographer husband, David Smith Soto.

## Excerpts from *The Cuban Sandwich: A History in Layers*

Andrew Huse  
Bárbara Cruz, Ph.D.  
Jeff Houck

The Cuban sandwich has long been an object of fascination and reverence for me, not only for how it tastes but for the people and journeys it represents. I was tired of the old hometown debates between Miami, Tampa, and Key West that had dominated discussions about the sandwich's history. I resolved to seriously explore the subject. In an effort to change the conversation, I placed Cuba, Cubans, and the diaspora back into the center of the sandwich story. A broad research approach aimed to be more inclusive among Cubans as well. Through the circumstances of emigration and exile, early generations of Cubans and their sandwiches had effectively been excluded from the sandwich's history. The history of Cuba and its troubled relationship with the United States provide a broad context in relation to the sandwich's story, including class, race, empire, exile, and more. My co-authors and I created profiles of contemporary sandwich mavens, artisans, influencers, and professionals, adding their own voices to the mix. When questions arose about certain details, we drew on the *cubanidad* of coauthor Bárbara Cruz and many trusted consultants, including her family and friends. Our biggest regret is that politics and pandemics prevented us from including more voices and sources from the island itself.

*This excerpt is from the first chapter of the book, which discusses the period before the Cuban Republic.*

*After discussing the colonial period, I explore the roots of Cuban cuisine.*

### **Cuban Cuisine**

The renowned Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz compared his nation's identity to the cooking of *ajiaco*, a stew of Spanish beef, Native Indian *ají* (chile peppers), and starchy tubers such as yuca and yams that were associated with African slave food. Taíno natives prepared ajiaco originally by preparing it in a hole in the ground lined with leaves, probably banana. The ingredients cooked slowly, simmered by

the sun. Over time, members of the tribe might take some to eat and add more ingredients to the stew. In this way, *ajiaco* might cook for many days or even weeks at a time. The strong flavor of the chiles had the virtue of masking the flavors of spoiled ingredients. Some Cubans interpret their culture as an ongoing *ajiaco*, which is never fully cooked or quite complete.

To fully understand Cuban cuisine, it is best to know something beyond ingredients and demographics to contemplate the spirit of the people. In his *Global Handbook* devoted to Cuba, Ted Henken wrote, "Cuban etiquette revolved around the national characteristics of boisterousness and loquaciousness, sensuality and secularity, jocularly and mockery, ambition and modernity. The most distinctive social characteristic shared by Cubans is a deep sense of hospitality. Cubans also tend to hold conversations at an unusually high volume and are masters at the art of conversation, often holding forth for hours."

Antonio Benitez-Rojo, one of Cuba's literary greats, identified the two conflicting natures in the island's history, known as *Cuba Grande* and *Cuba Pequeña* (Big and Little Cuba, respectively). Authoritarianism, pride, brutality, and sugar plantations represented the Big Cuba of the financial elites, but did not represent the soul of the common people, or Little Cuba. The true Cuban spirit, also known as *lo cubano* or "the Cuban way," could only be found in Little Cuba. The most famous and durable creations of Cuban culture would not be passed down by elites, but percolated insistently from below. Even Cuba's food was traditionally produced on small-scale *sitio* farms, often run by ex-slaves and their descendants who were fiercely proud of their humble estates.

Some scholars have traced the origins of an independent Cuba to the rich body of literature produced there beginning in the mid-1800s. Among a flowering of revolutionary thought, the upstart nation's earliest cookbooks were vital in forging an identity apart from Spain's. *Comida criolla* (Creole food) became an



important facet of Cuban nationalism in the 1850s. Advocates of independence renounced Spain and its system of sugar and slaves, while extolling Cuban folk traditions, especially food. Cuban cookbooks arose along with the island's literacy rate and growing middle class, documenting the depth and local variety of the national cuisine at the time. Cuban nationalists held up ingredients such as *boniato* (also known as white sweet potato), plantains, and yuca, and recipes such as *ajiaco* as being distinctly Cuban rather than Spanish. True *criolla* cuisine included indigenous and African influences.

*This excerpt is from chapter 2, "Sandwiches," which discusses the rise of the sandwich as a popular dish around the world and in Cuba. The development of distinctive Cuban bread seemed to coincide with that of the sandwich.*

### ***Pan Cubano***

Since 1915, Cuban style *pan de agua* (bread made with water), known as Cuban bread, has been baked into yard-long loaves at La Segunda Central Bakery in Tampa's immigrant enclave of Ybor City. With long strips of palmetto leaf splitting the top, the loaves seem long and unruly beside a plump, uniform baguette, with its even cuts along the top. The bread is crusty, craggy even. The flaky exterior shatters with a bite, giving way to a fluffy interior. With minimal added fat, "water" bread's shelf life is typically a single day. The Cuban bread produced in Ybor City is so notorious for littering tables with crumbs and shards that local waiters began carrying scrapers to brush aside the detritus from tablecloths between courses. La Segunda's virtually unchanged product gives us a window into the evolution of Cuban bread. Here too, the Cubans of Florida are divided. Between Tampa and Miami, the approach to making Cuban bread is separated by generations and the circumstances of immigration and exile.

The Spanish believed that bread was a symbol of Western civilization—it was used in the Christian

sacrament of communion, after all. As a tropical country, Cuba had never cultivated wheat but depended on imports. The scarcity of flour was a recurring cause for concern in the colony. Cubans tended to have small, simple kitchens without ovens or the desire to heat up their houses baking fresh bread. For those living in cities and towns, this was left to commercial bakeries.

As early as the 1830s, visitors noted the high quality of Cuba's bread. Many recalled the bread vendors who wandered the plazas and streets selling loaves from cloth lined-baskets perched on their heads. Whereas Cuban bread assumed the shape of squat, round loaves before the War for Independence like "overgrown biscuits," the thin, pan de flauta became a standard type of bread after the War for Independence (and the Spanish-American War of 1898). In 1906, a journalist noted, "When the loaf is cut, the slices are no bigger around than our silver dollar." It is easy to see the similarities between pan Cubano and Spanish barra bread. Cubans also consumed typical sandwich bread or pan de molde, also known as Pullman bread for the train cars that helped standardize the box-shaped loaf.

Journalists in the U.S. tended to describe Cuban bread in superlatives. In 1899, the New Orleans Times-Picayune, from a city which was well-versed in excellent bread, enthused, "Cuba does have the best bread in the world." The Minneapolis Journal swooned in 1906, "Cuban bread is something to dream about long afterwards." In 1909, a woman writing to the Indianapolis Star reported, "Cuban bread, made in loaves more than a yard in length, is far superior to any made in our own land."

Cuban bread inspired by that era has a characteristic strip down the length of the top. According to scholar Jono Miller, the palmetto leaf served as a temperature gauge of sorts. In the old days of uneven wood-fired ovens, if the palmetto leaf began to scorch, it served as a visual cue to the baker to rotate the loaf or shift it to a cooler part of the oven.

Although Americans seemed to universally love Cuban bread at first taste, they were often puzzled by the appearance of the era's signature palmetto leaves that crowned each loaf. Some correspondents erroneously assumed that the bread was wrapped in banana leaves while baking. An American housewife living in Cuba noted,

Cuban bread almost invariably is the product of the [professional] baker, and is excellent in quality. The shape of the loaf is always the same -- long, narrow and flat. Sometimes the suspicious American will find at his first meal a bit of what seems to be brown paper adhering to the top of the loaf. In Cuba each baker purchases daily a certain number of green banana leaves, a strip of which is fastened to the top of each loaf, for the purpose of preventing the bread from rising too high in the heat of the oven. Certainly, the result is a crisp, crusty loaf, highly pleasing alike to eye and taste.

When Tampa's Cuban community began baking the distinctive fluted Cuban bread of the 1890s, long and thin, it preserved a tradition all but forgotten by those on the island today. Local legends claim that Tampa's Cuban bread recipe, popularized in the late 19th century, was a product of the war for independence. To conserve food, bakers literally stretched their bread into long, thin loaves, enabling hungry Cubans to cut small slices for rationing.

Journalists' accounts of the vendors in Havana confirm the change between the late 1890s and the early 1900s. Whereas old-style Cuban bread assumed the shape of squat, round loaves before the war like "overgrown biscuits," the thin fluted loaf became a standard type of bread after the War for Independence (and the Spanish-American War of 1898). In 1906, a journalist noted, "when the loaf is cut, the slices are no bigger around than our silver dollar." Over time, the size of the Cuban loaves grew in girth so they resembled yard-long loaves of bread rather than oversized breadsticks. One could argue that those long loaves ran through the entire workday, when most workers woke to a breakfast of *café con leche* and buttered Cuban bread. The morning refresher set off a succession of miniature feasts throughout the day, which concluded with dinner and the last of the bread.

Because skilled cigar workers in Havana and Tampa were “the means of production,” they took breaks regularly throughout the day, seeking out snacks in nearby cafes. These breaks were later minimized by the *cafeteros*, or coffee vendors, who kept the workers well-supplied with coffee and other refreshments at their work benches. Still, workers regularly left the factories for coffee and conversation in the morning and afternoon, when snacks and sandwiches (which were often available in smaller sizes than they are today) were most popular during the work week. For all of its tasty perks, the structure of the work day restricted snacking impulses. During weekends, the cafes brimmed with coffee and conversation, and street vendors all over Cuba deployed their wares, a panoply of portable bites and delights available at virtually all hours. At night when the tropical heat receded, Cuba's nocturnal appetite emerged, when every morsel would serve to prolong the evening's pleasures or satiate them. The Cuban loaf cradled the people's most elaborate sandwich, and in the process, trace the prosperity of the exile community.

*This brief excerpt is the opening of the section on sandwiches in Cuba and reflects on the sandwich's place in Cuban culture.*

### **The *Sangwich* in Cuba**

Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz developed the idea of “transculturation,” cultural mixing and exchange in relation to Cuban culture, using the traditional stew, *ajiaco*, as an illustration. With Spanish beef, native chilies, and root vegetables associated with African slaves, the humble dish served as a bedrock of Cuban culture and cuisine. For Ortiz, Cuba's culture was best represented by the dish-- which is common in Cuba and across the Caribbean, where it is also known as *sancocho*-- because all of the ingredients retained their integrity, unlike the “melting pot” metaphor of the U.S. Each element contributes its own flavors and textures to the stew while being suffused by the other ingredients.

If Ortiz's metaphor of *ajiaco* helped to explain the varied influences on colonial Cuba, perhaps no dish illustrates modern Cuba's history better than the Cuban sandwich, a dish that represents the realities of urban life, reveals the influence of other cultures, and reflects modern aspirations. At its center is the deep love for pork, which the Spanish had brought to the New World. The other components of the sandwich, such as Cuban bread, reflect the growing complexity of modern economics and cuisine. In contrast to the rustic simplicity of *ajiaco*, the sandwich is complex and largely dependent on imported and/or processed ingredients, such as wheat flour, cheese and so on. Rather than a one-pot communal experience that could theoretically simmer forever with added ingredients, the sandwich was personal, portable, public, and pricey in comparison.

Excerpted from *The Cuban Sandwich: A History in Layers* by Andrew T. Huse, Bárbara C. Cruz, and Jeff Houck. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2022. Reprinted with permission of the University Press of Florida



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