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*“Feeling Like Fidel”: Scholarly  
Meditations on History, Memory, and  
the Legacies of Fidel Castro*

**ABSTRACT**

In the wake of Fidel Castro’s death in late November 2016, the Cuban state inaugurated a nine-day period of national mourning and commemoration focused on the official theme, *Yo soy Fidel* (I am Fidel). Like the slogan *Yo soy Fidel*, the events organized to honor Fidel glossed over the impact of his authoritarian rule on the evolving nature of citizens’ agency and participation in the communist state as wholly positive and exceptionally empowering. One of Fidel’s greatest legacies, the enforcement of a “patriot or traitor” binary and the creation of an everyday culture of siege amidst the Cold War remained as undiscussed as citizens’ personal experiences and controversial views of Fidel Castro. Particularly inconvenient memories of Cuba’s “high Soviet Age,” the period of the 1970s and 1980s when Fidel reached a zenith of authority, seemed not just out of place but taboo. This essay responds to these deliberate acts of silencing by excavating the origins of Cuban officials’ idea that the Revolution had groomed every citizen to become future embodiments of Fidel. To understand this process and its meaning for foundational generations of Cubans raised under and by the Revolution, I examine state educational programs, especially their stated goals, methods, curriculum, and affective outcomes after Cuba adopted an officially communist pedagogy upon integration with the Soviet bloc in 1972. Cuba’s schools were responsible not only for the near perfect literacy rates achieved in the 1970s; however, they were also responsible for deploying and instilling a sense of siege and a drive for communist perfection that overtly subsumed individual identity, choice, and agency to ensure compliance with the primary duty that the party allocated to citizens: political obedience before the party and Fidel. Looking carefully at the affective nature of average citizens’ experience, this work explores what life “on the binary” of patriot or traitor was like, particularly during the height of the *fidelistas*-Soviet alliance when foundational generations of Cubans charged with crafting a pure ideological and revolutionary identity emerged. That revolutionary identity hinged on the willingness of citizens to substitute genuine, structural power over the state with the feeling of holding power through Fidel.

**RESUMEN**

Quando Fidel Castro murió en los últimos días de noviembre 2016, el Estado cubano inauguró un periodo de nueve días de luto oficial y conmemoración nacional bajo el lema *Yo soy Fidel*. Al igual que el lema, los eventos organizados para honrar a Fidel

evitaron toda discusión sobre el impacto de su mando autoritario en el carácter evolutivo del poder y la participación del ciudadano en el estado comunista, presumiendo un saldo totalmente positivo y excepcionalmente inspirador. Uno de los legados indiscutibles de Fidel, la consolidación del concepto binario de “patriota o traidor” en la vida del pueblo y la creación de una cultura cotidiana basada en la plaza sitiada durante la Guerra Fría, resultó tan ausente como las experiencias personales y las visiones controversiales de Fidel Castro. Memorias especialmente inconvenientes de la época de alta compenetración soviética, las décadas de los setenta y ochenta cuando Fidel llegó a la cúspide de su autoridad política, parecían no solamente fuera de lugar sino tabú. Este ensayo responde a estos silencios deliberados, excavando los orígenes de la idea de que el estado preparó a los ciudadanos para que fuesen futuras encarnaciones de Fidel. Para entender este proceso y su relevancia para generaciones seminales criadas bajo y por la Revolución, examino programas educacionales del estado, particularmente sus declarados propósitos, métodos, currícula y resultados afectivos luego de que Cuba adoptara una nueva pedagogía oficialmente comunista como resultado de su integración al bloque soviético en 1972. Las escuelas cubanas no fueron solamente responsables por lograr un alfabetismo universal en Cuba en los setenta sino por desplegar y cultivar la sensación de vivir en una plaza sitiada y una vocación por perfeccionar el comunismo que sublimara la identidad individual, la posibilidad de escoger, y la autonomía personal para asegurar la complicidad con la mayor responsabilidad que el partido asignara al ciudadano: obediencia política frente al partido y Fidel. Mirando detenidamente la naturaleza afectiva de la experiencia del ciudadano común, este trabajo explora lo que era vivir bajo el signo constante de “patriota contra traidor;” precisamente durante los años cuando la alianza cubana-soviética predominara la escena en que se suponía que nuevas generaciones se encargarán de asumir una identidad revolucionaria auténtica e ideológicamente pura. Argumento que esa identidad revolucionaria requería que cada ciudadano *suplicara* el poder estructural y genuina sobre las decisiones, actuaciones y políticas del estado con la sensación afectiva de ejercer el poder a través de Fidel.

In November 2016, when the Cuban government opened the National Mausoleum honoring José Martí in the Plaza of the Revolution three days after the death of Fidel Castro, foreign journalists seemed flabbergasted: expecting to file past an urn containing Fidel’s ashes, they found instead only a large box of medals surrounded by heavy, velvet purple curtains and an honor guard. “Where is Fidel?” they asked themselves. Out on the street, some Cubans speculated that perhaps the government had refused to put Fidel’s remains on display to prevent (or impede) mourners from venting their frustrations by desecrating them in some way. Deftly aided by the alternative press known on the island as *radio bamba* (lip radio), other Cubans joked, “El que se creía el Mesías en el ‘59 ahora se ha convertido en Espíritu Santo. ¡Por eso no se deja ver!” (He who was deemed the Messiah in 1959 has transformed into the Holy Spirit. That’s why he won’t let himself be seen!).

By contrast, surely no one in the upper echelons of Cuba’s Communist Party found the occasion of Fidel’s death a laughing matter. While twenty-four-hour-long celebrations exploded among Cubans of all generations across South Florida, the Cuban state’s nine-day-long, meticulously orchestrated plan of national mourning presented a striking contrast. Police cordons, prohibitions on gatherings of any kind and bans on alcohol sales demonstrated that Cubans in Cuba were clearly not free to react spontaneously to Fidel Castro’s death—whatever form that might take—because such reactions would have implied uncensored (and potentially uncontrollable) interpretations of his life. Four days into island commemorations, YouTube revealed the extremes to which Cuban officials would go in managing citizen discourse: anonymous sources posted a brief video clip of Cuban government TV reporters on a “hot mike.” Confident they were off camera and not being recorded, news anchors Froilán Arencibia and Mariuska Díaz discussed the absurdity of secret government orders that they not address viewers with the traditional phrase *buenos días* (good morning or good day), an order that both anchors passionately rebuked. Apparently, state officials gave the order because absolutely *nothing good* could be said or even implied about Fidel Castro’s death: the word *saludos* (greetings), remarked the disgusted anchors, had to be used instead.<sup>1</sup>

The government’s censoring of “good morning” for nine days also implied a secondary, equally important lesson: if nothing good could be associated with Fidel’s death—not even “morning”—nothing “bad” could be associated with his life. Now the all-or-nothing, with-us-or-against-us boundaries in which Fidel Castro had confined the process of the Cuban Revolution for decades suddenly defined not only his life but also his death. Moreover, the state’s commemoration of Fidel was oddly reduced to a ritual reversal of his triumphant caravan’s January 1959 march from Santiago to Havana. What happened to everything else? Wasn’t there more to discuss? After all, Cuban officials had nearly six decades of rule from which to draw a more complex narrative.

In this context, inconvenient memories and legacies of Fidel Castro’s life appeared as elusive as his urn, giving way to a highly staged performance of official forgetting. Through displays of discursive amnesia, leaders signaled that the role of Fidel at every stage of Cuba’s Revolution could only be revered, not assessed. To the question of *¿dónde está Fidel?* (where is Fidel?) a funeral procession to Santiago and state-organized mass mourning ritual supplied a strictly scripted answer. *Yo soy Fidel* (I am Fidel) was the official slogan of the Communist Party’s period of mourning for the death of Fidel, a phrase apparently meant to evoke a linear history of the Revolution’s continual triumphs in capsule form. Splashed across handheld signs and mouthed by weeping citizens dutifully recorded by the state and international media, the government-authored declaration served as a personal pledge. Long prophesied in school

curriculum, state media, and commemorative enactments of loyalty oaths since the 1960s and 1970s, the fundamental idea of becoming like and feeling like Fidel had allegedly reached its climax.

Given that most citizens invited to file past Fidel's box of medals in the National Mausoleum to José Martí were reportedly Communist Party militants, many mourners were likely hard pressed to forget how Fidel had once recast Martí's role in Cuba and Cuban history itself when he claimed the mantle of the Russian Revolution and presided over annual Soviet-style military parades in that very spot for years. "Who doubts that one day the ties of all true revolutionaries and all liberated peoples will be as fraternal as those that today unite Cuba and the Soviet Union?" Fidel Castro had asked of crowds and Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev from a platform at the base of Martí's National Mausoleum in 1974.<sup>2</sup> Although foreign journalists may have wondered "where is Fidel?" in 2016 as they filed past an invisible urn, the more valuable question remained unasked: Where is history itself?

Of course, to islanders who survived the ideological whiplash of the early 1990s when the Cuban Communist Party overturned its most "sacred" tenets in the name of economic and therefore political survival, official amnesia came as no surprise. History could be found everywhere despite its denial precisely because memories of Fidel, especially his words, were indelibly inscribed in the identities of vast numbers of Cubans. Whereas Fidel surely spent the last thirty years of his life justifying and glossing over the communist state's embrace of capitalism, religion, and, as Cubans say, *cualquier otra cosa que le daba la gana* (whatever else he wanted), Raúl has shown no such compunction. In fact, with the exception of biennial speeches and those made every five years at the congress of the Communist Party, Raúl rarely speaks. However, Raúl's silence and Fidel's attempts to speak the state back into ideological coherence along an unswerving historical path have failed to cover up *fidelismo's* greatest visible legacy: the construction and consolidation of a security state so culturally embedded that, until the crisis of the 1990s forced some changes, virtually the only role it left open for citizen political agency was deputization: the defense of Communism and the policing of dissent.

Today, aside from the occasion of Fidel's death itself, nothing better represents the marginality of citizens from state power than Fidel's transfer of rule to Raúl in 2006 and Raúl's 2013 promise to pass the baton to his handpicked successor in 2018, Miguel Díaz-Canel, one he fulfilled this April. A Communist Party bureaucrat, Díaz-Canel's presidency still leaves Raúl, as head of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR, the Revolutionary Armed Forces) and chairman of the party, calling the shots. On all three occasions, island Cubans' reactions evinced shock, dread, and then, inevitably, apparent compliance. Although many factors explain this, behind the seeming absence of public debate

about the memory and legacies of Fidel is a multilayered paradox that lies at the heart of who Cubans of all generations are today.

That paradox is what the great Cuban playwright René Ariza brilliantly described in 1983 after years of “political rehabilitation” in labor camps and jails for charges of homosexuality, ideological subversion, and related crimes of “social dangerousness.” The willingness to tolerate, even support, such policies had seeped into “the character of the Cuban a long time ago,” attested Ariza, “which is not something specific to Castro. There are a lot of Castros and one has to surveil the Castro that every one of us [Cubans] carries inside.”<sup>33</sup> Ostensibly, the propensity to dismiss Ariza’s warning lies deep in all Cubans, regardless of who we are, because the alternative—to recognize our complicity with repressive states whether we reside in Cuba or the United States—continues to be as painful as recognizing the role of repression in ensuring both Fidel’s rule in Cuba and US policies abroad. However, the communist state’s discursive resurrection of Fidel in every island Cuban ensured that no one could look away from the evidence of their complicity with its endurance. If the Revolution’s liberating potential had been undermined, distorted, or betrayed in the previous six decades, it was not Fidel’s fault, commemoration organizers implied, anymore than the fault of all Cuban citizens.

In this sense, island commemorations of Fidel’s death were strangely reminiscent of earlier moments in the Revolution when the stakes for silencing history in the name of stabilizing the political present were similarly high, such as the early 1970s when leaders surrendered to Soviet planners, fully joined the Soviet bloc, and returned Cuba to imperial dependence, albeit in socialist form. Determined to put behind them lingering memories of the complex struggle against Batista, promises of a return to democracy and state-induced economic strife culminating in the disastrous Ten Million Ton Harvest of 1970, the government inaugurated the “high Soviet Age” of the next two decades. It held the First Communist Party Congress in 1975 and then issued a new constitution that ended all pretenses of protecting freedom of expression, assembly, and association. Echoing his legendary defense speech after the 1953 assault on the Moncada barracks, leaders also declared the infallibility of Fidel and his closest associates with the slogan *absueltos por la historia* (absolved by history) and the refrain “The Cuban people will live with their Revolution or every last woman or man will die along with it.”<sup>34</sup> Although hardly part of public discourse anymore, particularly as outrage over the Communist Party’s adoption of corporate capitalism in the early 1990s gave way to conformity, the memories and legacies of Fidel Castro’s all-or-nothing mandates remain silently resilient among older generations of Cubans. Gradually and some would say mercilessly, Cubans raised under Fidel’s rule were not simply charged with dying for the *patria* as the chorus to Cuba’s national anthem had once charged

their ancestors—*morir por la patria es vivir*. From the 1960s through the 1990s, the Revolution engulfed and then replaced *patria*. Fidel argued that the Revolution's *razón de ser* (reason for being) was these generations as much as their *razón de ser* was the Revolution.<sup>5</sup> There was no escape; political existence was the only one allowed. During much of this period, it was an internationalist revolution more than a nationalist one, allegedly born as much of Martí and Maceo as of Marx, Lenin, and, of course, Fidel.

Undoubtedly, the paradigm of the Cold War seemed to justify *fidélismo*'s demand that Cubans happily follow Fidel's orders, a rule enshrined in the once omnipresent slogan, *Comandante en Jefe, ordene* (Commander in Chief, order us). Living within and believing in the endless binary of patriots or traitors was the standard-bearer of identity for three decades. Because this binary first emerged between 1960 and 1961 when US policies stopped at nothing to overthrow the revolutionary government in Cuba, it is tempting to conclude that the greatest legacy of Fidel Castro's rule is precisely the fact that he got away with it. That the US government and its greatest allies, US corporations, were not present in Cuba for most of the past sixty years (nor were they wanted) remains an astounding achievement.<sup>6</sup> It clearly transformed people's aspirations to sovereignty and raised the stakes for those who opposed political, cultural, and economic decolonization worldwide.

Nonetheless, the liberation from US power that the Cuban example evoked came with conditions for Cubans, not just unexpected concessions such as the loss of all citizens' economic autonomy from the state and the elimination of a civil society outside the political reach and control of the state. As I and others have shown elsewhere, those conditions quickly came to include the need to ignore and deny revolutionary forms of racism, the repression of all "doubt," and critiques of state policies as divisive conduits of counterrevolution.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, while the 1975 Constitution left out average citizens' rights to criticize, the statutes of the First Party Congress reserved the right to criticize for party members, including the right to express one's opinion in the party press and to "criticize any Communist, whether he holds a leadership position or not, individually or at Party meetings."<sup>8</sup> The fact that Cuba's Communist Party was the smallest ruling party in the socialist world should not be lost on us; until the early 1990s when it expanded exponentially in order to shore up collapsing state authority, Cuba's Communist Party numbered only 55,000 in 1969, increasing fourfold to 202,000 in the 1970s in a population that hovered around ten million.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, party members enjoyed no oversight outside their own ranks; they controlled all sanctioning and promotion of their own members, free of citizen control.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, once institutionalized in the 1970s using such Soviet legal models, liberation through the dictatorship of a miniscule vanguard party strove to liquidate individuality and raise young Cubans, especially students, to new

standards of sacrifice. Indoctrination campaigns aimed at recruiting parents to the task were overt on this point. Dating from the 1960s, one common poster featured a black boy and white boy standing side-by-side under the heading: “These children will be patriots or traitors. That depends on you. Teach them the work of the Revolution” (fig. 1).<sup>11</sup> One could either be a patriot or traitor



**FIGURE 1.** Emblematic of Cubans’ national condition after standoffs with the United States in the early 1960s left both countries in a permanent state of war with each other, this poster posits Cuban citizenship as an all-or-nothing proposition: to belong and be Cuban, one had to offer unconditional support for the Revolution. It also reveals the early politicization of life and identity for Cuban youth.

in revolutionary Cuba; additional dimensions of the individual Self were either inconsequential or extensions of this primary condition. Soviet-style and Soviet-led communism, now firmly enmeshed with the messianic leadership and discourses of *fidelismo*, however, undoubtedly made the emotional mechanisms for enforcing the obliteration of citizen autonomy and the sanctioning of political diversity far worse. Beginning in 1972, state efforts to stamp out “ideological diversionism” surged, now broadly defined as differences of opinion, particularly among revolutionaries who studied and debated an emerging, global spectrum of Marxist and radical thought.<sup>12</sup> Concluding that the “ideological poison” of “false ‘leftism’” most commonly took the form of “criticism,” the party attacked “ideologically colonized” critics who “could be nothing other than agents, through their work and their deeds” of imperialism.<sup>13</sup>

Cuba then plunged into a dark period of purges, intimidation, and repression that only waned in the mid-1980s when cracks in Soviet power began to undermine the Cuban state’s traditional methods for harnessing popular complicity. The abuses and tragic lifelong consequences of that period for its victims, especially intellectuals and artists, are largely undisputed, thanks to a 2006 protest staged in Cuba’s cultural field.<sup>14</sup> While memory in these cases still mostly awaits archival documentation, most of us take the memories of average Cubans, especially the first and second generation of youth raised in the Revolution, for granted. Most often glossed in idealistic, wholesome, and even utopic terms are Cuba’s state schools. They have arguably become enduring symbols of socialist liberation from capitalist underdevelopment. However, as this essay contends, the deepest roots of Fidel Castro’s authoritarianism, the making of the little Fidel in each citizen that the state celebrated in the wake of his death, and literally at his wake in 2016, can be found there. Education, the very site of the Revolution’s greatest triumph, Cuba’s legendarily near perfect literacy rates, was also a battleground in which only one side, the Communist Party, could win.

Thus, as millions of Cubans repeated the slogan “I am Fidel” after Fidel’s death in 2016, the obliteration of the individual for the sake of the survival and power of the state appeared, to remaining leaders at least, symbolically complete. Yet this essay contends that it is precisely in light of the state’s contention that every citizen, upon Fidel’s death, had become Fidel, that Fidel’s greatest legacy can be found. The conclusion that Fidel Castro overturned the structures of US imperialism to build the prosperity and empowerment of Cuban citizens on its ashes is ahistorical and flawed. On the contrary, whereas billions of dollars in Soviet subsidies and annual aid built the now financially devastated health-care, transportation and school systems, Fidel mostly built a towering surveillance state that endured and survived because it thrived, as he himself demanded, in the soul of every citizen. The siege reality of the Cuban Revolution’s first decade did not simply give way to a siege mentality on the

part of Cuba’s self-appointed head of state, Fidel Castro; it gave birth to a siege culture, meticulously crafted by Fidel as he institutionalized the uncontested-ability of communist rule in the beliefs and identity of the Cuban people. How do we excavate these beliefs and assess the imbrication of a one-party state in the identity of citizens? How do we understand the meaning and impact of communist leaders’ ascription of Fidel’s resurrection in average Cubans? History calls us to look carefully at the affective nature of citizens’ experience in order to examine, even feel, what life “on the binary” of patriot or traitor was like, particularly during the height of the *fidelist*-Soviet alliance when foundational generations of Cubans charged with crafting a “revolutionary identity” emerged. That revolutionary identity hinged on the willingness of citizens to substitute genuine power over the state with the feeling of holding power through Fidel.

### **Life at Siege: Cuban Identity and the Binary of Patriot and Traitor**

The binary of patriot versus traitor stood at the heart of Fidel Castro’s greatest legacy: the transformation of a vast “people’s revolution” seeking radical social reforms into a national security state, which in most ways continues to police possible alternative destinies by requiring and celebrating the notion that Cubans police themselves. By the late 1960s, the will to police oneself and others served as the primary marker of revolutionary citizenship. More than ever, citizens understood that cultivating certain attitudes was essential to being seen not just as revolutionary but, in the emerging political parlance, simply “Cuban.”<sup>15</sup> In some ways, this was far from new. Since the heady early years of the Revolution when Fidel Castro called on unconditional support (*apoyo absoluto*) to defeat US imperialism, sincerity and near euphoric expressions of excitement for any task or policy were primary to belonging.<sup>16</sup> However, after 1965, state institutions established paradoxical principles to define the New Man: the will to criticize was considered as integral as total loyalty and service to the state. Quickly the question became: Could one be both loyal and critical of the state? During a long fifteen-year period stretching from 1965 to 1980, workplace purges, internment in labor camps for political crimes such as “laziness,” and nocturnal, government-organized shuntings of individuals by neighbors known as *mitines de repudio* became commonplace. Knowing how to be a patriot without morphing into a traitor was essential. If the need for such strategies explains why generations of Cubans born and raised after the 1959 Revolution left Cuba, how and why did so many others not only stay, but *integrarse* (join in)?

From the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s, the state achieved much of its legitimacy among citizens by creating and controlling citizens’ morale through powerful emotional means that made them feel as important to the continua-

tion of the Revolution as Fidel Castro himself. These included a general understanding of daily life and mass labor mobilizations as a process of national reeducation in the proper ways of being revolutionary. Fidel Castro and his supporters envisioned this process as making Cuba into “one enormous school, with Fidel as chief pedagogue,” what less charitable observers called “[one] vast reformatory.”<sup>17</sup> Fidel repeatedly characterized Cuba as one gigantic classroom in which all citizens were being reeducated out of the ways and values of the past to become the “new man.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, Fidel gave so much attention to Cuba’s future in virtually every speech that many Cubans joked that if the future tense did not exist, Fidel would have gone mute.<sup>19</sup>

Yet it was Fidel’s very focus on the future that inspired José Llanusa, Cuba’s minister of education from 1965 to 1970, to define Fidel as the embodiment of revolutionary pedagogy—the new man—and the citizenry incarnate: the people were as much Fidel as Fidel was the people, argued Llanusa.<sup>20</sup> Communist Party founder and elder statesman Fabio Grobart later echoed Llanusa at the First Party Congress in 1975, extending the characterization of Fidel as principal pedagogue of the Cuban people to all party militants themselves and, by extension, the global communist movement:

He has known how to forge the profound and unbreakable friendship between Cuba and the fraternal Soviet Union, between Cuba and all other socialist countries. . . . He has raised up the honor and prestige of our *patria* to never-before-seen heights in our history. . . . Over all of these years, educating and stimulating us with his example, he has participated personally in all our battles, all our work. . . . He has educated us in the example of his self-abnegation, tenacity, firmness and capacity, with his intransigent and consequential application of Marxist-Leninist principles . . . He has been and is the teacher; he is a constant educator of cadres and militants of our Party and the Union of Young Communists. He has taught us how to be a truly revolutionary party, a truly Marxist-Leninist party. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Implicit in Grobart’s excessive sycophancy was the elevation of Fidel above all other living men, an endorsement that he was not only the genuine new man in socialism all should emulate, but the long-awaited communist messiah.

Despite Fidel’s official exceptionality and his ideological perfection, the state entrusted its interests to the masses, or so officials repeatedly argued, revealing an equality between leader and citizen that no other political system could rival. Political loyalty was often the primary qualification for promotion to positions of authority and, in the absence of material incentives, a sense of power was its only reward. This proved the system’s legitimacy, or so the Communist Party contended. Citizens quoted in the media echoed the party’s view. “Now when I walk down the street,” attested a CDR activist in 1968, “I feel as if I were Fidel! . . . Yes, I feel as if I were Fidel!”<sup>22</sup>

With this in mind, emerging state educational programs of subsequent de-

cadecades impressed on citizens the idea that Cuba’s Revolution represented an opportunity to transform themselves into a higher form of humanity, a kind of suprademocracy and superdemocracy at the same time. To feel like Fidel was to incarnate the state, to be both the people and their leader—to embody a collective and an individual—simultaneously. This was particularly true of state pedagogy from the 1970s forward when agencies of the Ministry of Education worked to permeate all dimensions of the individual’s perspective with Marxist-Leninist principles through the creation of new curricula and texts. While teachers relied regularly on rote memorization and reading Fidel’s speeches instead of novels or social science textbooks, the walls of classrooms, workplace bulletins, and billboards immortalized Fidel’s utterances to render a constant echo effect.<sup>23</sup> By the early 1980s, the burden had not lessened but seemingly increased. Fidel called for total surrender to the will of the state: “All the attention paid to the Party and to the [Communist] Youth can *never* be considered excessive.”<sup>24</sup>

The degree to which ideology drove instructional materials was truly unprecedented by the early 1970s, even when compared to the unabashedly politicized instructional manuals used in the Revolution’s early literacy campaigns and adult education programs.<sup>25</sup> As of 1971, Cuba’s officials and pedagogues recognized that the “political education” of the past fell short and “communist education” was the goal. No aspect of a child’s cultural and ideological evolution could be left up to chance.<sup>26</sup> “The Communist education of the students is the goal that Cuban educational system seeks” (*la educación comunista de los estudiantes es el fin que persigue el sistema educacional cubano*), contended the Ministry of Education in a new journal targeting pedagogical workers.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, schools steeped adolescents in “moral-ideological education” as morality could not be separate from ideology. Target themes under this rubric included “formation of students in a classist concept of the world,” “development of Communist morality,” “development of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism,” and the capacity to defend their communist beliefs from attack.<sup>28</sup> To achieve “education in Communist morality,” each child or adolescent “ought to participate consciously in [agricultural] activities not mechanically.”<sup>29</sup> Because Soviet subsidies in the 1970s and 1980s ensured that Cuba no longer relied on voluntary labor to reach national production goals as it had in the 1960s, voluntary work in agriculture shed much of its economic urgency to take on an even more intense political role. In the Revolution’s second and third decades, the massive expansion of secondary schools entailed integrating hard agricultural labor into the curriculum. Through country schools built permanently amidst large state farms as well as urban schools that required months-long stays on collective farms, leaders sought to catalyze a proletarian outlook and mold an uncomplaining, disciplined personality best summarized in the slogan of the Communist Youth: *Hacer de cada joven un estudiante, de cada estudiante un Comunista y de cada Comunista un soldado*

*de la Patria* (To make of every young person a student, of every student a communist, of every communist a soldier of the Fatherland).<sup>30</sup> As the head of a country school explained to visiting New York pedagogue and researcher Marvin Leiner, the “political work” of constantly explaining communist values like self-discipline was “even more basic in the *escuela al campo* [school in the countryside]” because students had to act alone in the fields: “[The student] must meet certain goals, and so he must be convinced of the necessity of fulfilling these goals, and of fulfilling them *enthusiastically*.”<sup>31</sup> Achieving personal happiness through collective compliance thus formed the essence of a communist personality.

When officials launched the new Marxist-Leninist curricula, the primary task of the teacher was to guide each student in “the development of a Communist personality in a precise and objective way” (*el desarrollo de la personalidad comunista de forma precisa y objetiva*).<sup>32</sup> Directing teachers to incite emotional responses, particularly through the study of highly hagiographic histories focusing on Fidel or revolutionary martyrs, the Ministry of Education sought to embed ideological principles in primary schoolers’ sense of self and progressively personalize students’ resulting sense of duty as they entered middle school through Marxist-Leninist rules of etiquette and social behavior. These rules covered everything from how students dressed to how they ate and how they interacted with adults, peers, neighbors, and family. The overarching mandate was to “never defraud the confidence that the Revolution and most especially Comrade Fidel has deposited in the youth” (*no defraudar jamás la confianza que ha depositado la Revolución y especialmente el compañero Fidel en la juventud*).<sup>33</sup>

Because such ideas might have seemed outlandishly ambitious, government publicists decided to root such concepts in the legitimate discourses of the past, particularly in nineteenth-century nationalist José Martí’s famous statement, *Patria es humanidad* (the fatherland is all humanity). Although today the slogan is better known for gracing the exterior wall of the international airport terminal in Havana exclusively reserved for flights to and from Miami, *Patria es humanidad* once headlined graduation ceremonies for the children of peasants educated in Havana’s top boarding schools. *Patria es humanidad* was supposed to form the core logic guiding early childhood education and the often incomprehensibly altruistic pledges that Cuba’s youngest revolutionaries made.<sup>34</sup>

According to Fidel Castro, the new revolutionary pedagogy had one broad ideological objective: to strip Cubans of their culturally ingrained “selfishness,” thereby clearing the way for a true communist society. In the past, schools and society had only taught children to “fool others, to be crooks, to live without working and become exploiters,” contended Fidel. “This was their moral education.”<sup>35</sup> To combat such cultural legacies as well as “loafing, laziness, lies,

parasitism, lack of loyalty or lack of solidarity with others in the society of the future,” the state developed specific school curricula meant to reconfigure emotional experiences in new ideological ways.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, preschools, first established in 1960 and radically expanded after 1967 to enroll nearly fifty thousand children, were considered ground zero for the formation of the new man. Preschool day care centers, called *círculos infantiles*, were even more fundamental than primary or secondary schools in creating “collectivist consciousness.”<sup>37</sup>

Exemplifying their importance, national day-care director Clementina Serra explained in an internal government report “how we form collective consciousness” and “how we form national consciousness” among preschoolers. Collective consciousness was achieved through such moral instruction as correcting egoism as well as directed activities like group birthday parties and the collective act of throwing flowers into the ocean in order to commemorate the October 1959 disappearance of beloved revolutionary hero Camilo Cienfuegos.<sup>38</sup> Methods to form national consciousness evinced little variety. They included activities such as reciting poetry to Camilo, painting pictures of him, singing songs such as the “Hymn to Che,” or learning about revolutionaries, dead or alive, including José Martí, Antonio Maceo, and Fidel Castro. Cultivating national consciousness also came through interacting, whenever possible, with still-suffering victims of imperialism who attested, simply through their existence, to the greater already-established triumph of Cubans. Preschool curriculum planners singled out Vietnamese residents of Cuba as ideal visitors to *círculos*: their presence taught children gratitude toward their own revolutionary Patria and a desire to “help” the oppressed of other countries in its name.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, preschool curricula normalized the honoring of revolutionary martyrs and overt political indoctrination by making such themes part of regular scholastic instruction, happening as often as once every four to six weeks rather than only on historic anniversaries or at certain times of the year. For example, third-semester language arts classes for preschoolers listed the following instructional themes for a two-week course unit that could take place whenever teachers felt inspired:

- 3.1.6: Our friends, the guerrillas.
- 3.1.7: Animals who drink mothers’ milk when they are born.
- 3.1.8: Mother hen and her chicks.
- 3.1.9: Flowers for Camilo [Cienfuegos].<sup>40</sup>

Subsequent themes for other weeks included “Let’s learn to cross the street. Who cures us [when we’re ill]? How to remember our martyrs. . . . Our favorite toys. Martí, friend of children . . . Our friend, the *miliciano*.” In addition, activities meant to form proper “mental attitudes” among three-to-four-year

olds such as love of unpaid manual labor included pulling weeds in the yard of the *círculo* and taking them to the countryside where they could witness adults doing voluntary labor.<sup>41</sup>

Published by the state's new children's publishers and distributed by the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (Union of Young Communists), books for Cuban children regularly centered on Fidel, Cuba's ideal teacher and the Revolution's first new man. Primers for teaching Cuban history to three- to five-year-olds featured such titles as *Con Fidel y con la historia*. This book offered a nonchronological account of Cuba's triumphs against US imperialism re-enacted through a bearded child, or mini-Fidel, as well as other secondary cartoon characters.<sup>42</sup> Illustrated with childlike drawings of a mini-Fidel, the book showed him engaged in such activities as handing out land titles to black and white *campesinos*; holding CIA-trained mercenaries at gunpoint; "vanquishing" the rebellious peasants of El Escambray single-handedly; riding an elephant alongside a black, presumably Angolan, freedom fighter who drags a chained-up Uncle Sam behind them; and kicking Uncle Sam off the Cuban island while declaring the end "of all exploitation."<sup>43</sup> Although the success of this style of revolutionary pedagogy on the formation of toddlers' and preschoolers' individual consciousness may remain incalculable, emotional experiences creatively inspired citizens to personify the Revolution. This led them to see individual sacrifice in service to the state as necessary and pledges to blind faith in its policies as natural, unquestionable, even innate extensions of their own identity as Cubans, revolutionaries, human beings, and potential Fidels.

Books intended for preadolescent readers exemplified the role of these emotions in creating an internal dialogue with the state through Fidel. For example, *Hay que pensar en el futuro*, titled after a quote from a speech Fidel made to elementary schoolchildren, included illustrations made to look as if they were made by children (although they were not) and photographs of Fidel talking to them, as well as the entire speech he delivered at morning assembly.<sup>44</sup> Other books, targeting parents and adults, resembled the photographic collections typical of US coffee-table books. In *La educación en revolución*, Fidel's visit to Havana's Lenin School referenced or quoted Fidel Castro on every page of Juan Marinello's introductory essay and emblazoned the image of him surrounded by kids in the uniform of La Lenin on both its wraparound jacket and internal cover. While also highlighting Fidel's visits to schools and quotes from his speeches to kids, two books with large print runs exhibited children's drawings and photographs of uniformed, obedient child-patriots. Their images served, in the words of one book, as "graphic testimony" of the successful revolutionary transformation of Cuban kids.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of such testimony was *Imágenes infantiles de Cuba revolucionaria, 1970-75*. Editors of this book claimed to

have reviewed ten thousand children’s drawings to determine schools’ success in implementing new programs of “political integration.”<sup>45</sup> The book typified the implicit notion that not all kids’ expressions of political consciousness were equally valuable, probably because party pedagogues did not deem them ideologically correct. Demonstrating this was the monothematic measures by which editors selected images. By far the most redundant were kids’ drawings of kids picking or tossing flowers into the ocean to commemorate Camilo Cienfuegos, a ritual they had presumably learned in day care; military parades on El Día de las FAR; the *Granma*; Moncada; and above all, watercolor images of Fidel Castro speaking to flag-waving boys and girls at the Plaza of the Revolution.<sup>46</sup> Ironically, however, few of the drawings that Cuba’s most powerful government publishing house selected to illustrate the successful “political integration” of children were actually made by different kids. The majority of the drawings were made by a select handful of the same kids. While most kids saw at least two paintings published, some, like nine-year-old Estrella Gómez, had four of her works selected, and eleven-year-old Berta Iraola had no fewer than five. Indeed, with more than ten thousand images from which to choose, the lack of diversity in subject matter and authorship leave one to wonder just *how* successful new ideological training programs were in recasting the creative imagination of Cuba’s kids.

Nonetheless, the state’s concerted documentation of children’s precise reproduction of communist-defined values, images, words, and beliefs in books like these reveal the inescapability of coercive complicity. Cuban educators turned Fidel into an everyday protagonist of leisure time and rewarded those who converted the private spaces that Cuban families otherwise might protect against political intrusions into extensions of Fidel’s “giant classroom.” As the local library, children’s book fairs and living room reading selections came to reflect the needs and presence of the state, so officials hoped that one’s character, family life, and emotional outlook might do the same. In this and other ways, the most intense forms of human affect among younger generations of Cubans thus became political instruments for consolidating state power, particularly through the feelings communist officials hoped citizens would develop toward Fidel and the Revolution.

Like a father and a mother, Fidel and the Revolution were not only the primary protagonists of Cuba’s political life but the primary advisers of Cubans’ personal lives. Shame over not doing enough to fulfill the limitless goals set by the Revolution, hope in the possibility of fulfilling these goals, and love for those who assigned one to the task as well as the task itself—these were the feelings that together underpinned the process and prospect of developing the educational system’s stated goal: to develop a communist personality in every child and thereby create legions of kids who would literally “be like el Che”; that is, they would live up to Fidel’s call for total sacrifice to the cause.

### **Living Up to Fidel: Everyday Heroes, the Goal of Perfection, and the Pedagogy of Love**

In the 1970s, omnipresent messaging through revolutionary curriculum spread to encompass the visual landscape of schools and neighborhood murals maintained by the CDRs. Through such messaging, the state taught citizens that they should feel love toward the revolutionary reality they were constantly building; shame over not feeling love went hand in hand with failing to build the Revolution and vice versa. At the center of this triangle was none other than the individual him- or herself. The mass printing of propaganda posters specifically geared at young people proved central to this process. First printed as an official slogan of the 1971 Congress of Education and Culture, the phrase “The Revolution has placed its most profound hopes in the youth and confides the future in it” (*la Revolución ha puesto en la juventud sus más profundas esperanzas y confía a ella su future*) appeared repeatedly on posters featuring smiling, studying, and saluting children dressed in the uniform of the Communist Pioneers, especially from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s.

Through other posters, students learned that studying, particularly in the science and technical fields (as opposed to the humanities and social sciences) “propelled the Revolution forward” and represented a daily tribute to dead revolutionaries Camilo and Che, the two martyrs emphasized across curricula for children as young as three in government day cares all the way through teenagers in high school. To study in socialist Cuba was as much a historical extension of Cuba’s victory over imperialism as proof of the Revolution’s future triumph over underdevelopment, the primary legacy of imperialism. Thus, according to Fidel, the task for students was sacred: “This generation must consecrate its efforts to [the goal of economic] development.”<sup>47</sup>

Students also were subject to a higher standard than any other Cuban, literally called by Fidel and the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas “everyday heroes” not “heroes for a day.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, argued Fidel, even the standard of perfection was never too high for Cuban youth. “The cleanest, the purest, the most honest must be the student, because they are the workers of tomorrow,” entreated Fidel in a popular poster series used in virtually all schools in the 1970s. “They are called to develop, to a maximum point of perfection, socialist society and advance deliberately along the paths of communism” (fig. 2).<sup>49</sup> Permanent signage in some schools included the striking statement *Donde nace un comunista mueren las dificultades* (Where a communist is born, all difficulties die).<sup>50</sup>

Surely, raising kids who would assume the principles of perfectionism required starting young. It entailed embedding society’s desires deeply in the fabric of one’s self, even if that fabric remained far from complete. A little known and previously unused collection of hundreds of essays gathered by



**FIGURE 2.** Used in schools across Cuba in the 1970s and 1980s, this poster echoes many others of varying design from the same period. They reminded students, through Fidel’s voice, that they were not only responsible for the future of communist society but for achieving a “maximum” degree of “perfection” in themselves, their attitudes, and their behavior to do so.

Marvin Leiner in the 1970s reveals how deeply embedded such lessons were in their political souls.

A US pedagogue, brother-in-law to longtime state filmmaker Estela Bravo, and “unconditional” supporter of the Revolution at the time, Leiner asked fifth and sixth graders in schools across Cuba to write essays titled “Five Wishes.” The resulting handwritten children’s essays speak to the conviction that their primary purpose in life was “to be useful to the fatherland.” Leiner’s mostly eleven- to twelve-year-old informants also punctuated their five wishes with plans to “fight and die for the Revolution.”<sup>51</sup> As one girl explained, saying that one wanted to be like El Che (or his fellow martyr “Tania la Guerrillera” Bunke) was far from original: after all, every kid knew she or he was supposed to be like Che or his Soviet-trained, guerrilla girlfriend Tania la Guerrillera.<sup>52</sup> Because everyone apparently wanted to die for the Revolution, she and other essay writers realized, their list of five wishes needed to prove something more.

This explains why across hundreds of these children’s essays one pattern is clear: no child wished for merely one career, with most wishing for three or as many as six careers. Topping the list in almost every case was the goal of becoming a teacher to form the new man, to be sent to the far reaches (*rincones*

*más apartados*) of the island to teach the lowliest of the low and once triumphant, to be sent abroad in a never-ending search to vanquish illiteracy in the name of the Revolution. However, a near majority, including girls, wished to be militia members, army officers, ship captains, and air force pilots so they could “exterminate [US] imperialism,” turn enemy aircraft “into dust,” and fill “the sky with blood and fire” in case of an attack by “*esbirros* [goons] from the United States.”<sup>53</sup> Those who wished for purely civilian careers similarly couched their purposes in heroic or patriotic terms. One girl wanted to be a seamstress—but only, she was careful to say, to “help the Revolution make clothes” for its citizens and thereby take advantage of her own naturally good fashion sense.<sup>54</sup> Another girl wished to be a flight attendant, but only if she could “fly in rough weather” when danger was at its peak and others might refuse; she also wanted to be an artist, but only if she could paint the portraits of great martyred revolutionaries.<sup>55</sup> “I wish to be a doctor,” wrote twelve-year-old Ernesto Aguilar García of the rural school in Uvero, Oriente, “just in case someone gets sick, I can cure him so he can keep battling Yankee barbarism.”<sup>56</sup>

Kids who wished for nontraditional, civilian career paths were equally aware that the legitimacy of their dreams rested on a direct connection to serving the Revolution. Thus, Rolando Mustelier Castillo dreamed of being a chess champion “because this way we could show the North Americans that they are not the only ones who know but rather that the Cuban knows as much as anyone from anywhere.”<sup>57</sup> One child, José Julián Cala Saqué, chronically ill from a heart condition, wished to be cured of his illness so that he could first, be a cardiologist to cure other kids; second, enroll at the Antonio Maceo School of Cadets and learn to use anti-aircraft weapons; third, combat US imperialism; and fourth, fight “racism in the United States and worldwide.”<sup>58</sup> Notably, José Julián was no more ambitious than any of his peers. One girl wanted to meet the president of Vietnam so she could offer her condolences and services to that country. A boy wished to become a communist cadre so that “when the old *jefes* die, I can take their place . . . to defend Cuba.”<sup>59</sup>

In short, these children clearly “felt like Fidel.” The empowerment they confessed stood alongside its principal emotional vehicles of shame, hope, and love—a point most evident in the myriad justifications for choosing one career over the other and the concern every writer expressed in declaring his or her wishes’ direct connection to “the needs” of the Revolution. Such was the case of 270 graduating high school seniors who hiked twenty-six kilometers to the historic campsite of Che Guevara’s column in the mountains of Las Villas for what must have been—given the site’s isolation—a mostly private graduation ceremony. There, standing on politically sacred ground where Che and others might have died when they first pledged their lives to Cuba, the graduates professed: “We swear to direct our future activities as university students to-

ward attainment of the Communist society, sparing no physical or intellectual effort . . . to find the essential motivation for our work and future plans in love of mankind, the dream of developing the man of the 21st century . . . with a profound international spirit, depending on *neither* moral *nor* material incentives."<sup>60</sup> Of course, the idea that one should not be inspired by either moral or material incentives is paradoxical: if one cannot find a reward in the social or economic world, where could it be found? The answer apparently lay in the mystical realm, defined by the absence of all other motivations and elevation to a genuinely altered "state"—akin to embodying the spirit of Fidel Castro, the incarnate nation and still living incomparable new man.

In other words, like Leiner's elementary school students who dreamed of fighting a war against the Yankee invader, the value of these graduates' future lives derived from the consciousness that they had not yet died: that is, implicitly, they knew that living for the Revolution had to mean as much as dying. Having been too young or simply not alive at the time of the movement against the dictator Fulgencio Batista, young Cubans grew up during the first decade of the Revolution hearing that hard work, voluntary labor, and devoted study were the means by which they "made up" for a destiny lost to younger generations by accident of birth.<sup>61</sup> The same guiding logic extended to even the youngest of Cubans, so Inés, the director of a Havana day care, explained. Three- and four-year-olds had to learn about revolutionary martyrs: "We speak about the dead and not about the living because those who are living have still not given their all, and the highest praise that can be given here is when that person has given his/her life. One who hasn't given one's life yet has not done all that one has to do."<sup>62</sup> For Inés, the moral to live by was clear: the highest form of love was found only in the political realm, not the personal. Love for the Revolution was therefore not simply the most authentic form of love but the most rational: death on its behalf spoke to the unconditionality of perfect love and by extension, the Revolution's perfect rationality. The principle pedagogue, as always, in this process was none other than Fidel Castro himself.

Importantly, Fidel had long promoted "love" for the Cuban Revolution as a primary factor propelling unity and belief in its boundless potential for doing unprecedented good in the world. On December 31, 1960, the eve of the Revolution's pivotal Year of Education and only weeks after nationalization of most private enterprise left 80 percent of the economy in state hands, Fidel Castro promised that Cuba would show America "what it is possible to achieve with effort, sacrifice and love for one another, with love for the Fatherland . . . [a]nd in this way, we shall achieve something great, without hurting absolutely anyone, doing good for our people and at the same time, for the whole world." The net result of so much love, predicted Fidel, was to inspire hope among Latin America's oppressed nations to imitate the increasing perfection of revolutionary Cuba.<sup>63</sup> Over the next two decades, love would not only become an

inescapable point of reference in Cuba's public discourse but nearly as inescapable as references to Fidel Castro himself.

In the 1970s and 1980s, commemorations of Cuba's massive national Literacy Campaign of 1961 and subsequent achievement of a nearly 100 percent literacy rate inspired many influential US academics to revisit Cuba's school system. Many of them published highly popular, virtually uncritical, congratulatory books and admiring memoirs of officially guided experiences in Cuba. Several of these works enjoyed long shelf lives as academic institutions adopted them in college classes, and global fascination with romantic understandings of the Cuban Revolution deepened amidst intensifying US support for traditional, rightwing dictatorships around the globe.<sup>64</sup> Examinations of its long-term success in reducing illiteracy rates to First World levels necessarily entailed debunking the idea that the yearlong Literacy Campaign was primarily responsible; as the Cuban government itself admitted, it was *seguimiento*, the follow-up courses for adults and rural schools that achieved greater literacy over the course of a decade, not one year as Fidel originally claimed. Importantly, however, by the 1970s, the individual sacrifice of young volunteers, called *brigadistas*, had faded into the background while Fidel's protagonism in the 1961 Literacy Campaign took center stage. As National Book Award-winner and US educator Jonathan Kozol documented in his bestselling memoir on the educational system in Cuba, the primary reason all his informants gave for joining the campaign was Fidel. "The statement that 'we could not allow Fidel to be embarrassed in the eyes of the world' is made today by many men and women who were only ten or twelve years old during the year in which it took place," Kozol wrote in 1978.<sup>65</sup>

"I wanted so much that we would prove that we could keep the promise that Fidel had made before the world [when he announced the campaign at the United Nations in September 1960]," attested Armando Véldez, a now aged *brigadista* and member of Cuba's foreign service. "I did not want it to be said that we would not stand up beside Fidel."<sup>66</sup> María, another former *brigadista*, confessed to Kozol, "I did not know Marx or Lenin at that time. I only knew about Fidel. . . . It isn't just for what he has already done—but also for the things he dreams to do."<sup>67</sup> Recalling that all seven hundred thousand Cubans whom the literacy workers taught in 1961 were required to write a thank-you letter to Fidel as their final exam, Kozol remarked that after looking at the letters preserved at the state literacy museum, it is impossible to deny their near complete uniformity. It was as if they were copied rather than written. Yet his "instinct" told him that he should "accept them as [participants'] open manifestations of pride and personal liberation."<sup>68</sup>

In many ways, Kozol's "instinct" to simply believe the state's version of the truth, despite nagging evidence to the contrary, mirrors precisely the goals of the teacher-training programs for the *brigadistas* as well as the content of

the literacy manuals and educational curricula intended to teach teachers, pupils, parents, and other citizens alike in the Revolution’s second decade. As thirty-three-year-old Christina explained to Kozol: “I learned the word *revolución* and I learned to write my own name for the first time, too. Everything else, up to the present day, was easy after that.”<sup>69</sup> In many ways, love for the Revolution and love of self fused in Christina’s experience. Fidel’s guidance in that process became indistinguishable from that of the state, making its heavy hand feel loving, comforting, and kind.

In Cuba, discourses of love for the Revolution and their ability to embed the self in an intimate relationship of subordinate power to the state served to manage collective morale, buoying it with individual testimony and personal experience—making the siege culture and patriot life on the Cold War binary as real as they could be; love might also have made the often overwhelming drive to perfect oneself and society feel like a fulfilling task, even if it was never fulfilled.

These same discourses of love undoubtedly facilitated similar feelings for many foreigners who sought to identify with the Revolution for entirely different reasons. This was particularly clear in the case of progressive intellectuals who visited Cuba by formal invitation and participated in state-backed research on state achievements, as Kozol did in 1978, or who attended high-profile cultural and educational congresses the Communist Party organized, such as the one New York intellectual Susan Sontag attended nearly ten years earlier. In 1969, Sontag published a widely read essay titled “Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution” in the antiestablishment magazine *Ramparts*.

Addressing herself to a leftist US audience whom she assumed to be white, intellectual, and bourgeois, Sontag articulated a key principle essential to cultivating the “love” for the Cuban Revolution that all anti-imperialists were called to feel, whether Cuban or not. That is, Sontag argued that the standards by which any leftist might normally judge a system of power should not apply to Cuba because the humanistic intentions of the Revolution made it uniquely good and its adoption of communism—always so close to the United States—put its courageous leaders beyond reproach. Therefore, what might be considered oppressive policies or ideals in any other context, she contended, was, in the Cuban case, either a minor error that could be easily overlooked or a necessary path toward greater liberation. In other words, Sontag echoed both Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party’s style of “teaching” the masses how to work their way out of criticizing the state by cultivating responses built on hope and love. She also pioneered the *logos operandi* of more than one generation of new left academics, progressives, and liberals in the United States when it came to judging Cuba: to be truly acceptable in such circles, one could seemingly never deign to judge at all.

For example, Sontag argued that visiting American critics' "reflex posture of anti-militarism," disgust with censorship, "aversion to patriotism," mistrust of ideological conformity, and "unformulated pacifism" were all mistaken positions, akin to those of counterrevolutionaries, even when voiced by self-identified leftists.<sup>70</sup> Sontag also dramatically minimized the mass internment of thousands of citizens in isolated forced labor camps, a group of which were named UMAP, *Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción* (Military Units to Aid Production). Sontag characterized the UMAP as simply "one bad moment two years ago" when Cubans got "a little up-tight about sexual morals [and rounded] up several thousand homosexuals in Havana and [sent] them to a farm to rehabilitate themselves."<sup>71</sup> In punishing nonconformists, Cuba was defeating "individualism," pure and simple.<sup>72</sup>

Of course, far from being "one bad moment," Cuba's UMAP camps lasted for over three years and may have comprised dozens, if not hundreds, of separate sites. Held without charge for months or years at a time, intellectuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholic priests, homosexuals, and others endured "political rehabilitation" through forced labor, electroshock therapy, and often sadistic forms of public humiliation. Indeed, it was largely due to the objections of foreign supporters of the Revolution that the UMAP were finally closed.<sup>73</sup> UMAP also represented one of many means by which the Cuban state sought to combat a rising tide of critical voices among the most loyal ranks of revolutionaries, especially between 1965 and 1971.<sup>74</sup>

Perhaps typical of many anti-imperialist US intellectuals at the time, Sontag apologized for the authoritarianism of the Cuban state and managed to reproduce the very imperial gaze she sought to shatter all at once. Exemplifying this, one of her parting points of persuasion included the argument that Americans criticized Cubans too much because they did not realize "what this revolutionary generation in Cuba has had to work with: a bastard culture made up of degraded Spanish, Yoruba and American elements. The remarkable thing is that they have done as much as they have, not that one still finds such expressions of spic taste as the ubiquitous girls on the street wearing their hair in pink plastic rollers."<sup>75</sup> More important, however, Sontag saw the crisis in efficiency, stagnant productivity, and mass absenteeism plaguing the Cuban economy as evidence of Cubans' habit "of making work seem like fun," a tendency she readily attributed to support for the Revolution, not resistance to communist controls.<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, Sontag's blindness—the need to justify the Revolution's repression and means of control—formed a broader bedrock of complicity with the state that foreign apologists, foreign and revolutionary activists alike, constructed through arguments like hers as "love." In the face of evidence that citizen complicity could at some level be coerced, Sontag voluntarily offered her own complicity as evidence of revolutionary love.

Importantly, despite differences in tone and texture, Sontag’s evaluation found its echo, if not unanimity, in the evaluations that other foreign contemporaries made of the Revolution. Paulo Freire, renowned Brazilian intellectual and author of the highly influential *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in multiple languages between 1968 and 1972, offers a case in point. Freire similarly equated the energy that was needed to make revolution with a kind of “sensuality” that denies individual desires and redirects them toward societal transformation. He also credited the pedagogy of the Cuban Revolution with convincing him of this truth: “In this, I’m a follower of Che Guevara. Love and revolution are married together.”<sup>77</sup> Marvin Leiner himself ended his book on early childhood education titled *¿Cuál es la realidad? (What Is the Reality?)*: “Love, joy, enthusiasm—all very Cuban. All have much to do with the Revolution and its expression in early childhood education.” Quoting Stanford University researcher Richard Fagen, fellow visitor and observer of Cuba’s new educational system, Leiner concluded that the Cuban Revolution was simply too “unique” to be judged in negative terms.<sup>78</sup>

In 1969, Sontag had ended her treatise on the *logos* of love for the Revolution with the claim that no Cuban writer had failed “to get his work published” nor had any writer been arrested for being too critical of the state. Ironically, she cited the case of Cuba’s then-famous rebel poet, Heberto Padilla, predicting that no writer ever would be jailed or censored.<sup>79</sup> Of course, less than two years later, Padilla was arrested, tortured, and forced to participate in a filmed self-criticism session among dozens of his peers. When Sontag subsequently joined dozens of other foreign writers in signing an open letter of protest to Fidel Castro, she was summarily rebuked as “anti-Cuban” and a traitorous counterrevolutionary. Her writings were banned from the island and Sontag declared an enemy of the state.<sup>80</sup>

Yet, despite Sontag’s experience (or perhaps because of it), *Ramparts*’ publishing house went on to publish Karen Wald’s admiring ode to Cuba’s schools, *Children of Che: Childcare and Education in Cuba*, nine years later. Following Sontag’s lead, Wald glossed over any Cubans she encountered who expressed doubt, resistance, or contempt for government policy as ungrateful, ignorant, or supremely selfish bad apples amidst a harvest of good.<sup>81</sup> This was especially true of children and young people whose rebellion the communist system answered with rehabilitative programs of incarceration led by “very loving people” who desired to make “*anti-sociales*” and political delinquents feel, in Wald’s words, “loved and needed.”<sup>82</sup> She also ended a list of sixteen common responses to the question she posed to Cuban school kids, *Who is Fidel?* with the following child’s testimony: “Fidel is a great revolutionary who fought and was a prisoner for our happiness, and that’s why all the children of this center love him as though he were our father.”<sup>83</sup> Wald notably began

the section immediately following her list of related quotes with the title *No Personality Cult*, assuring that “readers should not get the wrong impression” about her own evidence that state schools clearly glorified Fidel.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, in many ways, envisioning revolutionary society as an opposition-free utopia united in the building of socialism through a collectively received and deployed pedagogy of love was intrinsic to the success of Fidel Castro’s leadership and foundational to his one-man, one-party rule: both rested on the complicity of the majority of Cubans not only with the structures of power but perhaps, most important, with its discourses. When this complicity was *not* coerced from supporters but voluntarily and committedly offered as testament to one’s belief in communist values, the reaction it demanded from others—similar evidence of complicity—became unavoidably and intentionally coercive. After all, the point of educational programs for the promotion of ideological purity was, in the end, uniformity and compliance, the antithesis of debate and diversity. Official culture worked to make political love—the highest expressions of individual altruism and trust in the Revolution—part of popular culture through emotional, deliberate appeals to individual consciousness. Imperial witnesses served this task better in some cases than others, as the examples of Sontag, Leiner, and many scholars or political activists courted by the Cuban government in this period show.<sup>85</sup> Yet the external sources of support for the Revolution would have mattered little in the face of organized or even fragmentary internal opposition. Much like shutting one’s eyes to alternative interpretations of observed events, shutting out critical or negative voices was fundamental to the resilience and endurance of the revolutionary state as well as its call to trade power over the state for symbolic power in Fidel.

A central element in this process was undoubtedly the construction of perceived, affective forms of knowledge, not simply in schools or through the multiple forms of revolutionary pedagogy so common to the era, but through an environment deliberately saturated in monothematic discourses approved by the state as well as emotional experiences in which the greatest censor of rebellion and critique was the consciousness of citizens themselves. Clear examples of this phenomenon can be found in the music of Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés, both former victims of government repression. Far too critical of state authoritarianism, far too celebratory of individual desires, and far too poetic, Silvio and Pablo’s music demoralized and therefore demobilized listeners in the 1960s. While Silvio was famously relegated to isolation and hard labor on a state fishing vessel for months, Pablo spent the better part of a year at an UMAP camp in Camagüey. By the late 1970s, however, their rehabilitation and integration apparently complete, each composed a song that typified precisely the lessons that Cuban officials had so desperately wanted them to learn. Both directed themselves to a personified Revolution, plugging a depth of love that few beyond the Revolution itself could understand.

In the song “Acto de fé” (Act of faith), Pablo’s pledges of belief and devotion are made increasingly explicit with every verse. More to the point, Pablo admits—much as Sontag did years earlier—that every failure should be overlooked, every contradiction overcome, every doubt erased: *Creo en ti, lleno de contradicciones, presto a soluciones, siempre creo en ti. / Creo en ti, porque nada hay más humano que prenderse de tu mano y caminar creyendo en ti* (I believe in you, filled with contradictions, always offering solutions, I always believe in you. / I believe in you, because there is nothing more human than to hold your hand and walk alongside, believing in you).<sup>86</sup> More than just the highest expression of humanity, the Revolution has acquired the *carácter* of the Divine; likewise, attested Pablo, as faithful servant and lover of the Revolution, so has he: *Creo en ti, como creo en Dios, que eres tú, que soy yo, en ti, Revolución* (I believe in you, like I believe in God, who is you, who is also me, in you, Revolution).<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, in the song “Te doy una canción,” Silvio rejects those who assume he still uses his music to criticize the state, saying they only think such a thing *porque no te conocen ni te sienten* (because they don’t know you for themselves, nor do they *feel* you). Today, he pledges to give the Revolution a song and in so doing, to invert all negative assessments that could be made about it. To those who say that there are limits on personal expression, Silvio will prove that there are not. To those who think that the Revolution teaches citizens to kill, Silvio will prove that learning how to kill is a creative act. To those who doubt his faith, Silvio offers a song to the Revolution and promises to always speak for it, *la patria: Te doy una canción y hago un discurso, sobre mi derecho de hablar. / Te doy una canción con mis dos manos, con las mismas de matar. / Te doy una canción y digo Patria, y sigo hablando para ti* (I give you a song and give a speech / about my freedom to speak. / I give you a song with my two hands / the very ones that kill. / I give you a song and say *Patria*, and continue speaking for you.)<sup>88</sup> In the end, Silvio insists, writing a song for the Revolution is no different than firing a gun, writing a book, speaking for it, being a guerrilla, or making love: *Te doy una canción como un disparo, como un libro, una palabra, una guerrilla: como doy el amor* (I give you song, just as I would fire a shot for you, give you a book, a word, a guerrilla: just as I give you love).<sup>89</sup>

### **From Messiah to Mystic: The Death of Fidel in Historical Perspective**

For the Communist Party and its principal leader, Fidel Castro, the endurance and resilience of the Revolution rested squarely on three factors: discrediting all individual conditions of opposition, requiring the internalization of surveillance over it, and generating belief in the infallibility of an earthly messiah who would inspire citizens to feel that limitations on their agency, choices,

and identity were both empowering and worthwhile. In the 1970s and 1980s, Cuban day cares and preschools turned rigid Marxist-Leninist dogma into affective, instructional instruments meant to inculcate unconditional love for the Revolution in every citizen. In turn, generations of citizens ostensibly hoped that their love for the Revolution would inspire unconditional love from the Revolution.

Yet by the time Fidel died in 2016, Cuba's rulers commemorated his death by endorsing and enforcing displays of political mysticism and uncompromised allegiance rather than unearth long-buried memories of a contradictory, shamelessly authoritarian past. Doing so would have called his messianic message of inevitable communist triumph, let alone the legitimacy of his brother's current regime, into question. By staging and scripting a mass mourning for Fidel, officials argued for the Communist Party's own eternal life in the compliance and complicity of citizens: the slogan "Soy Fidel" signified that Fidel's body might have died but his combative spirit and ideas had risen in the mind and body of all loyal Cubans. Once again, the Cuban state had returned to time-tested emotional vehicles of the past rather than the past itself in order to shore up interpretations of the present. The result was a kind of "preschool curriculum" version of revolutionary history that served as a substitute and abstraction for the in-depth, improvised, and heady discussions of Fidel Castro's rule that surely took place in private rather than in government-organized, police-supervised public gatherings.

Today, sixty years after the flight of dictator Fulgencio Batista, scholarly meditations on the authoritarian legacies of Fidel Castro like those offered above are useful to assessing Cuba's ideologically incoherent present. For all its differences, today's army-controlled economy managed by foreign investors and unaccountable to average Cubans under Raúl Castro is, in principle, an outgrowth of yesterday's government-controlled economy managed by communist militants and unaccountable to average Cubans under Fidel Castro. Once a grassroots dictatorship in the 1960s, Cuba's government has gradually but surely become a militarized communist dictatorship that reproduced support for its structures and policies by seeking to shape citizens into mirrors of itself and its needs.

Although as of April 2018, he is no longer president of the Cuban Communist Party, Raúl Castro nonetheless retains control over Cuba's armed forces and massive internal security forces indefinitely. In addition to the long experience he brings to the job of intelligence and military chief (one he first assigned himself in 1959), Raúl continues to hold a monopoly not only on force but also as the head of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. He will remain "CEO" of Cuba's biggest retailer, importer, and hotelier, the Cuban military, especially the giant conglomerate known as GAESA that owns Gaviota, Cuba's largest tourist company, and controls the mammoth new port facilities at Mariel,

among other assets. When Fidel Castro was alive, things were not so different: for the last thirty years, the armed forces have exercised primary economic and therefore political control. Nonetheless, comparisons with other Latin American dictatorships such as Somoza’s decades-long dictatorship (1936–1979) in which officers of the Nicaraguan National Guard controlled industry and generals secured fortunes by guaranteeing contracts for foreign investors continue to be notable for their absence—from media and academic discussions of Cuba—despite their eerie similitude.

To what degree are such comparisons apt? To what degree is it necessary to sideline discussions of Fidel Castro’s legacies from the ways in which his rule has shaped the broader nature of identity for Cuba’s island citizens? As a specialist of modern Latin America, I sympathize with the desire to reject any comparison between the vast, bloodied fields on which millions of Latin Americans fought the US-backed Dirty Wars that defined the Cold War in the region for decades. Still, for the majority of Cubans who experienced the high communist era and whose identities became deeply enmeshed in state pedagogies of communist morality, adoration for Fidel, and love for the Revolution, there is a historical pattern to their government’s current behavior. Discussing that pattern—of seeking a monopoly over resources, controlling public discourse, and repressing dissent in order to maintain itself in power—is urgently needed.

But Cubans need far more than a national conversation on the authoritarian legacies of Fidel’s regime. By demanding that citizens “feel like” Fidel, live up to his demands as a route to fulfilling his example and thereby love the state as themselves, Cuban leaders substituted citizen control over government policy (as well as the attending rights to critique, organize, and protest) with guarantees of loyalty and steadfast shows of belief, not a set of structures vested with contestatory political power. The result, five decades later, is the sort of tunnel vision typical of Cuba’s top political elite: they see the future before them without being able to turn around and assess either the present or the past. Rather than claim that a new revolutionary identity had been born with the death of Fidel Castro, Cuban officials resort to recycling old, now tired vehicles of (largely eroded) affect. It is precisely in catalyzing an entirely new, heterogeneous, dialogic, and diverse post-Revolution revolutionary identity that the youngest generations of Cubans are being born. Cubans do not need to “unlearn” the lessons that Cuba’s politocracy and crushing culture of ideological self-perfection that the state taught them in the past; they need to rescind them entirely. Yet today, as Fidel’s death brought to light, citizens face a state that refuses to remember, let alone deconstruct or denounce, the methods and mandates that Fidel Castro and other leaders once proudly elevated as proof of Cubans’ liberation.

That state still holds both the reins of power—military, political, and eco-

monic—firmly in its hands. Some might argue that the coerced and coercive complicity that the death of Fidel put on display demonstrates the communist system’s successful reengineering of Cubans’ historically rebellious political personalities into a passive, apathetic mold. I disagree. As the history of education and the popular culture of siege in Cuba reveals, there is always more to see in Cuba than meets the eye—and, I would add, more that anyone who genuinely wants to see, can see. Perhaps Cubans will find the greatest sources of hope and change not be in remembering but in simply unforgetting the power, the pain, and the paradox that Fidel Castro’s legacies bequest to them.

## NOTES

1. La Razón de México, “Conductores de TV cubana debaten por censura de ‘Buenos días,’” 00:50, YouTube video, filmed and posted November 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZN9-iobSKLA>. See also Man Vid7, “Locutores cubanos protestando en camara abierta,” 00:50, YouTube video, filmed and posted November 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6DGbAeQwco>.

2. Cover and “Cuba-URSS internacionalismo militante,” *Cuba internacional* (October 1974): 2–3. Original Spanish: “¿Quién duda que algún día los lazos de todos los revolucionarios verdaderos y de todos los pueblos liberados serán tan fraternales como lo son hoy los de Cuba y la URSS?”

3. Interview with René Ariza in *Conducta impropia*, directed by Nestór Almendros and Orlando Jiménez Leal (Playor, 1983). Original Spanish: “Es, yo creo, que está dentro del carácter del cubano de hace mucho tiempo, que no es privativo de Castro y que hay muchos Castros. Y que hay que vigilarse el Castro que cada uno tiene dentro.” Achy Obejas cited this famous quote without providing due credit in her op-ed “The Little Fidel in All of Us,” *New York Times*, November 27, 2017.

4. Posters titled “Absueltos por la historia: XIX, Aniversario del Asalto al Cuartel Moncada” (1972) and “El Pueblo Cubano vivirá con su Revolución o morirá hasta el último hombre y mujer junto a ella” (1981) in Sección de Mapas y Planos, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter, SMP, ANC).

5. Fidel Castro, “Fidel en el Congreso de la UJC.” *Educación* 2, no. 5 (April–June 1972): 49.

6. Key contributions to the relatively new field of Latin American Cold War studies include Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Hal Brands, *Latin America’s Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Gilbert Joseph and Greg Grandin, *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America’s Long Cold War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna, *Brazil, 1964–1985: The Military Regimes of Latin America in the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

7. Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption and Resistance, 1959–1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Devyn Benson, *Antiracism in Cuba: The Unfinished Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Yvon Grenier, *Culture and the Cuban State: Participation, Recognition and Dissonance under Communism* (New York: Lexington Books, 2017).

8. See article 16 of *Statutes of the Communist Party of Cuba adopted by the First Congress, with the modifications agreed by the Second Congress* (Havana: Political Publishing House, 1981).
11. The text does not vary from article 15 in the earlier statutes defined in 1975. *Estatutos del Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Havana, 1976), 27–29.
9. William Leogrande, “The Communist Party of Cuba since the First Congress,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 2 (November 1980): 405.
10. See article 62, *Estatutos del Partido Comunista de Cuba*, 64–66.
11. Federación Ganadera, “Estos niños serán patriotas o traidores . . .,” in SMP, ANC.
12. On June 6, 1972, top army chief Raúl Castro gave one of the most significant policy speeches of his career to an assembly of officials, security agents, military officers, and others at the Ministry of the Interior, Cuba’s Soviet-trained and Soviet-modeled central intelligence agency. Days later it was disseminated widely, putting all of Cuba on notice, most especially teachers and the pedagogical community Raúl accused of patronizing and cultivating Cuba’s greatest internal threat, ideological division. See Raúl Castro Ruz, “El diversionismo ideológico: Arma sutil que esgrimen los enemigos contra la revolución,” *Educación* 2, no. 9 (July–September 1972): 21–35.
13. Humberto Pérez, “Colonización cultural y colonización ideológica,” *Educación* 4, no. 12 (January–March 1974): 47–48. The Communist Party required all members to “combat ideological diversionism and political confusionism, whatever forms it may take.” See Pérez, “Colonización cultural,” 65, and “Resolución,” *Tesis y resoluciones: Primer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Havana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, 1976), 250–257. The same resolutions meant to eliminate the threat of “disideologization” represented by Marxist revisionists and “bridge-building” theorists of the West also included the goal of eliminating all “religious ideology.” See “Resolución,” 255.
14. Perhaps the best summary of the 2007 events that blew the lid off Cuba’s campaign of intellectual repression is found in Mauricio Vincent, “El recuerdo del ‘quinquenio gris’ moviliza a los intelectuales cubanos,” *El País*, January 13, 2007, [https://elpais.com/diario/2007/01/13/cultura/1168642801\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2007/01/13/cultura/1168642801_850215.html).
15. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the term *anti-cubano* became a commonplace substitute for counterrevolutionary critics, citizens who left the country and alienated residents known as *gusanos*. I found the earliest use of the term in secret files documenting Cuba’s official response to international outrage over the detention and torture of writer Heberto Padilla in 1971. See “DGICL-2901 (Confidencial). Documento IV,” May 23, 1971, and Oficina de Dirección General del Instituto del Libro, “Memorandum confidencial a Co. Miguel Rodríguez, Co. René Roca, Co. Eduardo Neira. DGICL-2901,” May 28, 1971, p. 6, in Caso Padilla, *estante 52, anaquel 12, legajo 1*, Fondo General del Ministerio de Cultura. This archive has been moved from the Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba to the Instituto Cubano de Investigación Cultural Juan Marinello. My understanding is that the entire Caso Padilla file was removed. All transcriptions of this file, photographs, and other notes are available through the Digital Library of the Caribbean, at <http://www.dloc.com/AA00019994/00001?search=lillian+=guerra>.
16. Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 11, 20, 26, 36, 142–143, 291, 304–319, 342–345.
17. Susan Sontag, “Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution,” *Ramparts* (April 1969): 19; Gerald H. Read, “The Cuban Revolutionary Offensive in Education,” *Comparative Education Review*, 14, no. 2 (June 1970): 142.
18. *Informe del compañero José Llanusa Gobel, Ministro de Educación y miembro del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Havana: Imprenta del Militante Comunista, 1970), 106.
19. Cubans older than seventy repeatedly referenced this joke to me in informal conversations about their experiences of the mammoth labor mobilizations and failed economic policies of those years, especially the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s.
20. *Informe*, 106–107.

21. Fabio Grobart, "Palabras de Fabio Grobart, miembro del Comité Central en la presentación del Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, 22 de diciembre de 1975," *La Unión nos dió la victoria* (Havana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, 1976), 404–405.

22. Quoted in Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 303.

23. "Modeling and the Role of Student Leadership and Teachers, Part 2," Marvin Leiner Papers (hereafter MLP), Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, box 10, 124B.

24. Poster 1 of the series titled "Porque ellos son el futuro" in SMP, ANC. Emphasis added. Original Spanish: "Para formar el hombre revolucionario . . . el hombre comunista. Toda la atención que le presten al Partido y la Juventud a la organización de pioneros *nunca* será excesiva."

25. María Luisa Soler Acosta, *Aprender a leer y escribir: Un ensayo para el aprendizaje de la lectura-escritura para los adultos* (Havana: Gobierno Provincial Revolucionario, Departamento de Cultura, 1959); *¡Cumpliremos! Temas sobre la Revolución para los alfabetizadores* (Havana: Imprenta Nacional de Cuba, 1961); Ministerio de Educación, *Alfabetecemos: Manual para el alfabetizador* (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, 1961); Ministerio de Educación, *Como se forma un maestro en Cuba socialista* (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, 1965).

26. "Principios y lineamientos de la estructura y funcionamiento del MINED," *Educación* 1, no. 1 (April–June 1971): 5–10.

27. Luis Prado García, "La educación comunista de los estudiantes a través del estudio del marxismo-leninismo," *Educación* 6, no. 21 (April–June 1976): 71.

28. Carmen V. Manzano Andovega, "El trabajo educativo en la educación media," *Educación* 9, no. 42 (July–September 1981): 81.

29. "Una experiencia de pedagogía revolucionaria: La escuela al campo. Selección e integración de los conceptos fundamentales sobre la escuela secundaria básica en el campo expuestos por el Cmdte. Fidel Castro Ruz . . ." *Educación* 1, no. 1 (April–June 1971): 21.

30. Declaración Final del III II, Pleno Nacional de la UJC," *Juventud rebelde*, January 9, 1967, 8.

31. "Modeling and the Role of Student Leadership and Teachers, Part 2," 112.

32. Irma López, "El papel del maestro en la formación de la personalidad comunista del niño," *Educación* 6, no. 20 (January–March 1976): 49.

33. Teresita Aguilera Vargas, "La enseñanza de la historia en la escuela primaria," *Educación* 8, no. 29 (April–June 1978): 12, 27; Marta Cuervo Díaz, "Nuestro estudiantado y el IV V, Congreso de la Federación de Estudiantes de la Enseñanza Media (FEEM)," *Educación* 8, no. 28 (January–March 1978): 25.

34. "Graduación revolucionaria: Patria es la humanidad," *Granma*, December 11, 1967, 2.

35. "Fidel Visits Elementary School Opened Recently in Meneses, Las Villas Province," *Granma Weekly* (September 26, 1971), 2.

36. "Fidel Visits."

37. Leiner, *Children Are the Revolution*, 56–57. Clementina Serra, Spanish-language report, "Introducción-8," pp. 1–7, 11–12, and pts. 28–30, p. 1, in MLP, box 3. Note that this report is divided into several unmarked parts. I have done my best to describe them according to the headings given.

38. Serra, Spanish-language report, pts. 28–30 in MLP, box 3, p. 1.

39. Serra, Spanish-language report, pp. 2–3.

40. Ministerio de Educación, *Programas. Enseñanza primaria. Grado preescolar* (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, 1968), 15–16, in MLP, box 3.

41. Serra, "Antecedentes," 31.

42. Orlando Alba Beltrán, *Con Fidel y con la historia* (Havana: Editorial Gente Nueva, 1978).

43. Beltrán, *Con Fidel*, 3–4, 8–11, 29–30.

44. Fidel Castro, “*Hay que pensar en el futuro . . .*” (Havana: Gente Nueva, n.d.). The publication date was likely 1979–1981.
45. Rafaela Chacón Nardí, *Imágenes infantiles de Cuba revolucionaria: Testimonio gráfico, 1970–1975* (Havana: Gente Nueva, 1976), 8–9.
46. Chacón Nardí, *Imágenes infantiles*, 20.
47. Mid- to late-1970s poster titled “El esfuerzo de esta generación tiene que consagrarse al desarrollo” with image of Fidel Castro, in SMP, ANC.
48. This UJC poster reads “La historia de un país, las victorias, los avances se escriben cada día con el esfuerzo y el trabajo diario, no solo con el heroísmo de un día, sino de todos los días. Fidel” in SMP, ANC.
49. One of a 1978–1979 series of blue and orange posters meant for display in classrooms and public spaces of schools, this poster is titled (like many): “La Revolución ha puesto en la juventud sus más profundas esperanzas y confía a ella su future.—Fidel” in SMP, ANC. Original Spanish: “Lo más limpio, lo más puro, lo más honesto debe ser el estudiante, porque ellos serán los trabajadores de mañana; ellos son llamados a desarrollar, *hasta su maxima perfección*, la sociedad socialista y avanzar resueltamente por los caminos del comunismo.”
50. See the photograph accompanying Procopio Flores Uribe, “Acerca de los hábitos y normas de conducta,” *Educación* 4, no. 12 (January–March 1974): 60.
51. For examples from Ruíz’s class that explicitly use these phrases, see Tania Encarnación Pedroso Ortega, Alberto Einstein Essay 13; Ulises Barquín C., Alberto Einstein Essay 15; Nancy Barquín and Ana Cifuentes, Albert Einstein Essay 20; March 13, 1969, Five Wishes Collection in MLP, Wagner Labor Archives, NYU, box 10.
52. Maria Elena Antuña, “Composición,” Albert Einstein Essay 16, Five Wishes Collection. Of twenty-three essays from the fifth and sixth grade at Alberto Einstein Elementary School, ten kids invoked Che and Tania by name or said they wanted to be “el Hombre Nuevo” (the New Man). At the primary school in Uvero, Oriente, teachers mistakenly instructed students to create a wish list of career choices, as eleven-year-old Virgen Almaradas de la Paz (Uvero Essay 26), pointed out. Consequently, only three of forty-three mentioned Che Guevara by name. However all forty-three invariably justified their choices as a means for “helping the Revolution,” especially the less obvious the form that such help might take in the case of certain careers (such as taxi driver).
53. Quotes taken from Ulises Barquín C., Alberto Einstein Essay 13; Dennys Aguilera Morális, Uvero Essay 41; Vicente Rodríguez M., Albert Einstein Essay 1, March 13, 1969; and Fredys Puebla Aguilar, Uvero Essay 4, March 20, 1969, in Five Wishes Collection. Essays expressing primarily martial goals from the Uvero collection include Essays 2, 4, 12, 20, 25, 35, 37, 38, 42; from Albert Einstein, Essays 7–10, 13, 15–23.
54. Magalys Borrero Sánchez, Uvero Essay 1, March 20, 1969, Five Wishes Collection.
55. Margarita Aranzán Torna, Albert Einstein Essay 11, March 13, 1969, Five Wishes Collection.
56. Ernesto Aguilar García, Uvero Essay 35, March 23, 1969, Five Wishes Collection.  
Original Spanish: “A mi me gustaría ser doctor por si a caso hay un enfermo curarlo y que pueda seguir luchando contra la barbarie yanqui.”
57. Rolando Mustelier Castillo, Uvero Essay 25, March 22, 1969, Five Wishes Collection.
58. José Julián Cala Saqué, Alberto Einstein Essay 8, March 13, 1969, Five Wishes Collection.
59. Idania Hernández Domínguez, Uvero Essay 36, March 22, 1969, and Juan Ramón Orosa Bañobre, Uvero Essay 12, March, 22 1969, Five Wishes Collection.
60. Quoted in Read, “Cuban Revolutionary Offensive in Education,” 138.
61. José Quiroga is the first to recognize the depth of artificial and, indeed, illogical guilt with which young Cubans were invited to live. See Quiroga, *Cuban Palimpsests* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

62. Part 2 of Interview with Inés, in MLP, box 3.

Original Spanish: “Nosotros hablamos de los que están muertos no de los que están vivos, porque los que están vivos todavía no han dado todo, y lo más que se puede hablar aquí cuando se habla de una persona es cuando da la vida. El que no ha dado la vida todavía no ha hecho todo lo que tiene que hacer.”

63. Quoted in Antonio Núñez Jiménez, *¡Patria o muerte . . . !* (Havana: Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria, 1961), 5.

64. Examples include Karen Wald, *Children of Che: Childcare and Education in Cuba* (Palo Alto, CA: Ramparts Press, 1978); Gil Green, *Cuba at 25: Continuing the Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1983); and the best-selling book by Jonathan Kozol, *Children of the Revolution: A Yankee Teacher in the Cuban Schools* (New York: Delta Publishing, 1978), discussed in detail. Admittedly, I read all three of the books as assigned texts in high school and college.

65. Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, 8.

66. Quoted in Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, 22–23.

67. Quoted in Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, 42.

68. Kozol, *Children of the Revolution* 51–52. Most of the letters are written in a hand that belies the notion that their writers had started learning how to read and write from ground zero; instead, many thousands are written in fluid, primary-school-level hand. This fact alone might explain the highly restricted access the Ministry of Education grants to interested researchers.

69. Quoted in Kozol, *Children of the Revolution*, 63.

70. Sontag, “Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution,” 12, 14, 16.

71. Sontag, “Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution,” 14.

72. Sontag, “Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution,” 18.

73. Abel Sierra Madero, “El trabajo os hará hombres: Masculinización nacional, trabajo forzado e ingeniería social de la Revolución cubana,” and Abel Sierra Madero, “‘Eso fue un trabajo top secret’: Entrevista a la dra. María Elena Solé Arrondo (1941–2013),” ed. Lillian Guerra, *Cuban Studies/Estudios cubanos* 45 (2015): 308–349, 357–366.

74. Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 227–289.

75. Sontag, “Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution,” 18.

76. Sontag, “Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution,” 14.

77. Quoted in Moacir Gadotti, *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work*, trans. John Milton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 152.

78. Leiner, *Children Are the Revolution*, 186.

79. Sontag, “Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution,” 18.

80. Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 353–362.

81. Especially illustrative of this theme are Wald’s chapters “The Littlest Gusana” and “Juvenile Re-Education,” 269–320.

82. Wald, *Children of Che*, 294–295.

83. Wald, *Children of Che*, 262.

84. Wald, *Children of Che*, 263–264.

85. Rafael Rojas, *Fighting over Fidel: The New York Intellectuals and the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); see also Lillian Guerra, *Patriots and Traitors in Cuba, 1961–1981: Education, Rehabilitation and Vanguard Youth* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

86. Pablo Milanés, “Acto de fé,” in *Acto de fé* (Havana: 1980).

87. Milanés, “Acto de fé.”

88. Silvio Rodríguez, “Te doy una canción,” in *Mujeres* (Havana: 1979).

89. Rodríguez, “Te doy una canción.”