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Myra Ann Houser
Ouachita Baptist University, houserm@obu.edu

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Ouachita Baptist University

410 Ouachita Street, Box 3744

(202)-570-3330

houserm@obu.edu

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Abstract: Fidel Castro's meta-narrative of Cuban history emphasizes the struggle—and eventual triumph—of the oppressed over their oppressors. This was epitomized in Nelson Mandela's 1991 visit to the island, when his host took him to the northwestern city of Matanzas, and the pair gave speeches titled "Look How Far We Slaves Have Come!" The use of Matanzas as a site of public political memory began in 1843, and the memory of slavery soon became a surrogate for Cuba's flawed liberation movement. One-hundred and fifty years after the execution of Carlota, one of the enslaved leaders of the Triumvirato Rebellion in Matanzas, Cuba began Operation Black Carlota in Angola. Castro had come to power twenty years earlier and publicized his own storming of a former slave—and by then prison and Army—barracks at Moncada in Santiago. The naming of the mission, and the subsequent emphasis on slaves overcoming their neo-colonial "masters" illustrates the vividness of Cuban memories of slavery, as well as its emotional resonance as a rallying point. This paper summarizes this general memory of slavery and asks how Castro and his comrades used it to legitimize their African sojourns to their fellow Cubans and to international leaders. It examines how military victories such as that at Cuito Cuanavale served to some as a vindication of these earlier rebellions, resulting in the victory that Carlota and her comrades did not attain. Using speeches, memoirs, pamphlets, and existing literature on Cuba and Africa, it outlines how the memory of slavery deeply impacted both Cuba's revolution and its subsequent foreign policy.

Keywords: African Diaspora; Angola; Cuba; memory; military; slavery

Introduction

In 1991, during his post-prison world tour, Nelson Mandela visited Cuba and thanked the island's people for their support during South Africa's liberation struggle. Speaking on the site of an old slave barrack at Matanzas, Mandela and Fidel Castro compared the historical struggle of slaves rebelling against their masters to a more contemporary one, where the nations of the Third World rebelled against Western hegemony and imperialism.[ii] Mandela's presence in Matanzas, his reception of the Jose Marti Award, and the speeches he and Castro delivered indicate the culmination of a Cuban military and humanitarian campaign in Africa that invoked the memory of events such as the Triumvirato and Acana rebellions and later La Escalera repression in the 1840s in order to further the aims of Castro's revolutionary state.[iii] This article traces the development of Cuban memories of slavery and argues that the Castros often manipulated and used those memories in order to gain support for their revolutionary movement.

The Violent Past in Cuba and the Caribbean

The memory of a violent past has become important not only in Cuba but throughout the Caribbean, as Alvin O. Thompson writes.[iv] Thompson has argued that Caribbean peoples are "haunted" by a past that includes violent suppression of native populations, the institution of slavery and rebellions to it, and continued violence related to the memory of slavery. As a means of taming the past and asserting agency over cultural trauma, many Caribbean societies have begun to invoke slave rebellions during contemporary struggles, thereby redeeming past sins and even avenging past injustices, as in the Cuban case. This violent memory becomes especially pervasive, Thompson argues, in the Spanish Caribbean—Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. There, plantation slavery did not begin until the eighteenth century, and as whites remained the population's majority until the 1850s, "whitening" became important in these countries.[v] Thus, subsequent efforts to rebuild multiracial societies, such as Castro's in late

twentieth-century Cuba, have emphasized the remembrance of darker-complexioned citizens' accomplishments.

In discussions surrounding the memory of La Escalera, Castro has emphasized the efforts of "smaller" nations against larger hegemonic powers such as the United States. This decision to embrace Carlota and her comrades as a symbol of these smaller powers, rather than as distinctly Cuban, is consistent with Castro's efforts at Pan-Americanism, or at the very least Pan-Caribbeanism. Thompson points out that historical differences in language and culture, as well as the island geography that causes isolation, have often resulted in a Caribbean where individual nations have more dissimilarities than commonalities.[vi] Thus, while Castro's discussions may aim to include more Cubans in the project of nationalism, they also may serve to include more Caribbean citizens in what has been termed the country's "export of revolution."

Within both domestic and international iterations of the revolution, race would prove a tricky issue for Cuban leaders. They often tended to either ignore or minimize complaints of racial discrimination on one hand or to become overly interested in discussing them on the other.[vii] African interventions and the utilization of Carlota became key techniques in winning Afro-Cubans over to the revolutionary project during a time of lagging interest and even discontent.

Carlota the Rebel

Matanzas Province's Triumvirato Rebellion became an important symbol in this struggle, particularly as Cuba named its 1974 military mission in Angola "Operation Carlota"[viii] after the enslaved Lucumi woman who served as a leader in it. As one of the rebellion's female leaders, Carlota endured a much harsher execution and subsequent dismemberment than her male counterparts. The decision to use her image, then, recognizes this horrific death, and it also

reflects Castro's oft-used rhetoric regarding the important place of women in his revolution—and their active integration into Cuba's armed forces. Thus, the memory of an enslaved woman did indeed become a symbolic place—Nora's *lieu de mémoire*— for Cubans seeking to overcome their own country's troubled racial divisions, find a place in a larger international society, and assert themselves against their perceived subordination at the hands of neocolonial masters such as the United States.[ix]

In 1843, two slaves at a plantation in Matanzas killed a guard and two masters and set fire to the sugar mill, thus beginning the rebellions at Triumvirato and Acana. The latter had been led by an enslaved woman named Ferminia, who was promptly captured and imprisoned, then escaped, released, or rescued—depending on the narrative—prior to the Matanzas uprising. Ferminia, Carlota, and their companions Eduardo, a Fula; Narciso and Felipe, Lucumis; Carmita and Juliana, *criollas*; and Manuel, a Ganga, took control of the Acana sugar mill on November 5, 1843, killing the mayoral and his assistant and setting several buildings on fire before moving on to nearby mills.[x] After setting fires and killing overseers on several other plantations, the team was captured by Matanzas Governor Antonio Garcia Oña's troops at San Rafael Igenio. Carlota was killed and quartered during the capture, and the others—including Ferminia--died in a firing squad in March, 1844.[xi]

Despite being just one of two female leaders in the rebellion, Carlota quickly became the symbol for feminine strength against a brutal system. That same year, during the La Escalera events, slave owners and authorities began a brutal and systematic repression of suspected leaders in various uprisings. It remains, as discussed by Aisha Finch, "one of the most controversial episodes in Cuban history," largely due to conflicting memories of and theories on the extent of the conspiracy.[xii] One of those controversies has centered around whether a slave

conspiracy in fact existed prior to La Escalera or whether colonial officials used the idea of one to justify repression.

Cuban Memories of Slavery and Rebellion

Cuban public memory of slavery during the African campaign was conveyed both at literal sites, such as the Matanzas barracks, as well as in symbolic interactions, such as the Cuban defeat of South African Defense Force troops at Cuito Cuanavale, Angola, where Castro declared that the victory had avenged the memory of the executed slaves and vowed to continue in their mission to fight oppression during the battle that took place between September 9 and October 7, 1987. In Castro's 1991 Matanzas speech, titled, "We Will Never Return to the Slave Barracks," he cited the links between capitalism and slavery—and capitalism and apartheid—saying:

> In what way is apartheid different from the practice in effect for centuries of dragging tens of millions of Africans from their land and bringing them to this hemisphere to enslave them, to exploit them to the last drop of their sweat and blood? Who would know this better than the people of Matanzas, since here in this part of Western Cuba there were perhaps more than 100,000 slaves. In the first half of the last century there were as many as 300,000 slaves in Cuba, and one of the provinces that had the most slaves was this one, which was also the scene of great uprisings. For this reason there is nothing so just or so legitimate as the monument to this rebellious slave that has just been erected in this province.[xiii]

Castro's speech tied together public memories of slavery and apartheid. He delivered it while standing next to Mandela, South Africa's anti-apartheid icon, on July 26, 1991, the thirty-eighth anniversary of the date when he and his comrades had launched the July 26, 1953, movement to overthrow Fulgencio Batista. That Mandela had arrived in Cuba directly following a visit to the

United States, where President George Bush had tried to convince him not to visit Castro, only added to the drama and excitement. The Americans had, in Castro's estimation, proven themselves to be the hegemonic power best symbolized by old slave masters as it tried to prevent a meeting between the protagonists in the global struggles against slavery and imperialism.

The creation of Cuba's public memory of slavery

Fights against the institutions of slavery and colonialism became important prior to the former's full-fledged establishment on the island. Many enslaved individuals served as leaders in both of these movements, viewing colonialism and slavery as linked—which they often were. Led by free people of color, for example, the 1812 Aponte Rebellion had been preceded by Spain's declaration that it would help white plantation owners maintain their wealth, land, and lifestyle—a lifestyle that largely relied on slavery. Tales of the 1812 Aponte Rebellion came into public knowledge almost immediately, perhaps inciting further rebellions and scaring slave owners and plantation masters.[xiv] Additionally, the United States during the early nineteenth century began to view Cuban independence—which it connected with inevitable emancipation—as a threat to its own southern states, where slaves would surely gain inspiration from their brethren and rebel against plantation masters there, creating an even more difficult situation in a country where human bondage had already become a highly contested issue.

As Manuel Barcia has eloquently written, resistance by enslaved peoples varied across Cuba and took on many forms other than armed rebellion.[xv] While he discusses the validity and sometime success of resistance methods such as slow work, suicide, and marronage, Barcia Paz admits that public memory has focused largely on revolts because they were large and dramatic.[xvi] Additionally, it is easier to view revolts as conscious acts of rebellion, even when they were not successful, rather than analyzing ordinary actions and retroactively imposing a

rebellious spirit upon them. Matanzas in particular became the site for many rebellions, such as that at Triumvirato, and it has therefore also become the preeminent site for remembering slave life and resistance on the island. Although Triumvirato became and remained a site of remembrance, the memory of individual leaders such as Carlota grew more rapidly after the Angolan campaign and erection of public monuments in relation to the UNESCO Slave Route Project during the past decade. Based on Raul Castro's comments after Operation Carlota's success in Angola it becomes apparent that while Triumvirato may have remained a mythical part of Cuban memory, knowledge of its details lay largely dormant until their resurrection with the African connection. Matanzas Province had also previously served as Cuba's main site of Spanish conquest and colonial violence, famously named for the massacres on it shores long before any rebellions took place there.[xvii] While Castro invoked slave revolts in particular, he may also have been drawing upon a common memory of Matanzas as a place of colonial conquest, another wrong that Cuban troops could avenge through their success in twentieth-century Angola.

The uprisings of the 1840s, along with Aponte in 1812 and the Revolution of 1959, are considered major events in Cuba's history. Nonetheless, the rebellions resulted in relatively few deaths for slave holders, and even the property damage became insignificant when compared with other New World slave rebellions, totaling only about US$80,000.[xviii] Following the events of 1843-1844, slavery in Cuba became more pronounced, both in terms of the numbers of people enslaved and the importance of sugar in the island's economy, as well as in terms of the harshness and brutality enacted by plantation masters and authorities enforcing the O'Donnell Code. Thus, while in Afro-Cuban memory the Triumvirato rebellion remained important, it also became a failure that needed to be avenged. Emancipation and the Cuban revolution would

provide some of this vengeance, with Operation Carlota serving as the pinnacle in the journey toward making sense of Triumvirato.

The lesson for white Cubans became that while whites could be mobilized to fight for independence from Spain and blacks to fight against slavery, both should not be mobilized at once for the same cause. This realization undoubtedly contributed to the increasing repression with which enslaved Cubans found themselves treated after the rebellion. Repression continued as sugar-wealthy Cuba became the colony that Spain fought the longest and hardest to keep.[xix] In many ways the war for liberation and the war for abolition became intricately linked, a scenario that Castro would later emphasize in his comparisons between slave resistance and rebellion against Western hegemony.

As more recent scholars have argued, later allegations of conspiracy probably arose in order for colonial Cuban officials to mete out harsher punishments for slaves accused of rebellion and to provide a justification for continued repression in later years, as much of the Western world had abolished slavery.[xx] There may perhaps have been conspiracies, but the more likely scenario is that war had become an integral part of African lives, and that the hardy individuals who had survived wars at home, the Middle Passage, and then forced labor in the Americas simply viewed violence as a means for attaining short-term freedom.[xxi] While the planners of many revolts actually resided as free-people in urban areas, recently imported Africans became the most likely candidates to carry out rebellions on plantations, a fact Barcia Paz attributes to their familiarity with warfare and recent experiences with fighting on the African continent.[xxii] Paranoia of conspiracies and the potential for an "apocalyptic slave uprising" remained following Triumvirato, Acana, and La Escalera, however, and some colonial officials came to believe that unpunished revolutionaries from Aponte or newcomers from Haiti

or Britain may have helped to plan and lead insurrections, creating a further motivation for the harsh punishments that became the period's trademark.[xxiii]

Indeed, a cycle often arose where individual homicides of masters and the resulting repression morphed into full-scale rebellions.[xxiv] While incidents of homicide unrelated to rebellions also became common, during incidents such as the revolts at Triunvirato and Acana, an individual homicide might inspire enslaved peoples on other plantations to rebel, while news of another's rebellion could inspire other forced laborers to rise up against their individual masters. These events became to the Castros not just a perhaps-random series of events, but the precursor to a well-planned revolution, much like the one they viewed themselves as having carried out.

At the same time, classifying rebellion as an isolated incident allowed slave masters to feel safer, fearing not that their own charges would rise up against them in an act of solidarity if they were well cared-for. While communicating and organizing across the vast space of multiple plantations may have been difficult, it was indeed possible, and the decision to portray it as too far-fetched to take place was designed to deprive enslaved Africans of both agency and competence, as several historians have demonstrated.

Describing Carlota as a Lucumi woman points to a unique facet of Cuban slavery. Enslaved Africans working on the island hailed from diverse parts of Africa including Senegambia, the Bight of Benin, Angola and other areas in Central Africa, and Mozambique, in contrast with many parts of the New World, where humans had been imported (to the United States in particular) based on imperial trade patterns, and individuals at ports there had often come from one particular point in Africa. Not only did enslaved Africans in Cuba often know their place of continental origin, but in many cases were permitted to organize along ethnic lines,

creating organizations that paid homage to their particular homelands. Recently imported Africans in particular were not only the most familiar with techniques of warfare, but also the most likely to be able to communicate and organize revolts.[xxv] The term "Yoruba," as previously mentioned, could be applied to enslaved Africans from the Bight of Benin in West Africa, particularly present-day Nigeria, Benin, and Togo.[xxvi] Carlota was considered Lucumi, a word designating Yoruba-speaking and groups in Cuba. The area from where most Cuban slaves hailed, contained territory both in the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola, though Africans from this region rarely participated in revolts.[xxvii]

Despite these early rebellions and sustained efforts on the parts of slaves, Cuba became one of the last nations to abolish slavery, doing so only after an outcry from countries that had already emancipated enslaved populations. British and Spanish officials established "Mixed Commissions" after the trade's abolition in order to enforce the new slave-purchasing embargo, but these had little success in Cuba, where the trade not only continued, but ultimately thrived, through the nineteenth century.[xxviii] Despite its long hold on the island, Cuban slavery was probably endangered even as it began, largely due to massive rebellions by Africans, a fact Castro underscored in his rhetoric.

David Geggus has argued that the "spirit of abolitionism" circling the world, of which Afro-Cubans were aware, played a larger role in the increase in violent rebellions than the ideology of the French or Haitian Revolutions.[xxix] While enslaved Afro-Cubans may have been vaguely aware of these distant revolutions, the knowledge of a gap between liberal ideals and their own plight, as well as knowledge of warfare, were perhaps greater and became a larger factor in their decisions to take up violence. In fact, the most important role of the Haitian Revolution in creating Cuban slave rebellions may simply have been in transferring the title of

"world's leading sugar producer" from Haiti to Cuba and increasing the number of rebellious, newly-imported Africans to the island.[xxx] At the same time, the paranoia of both slave masters and Cuban authorities would have resulted in harsher, more repressive conditions against which to rebel.

The Cuban Revolution and Cubans

The Spanish Caribbean attained independence much later than its mainland counterparts, which organized and rebelled during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a time when Cuba was only beginning to develop as a mercantile colony.[xxxi] Cuba's late full independence in 1902, as well as the United States' special interest in it, have probably contributed to this revolutionary mentality and to Castro's need to assert his country's agency in struggles against hegemonic powers, particularly given the United States' role in the Spanish-American War. The long nineteenth century saw successive failed rebellions and attempts at independence. The process of self-assertion proved disappointing and ultimately came to shadow much of the island's twentieth-century history. Much of it had been articulated by Jose Marti, the "apostle of Cuban independence," in whose memory the award Mandela received would be named.

Even after the acquisition of its independence, Cuba did not remain a free state in the eyes of western powers such as the United States, who used the scientific racism so prominent in early twentieth-century discourse to deny the possibility of a majority Afro-descended nation ever being able to govern itself.[xxxii] US influence in Cuban politics continued with the Platt Amendment of 1901 to the country's constitution and under the leadership of America-friendly leaders such as Batista. Thus, in order for the Cuban revolution to be truly revolutionary it needed to represent a dramatic departure from this past.[xxxiii] In labeling the revolution and its

export as a continuation of the struggle of enslaved Cubans, Castro has perhaps created a surrogate for the island's never-realized liberation movement.

Thus, as Louis A. Perez, Jr., has argued, Cuban nationalism became a project that could be sustained only through engagement with an unfinished history.[xxxiv] Investigations into this historical near-obsession have dominated scholarly work on the country as "Successive generations of historians, sociologists, literary critics, novelists, and poets have represented the proposition of Cuban—lo cubano in multiple forms, formulated variously as cubanidad, cubania, cubaneo, and cubanismo. Cubannes has been a Cuban preoccupation."[xxxv]

In addition to serving as a surrogate liberation struggle, the continuum between memories of slavery and of resistance to Western ideals may also serve as an indirect means of including Cubans of color in the national narrative. As Aline Helg has pointed out, "Cubans of all races and backgrounds contributed to the struggle against the Spaniards, although after independence Afro-Cubans were largely absent from the important political and economic institutions on the island."[xxxvi] According to this statement, Afro-Cubans remained absent not only from historical memory of a "whitened" state, but also from the institutions they had helped create. In emphasizing enslaved Africans' role in building Cuba, Castro not only brought them into public memory and heritage, but also used this memory as a recruiting tool to add Afro-Cubans to the country's institutions.

The island's Army, for instance, had been historically white leading up to 1959, as nineteenth-century liberation leaders feared that training Afro-Cubans to fight would cause them to take up arms against the new nation and establish a Black dictatorship similar to that of Haiti.[xxxvii] Thus, in liberated Cuba, a view of the country's citizens as White continued at the encouragement of liberation leaders.[xxxviii] Despite this, Afro-Cuban participation in the country's

armed forces has remained high—in some cases close to 70 or 80 percent—even when this participation has actually furthered the aims of powers seeking to limit Afro-Cuban citizenship. Since the revolution Afro-Cuban participation in the armed forces has increased, and Afro-Cubans now comprise a large percentage of the country's armed forces.[xxxix] In revolutionary Cuba, however, Castro and his comrades began making efforts to change the perception of armed conflict as traditionally white and to integrate the country's political and social institutions.

Castro's need for more Afro-Cuban soldiers coincided, rather ironically, with a time of revolutionary disillusionment among black Cubans. As Lillian Guerra argues:

> Having derived their sense of loyalty to the national project from historically contingent experiences, many peasants valued and expected to expand their economic autonomy . . . Likewise, many self-consciously black revolutionaries deployed culturally specific interpretations of the values of rebellion and non-conformity by the state in the subversion of white creole cultures and the celebration of Afro-Cuban traditions quite apart from the colorblind nationality that the state embraced.[xl]

As the revolutionary project began to fray under mismanagement during the early 1970s, Guerra argues, a "grassroots dictatorship" arose that mobilized this sense of *cubanismo.*[xli] Afro-Cubans had, after all, often been anxious about the allegedly non-racial state where inequlities persisted, but their buy-in had become a key factor in whether such a project would, in fact, succeed.[xlii] The revolution, which its proponents claimed had eliminated racial discrimination, left a society that addressed and expressed race in "complex, often contradictory ways."[xliii] Carlota, then, provided a perfect point with which to tie Afro-Cuba's revolutionary history to her present and even to the making of her future. Additionally, the 1970s proved disheartening, as

more than a decade of US policies threatening national sovereignty had plagued the revolutionary government and a growing Soviet influence called into question the degree to which Cuba's socialist project was, indeed, Cuban. The most convincing way forward, particularly if Afro-Cubans were to be involved, would involve another invocation of history. And in tying history to the present, Fidel had become a master. Perez writes that:

> History had been Fidel Castro's passion. That he was clever, even brilliant, manipulative and shrewd, cunning and calculating, are all undoubtedly true, but he was effective principally because he was of the history that he propounded. He fashioned a larger vision of political purpose in the form of a claim in discharge of historical legacy. . . It was to history that Fidel Castro appealed for absolution during the Moncada trial, and it was history from which he claimed the mandate to discharge the duty of the Cuban.[xliv]

Echoes of African anti-colonial struggles

Connections between colonialism and the export of slave labor may have grown out of similar rhetoric in late nineteenth-century Congo. The United States' involvement with the 1961 murder of Patrice Lumumba, the country's first democratically-elected prime minister, may have served in the Castros' minds a parallel to their own country's history, where colonialism and slavery had been followed by neo-colonialism. The Angolan War for independence had also begun in 1961, with the Angolan Front for National Liberation (FNLA), Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and others fighting against Portuguese rule.[xlv] Early Congolese activists had linked the exploitation of laborers to colonialism, as Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja writes, "theft of African land and labor made possible Leopold's whole system of exploitation."[xlvi]

The history of the Congo has become almost synonymous with slavery and exploitation. Robert B. Edgerton recently called the country's history a "shackle" around it and recanted the country's history, beginning with sixteenth-century slave traders from Portugal—which held on so tightly to Angola before and during Castro's struggle—and the forced export of resources following the forced export of humans.[xlvii] Early Congolese freedom fighters had linked slavery and colonialism, just as Cuban activists had. Bogumil Jewsiewicki points out that the imagery surrounding the breakage of chains pre-dates modern slavery. This rhetoric, Jewsiewicki continues, initially appears in the Bible during a time prior to the literal chaining of slaves.[xlviii] In the Belgian Congo, where forced labor became synonymous with colonialism under Leopold II, many Africans viewed the end of colonialism as an end to local slavery.

Although Congolese activists did not participate in abolitionist movements on a large scale, they framed slavery and colonialism as intricately linked, a point Patrice Lumumba emphasized during his inaugural address.[xlix] The United States' role in Lumumba's assassination, often believed to be a direct result of this speech, confirmed for many activists the degree to which colonialism, and thus slavery, remained present in Central Africa. Thus, the continuum between Cuban slavery in the nineteenth century and Congolese exploitation at that same time gave way to rhetoric linking slavery and neo-colonialism in the twentieth century with an enslaved woman of possible Congolese descent becoming the image that symbolized the link between all of these struggles.

Carlota's memory in revolutionary Cuba

Cuba's foreign policy has provided an opportunity—both in practical terms and more abstract ways—for the nation to work toward racial progress. Cuban involvement in Angola, for example, provided jobs for many Afro-Cuban soldiers, and it also gave the government a

platform from which to address historical issues surrounding race and historical connections to Africa.[l] Thus, this internationalist policy became an important part not only of the country's export of revolution, but also played a role in domestic politics, serving as part of the "interative process of opening and closure" that contributes to discussions surrounding racial inequalities.[li] In fact, in terms of significant events within the country's history, Mark Q. Sawyer ranks Cuban involvement in Angola as one of the three most important events in creating opportunities for Afro-Cubans, along with the liberation struggle and revolution.

Cuba's African-descended population consisted of many free people of color, beginning as early as the sixteenth century. These individuals did not live as enslaved Africans, and they only entered an "Afro-Cuban" category with slaves' descendants during the early twentieth century. Afro-Cubans only began to outnumber whites during the late nineteenth century, and even then nearly twenty percent of these individuals remained freemen. Castro's image has not been one of free Afro-Cubans exploited at the hands of wealthy capitalists, but of slaves. Enslaved Africans who rebel have obtained a much more dramatic image even than their free counterparts who often planned and carried out revolutions alongside them. This perhaps reflects Castro's desire to fight for a common cause, to break out of bondage, rather than merely to fight out of sympathy or choice.

The Cuban Revolution and the United States

In addition to becoming a mechanism of gaining support from Afro-Cubans, Castro's association of his revolution with slave revolts also played to an international audience during the Cold War. The hegemonic United States that Castro portrayed as the enslaver of the rest of the world often found itself a target of criticism for its own segregationist policies. Gleijeses has argued that although the United States had cared little about the plight of Africans and their African

descendants, the beginning of the Cold War made them into pawns, and American leaders gradually became more concerned about their welfare. Nonetheless, US racism persisted, particularly in the South, and a decade before Operation Carlota's beginning the Organization of African Unity met in Birmingham, releasing a statement that: "The Negroes who, even while the Conference was in session, have been subjected to the most inhumane treatment [. . .] are our own kith and kin."[lii]

American fears over Cuba's non-racialism, Gleijeses argues, began long before the Cold War. During the pre-independence period as Spain had pledged its support to Cuban plantation owners and slave masters, the United States had become increasingly worried about the island's future. The example of Haiti again created a problematic image, and American leaders desiring to annex Cuba feared that its slaves would rebel, provoking enslaved peoples in the US South to do the same. Even if Cuba did not follow the example of Haiti, Gleijeses writes, it would probably at minimum have created a republic honoring equal rights for blacks and whites. These historical conflicts over race may have been present in Castro's mind, and his ability to show a *longue durée* history of US racism—extending backward beyond La Escalera and the alleged unification of Cubans—made the comparison seem all the more damning in the Cold War context.[liii]

Mandela's status as recipient of Cuba's Jose Marti award also invokes the memory of enslavement, although more subtly than the Castro brothers' rhetoric. Marti, the liberation leader had fought against US domination and possible annexation of the island, often cited the United States' record of slavery and segregation, calling the United States the "turbulent and brutal North that despises" Latin America and the Caribbean and comparing Cuba's struggle against hegemony to David's battle against Goliath.[liv] Thus, the Castro regime has portrayed Marti as a

great uniter, giving opportunities to the formerly enslaved peoples whom the United States continued to oppress. Creating an award in his honor, and bestowing it initially on an African leader whom the United States had attempted to pressure into not visiting Cuba, in a way made the analogy of Carlota more relevant to the contemporary struggle against hegemony and imperialism, portraying her story not as an isolated incident but part of an ongoing struggle against the racist northern Goliath. Nancy Mitchell has perhaps best characterized this long and conflicted history. Responding to Dwight Eisenhower's contention that Cubans and Americans should be friends based on their common past she remarked as quoted by Gleijeses that "Our (US) selective recall not only serves a purpose; it also has repercussions. It creates a chasm between us and the Cubans; we share a past, but we have no shared memories."[lv]

In his 1964 speech before the United Nations, Guevara highlighted these links again, expressing solidarity with the Portuguese colonies, including Angola and Mozambique, and comparing Portugal's imperialism to that of the United States.[lvi] Tracing the history of the Congo through enslavement to colonialism and neocolonialism, Guevara drew a line from early exploration to Lumumba's assassination, calling the country's history one of "plunder." Furthermore, although he did not cite explicit links between slavery in the Old and New Worlds, Guevara did say that the UN membership contained a majority of dark-skinned peoples and that, while skin color was not a determining factor in how the body responded to its members, ownership of a means of production was. Guevara then linked the two, highlighting the relationship between economic prosperity and skin color, something that Fidel Castro would emphasize in his later rhetoric invoking the memory of slavery.[lvii]

Finally, he demanded an end to "piracy" by the United States, which he accused of "kill(ing) their own children. . .because of the color of their skin" and said that "Cuba,

distinguished delegates, (is) a free and sovereign state with no chains binding it to anyone." Though this paragraph again contained no direct mention of slavery, the language Guevara employed was similar to that used in the "Break the Links" poster and other propaganda that had emphasized the binding chains of slavery, colonialism, and neocolonialism.[lviii]

Cuba in Africa

During the first years of Castro's presidency he and Che Guevara began internationalizing the revolution through supporting liberation movements in the Americas before turning his attention to Africa. Frank R. Villafana has argued that struggling in Africa may have been in some ways easier for Cuba, as it faced a reduced threat of retaliation or counter-support from the United States.[lix] In Africa, where the Congolese events of 1961 had demonstrated an American interest in the area just as the American-led Bay of Pigs aimed to oust him in his own country, Castro began his next fight against imperialism. Thus, Africa, rather than Latin America, became the next surrogate for Cuba's liberation struggle, and the common memory of slavery and colonialism became an important link for two apparently unrelated regions.

The employment of this common memory also served to emphasize a particularly Cuban mission. Especially during its early days, the Cuban operation in Africa had been viewed in the West as an extension of Soviet interests. Castro insisted that he acted of his own accord, more recent evidence has supported this.[lx] The connections between La Escalera and Angola in particular, however, created in the Castros' minds a justification for their involvement with African liberation. During the 2009 dedication of the National Museum of the Slave Route at San Severino, UNESCO Executive Committee President Olabiyi Babalola Joseph echoed this justification, saying that the practice of enslavement had indelibly linked Cuba with Africa.[lxi]

Treating Africa as a surrogate for anti-slavery struggles did not become immediately apparent upon Cuba's involvement with the continent, and it is unclear whether the comparisons really resonated with black Cubans. Victor Dreke, for example, the Afro-Cuban who served as Che Guevara's second in command in the Congo, does not draw any parallels between slavery and the fight against perceived imperialism in his memoirs.[lxii] Newspapers barely make mention of the campaign and connections, instead merely quoting the Castro brothers' speeches related to memories of enslavement and rebellion. Indeed, the Congo also seemed to become a quagmire for Cuba, as Lumumba was assassinated and his revolution seemed also to stall. The island nation turned its attention southward, toward Angola and South Africa, perhaps desiring to avenge Lumumba, and openly discussing the need to avenge Carlota and her comrades. Operation Carlota subsequently became the largest overseas intervention in Cuban history, with an initial 36,000 troops fighting in Angola in 1976 and more than 65,000 at Cuito Cuanavale.[lxiii]

The naming of Operation Carlota may have, in fact, begun to bear more significance only after the victories in Luanda, where Cuban forces kept SADF fighters away from the capital, and at Cuito Cuanavale. In his speech marking the fifteenth anniversary of the United States' failed Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba, Castro argued at length that Angola—which Cuba had just begun to aid—would serve as a theater to further defeat the West and reinforce Cuban supremacy.[lxiv] In that discussion, Castro compared the United States not to slave masters, but to pirates, conjuring images of a rogue group plundering other nations at will, rather than engaging in the systematic exploitation of a slave system.[lxv] He argued that Angola had become the primary space for fighting imperialism in Africa and that it "constitutes for the imperialist Yankees an African Giron (Bay of Pigs)."[lxvi] Despite omitting direct comparisons to enslavement from perhaps improvised speeches, Castro did repeatedly argue that Cuba possessed a legitimate reason for

African involvement, as many of its citizens were descended from Africans. The United States, however, possessed only ulterior motives for African involvement that included the continued oppression of African peoples. Thus, despite Operation Carlota's name, the more overt comparisons of Angolan struggles to those of enslaved Cubans had not yet begun.

Although her role as the leader of a slave revolt may not have gained prominence until after Cuito Cuanavale, Carlota's gender came into play much earlier. Prados-Torreira has argued that Cuban women were long willing to fight for both their freedom from enslavement and liberation from Spain, and the image of women fighting became important as early as the nineteenth century. Women not only promoted their role in the struggle to recruit others of their own gender, but also to manipulate machismo men to fight, asking them to take up arms when their wives, sisters, and daughters had already done so.[lxvii] In nineteenth-century Cuba white women often found solidarity with anti-slave rebellions, viewing their own inferior social status as linked to that of enslaved Afro-Cubans in a misguided social hierarchy.[lxviii] Castro often emphasized the importance of women to the revolution, particularly in Angola, the first location where Cuban women served in combat, and "Operation Carlota" may have served as a call to female soldiers as much as it did to male Afro-Cuban soldiers, though the former comprised a small minority of troops.[lxix] The decision to use her name alone while omitting Ferminia's, however, served paradoxically to support the idea that one lone and exceptional woman had played a role in the traditionally male sphere of armed rebellion rather than accurately reflecting the heavy-handed role of women in the rebellion.

Carlota's memory as an enslaved woman became even more prominent in the Castros' rhetoric as Apartheid began to crumble, though Mandela was not the first African leader to make comparisons between anti-slavery and anti-colonial struggles. In 1977, Castro presented the

Playa Giron Medal to Mozambique's Samora Machel, leader of FRELIMO, at the 26 July School in Santiago de Cuba.[lxx] Prior to awarding the medal, Castro once again spoke of the symbolic importance of historic places in Cuba's internationalist missions, saying "Today's event, the presence of Comrade Samora Machel and his delegation at this square facing the Moncada Barracks is a symbol of the times in which we are living."[lxxi] Later Castro emphasized both countries' common history of colonialism and neocolonialism. The link between slavery and colonialism was not explicitly mentioned, but could again perhaps be inferred through Castro's discussions of economic, along with political, oppression.

A few months earlier, on July 26, Castro had told a Swedish film crew that Cuba was, in essence, African.[lxxii] Again he drew lines between major events such as the CIA's involvement in Zaire and Angola's subsequent invasion by US-backed Zairian troops, emphasizing once more that Cuba had made its own decision independent of the Soviet Union in supporting nations so similar to their own. The emphasis here was less on blood ties than on common experience as oppressed peoples and revolutionaries.[lxxiii] Toward the end of Operation Carlota, then, he had established an increasing number of connections between Cuba and the Congo, Angola, and Mozambique, often mentioning slavery either directly or through implication.

On May 27, 1991, Raul Castro welcomed home Cuban forces who had fought in Angola, citing their involvement as a turning point in this battle against Western hegemony. Here, again, the struggle in southern Africa seemed to serve as a sort of avenging for the death of Carlota and her comrades while again forgetting Ferminia, as Raul told his national audience that:

> In Cuba we named the internationalist operation Carlota in honor of an exceptional African woman who, while being a slave, headed two uprisings against the colonial

> oppression and, as they attempted to do in Angola in 1975, was torn apart by the tyrants who were able to arrest her in her second rebellious attempt. Without even knowing it yet, the thousands of Cubans who were part of the operation were going to extend the legend of Carlota, the Cuban-African heroine, through Cabinda, Quifangondo, Medunda, Cangamba, Sumbe, Ruacana, Calueque, and Cuito Cuanavale.[lxxiv]

Raul's comment that Cuban soldiers fought for Carlota's legacy "without even knowing it yet" points to the fact that the invocation of Carlota's name became more important after Angolan victory than before. It points also to the Castros' ability to construct a legend around Carlota, a figure whom their soldiers were scarcely familiar with before being deployed to fight in her name. This demonstrates the ability of Raul and Fidel to influence popular opinion surrounding not only their own government, but also the memory of Cuba's slavery. Although Cuban leaders named the military campaign after their enslaved heroine, they had no reason to expect to win it during its initial phases—particularly after the debacle in the Congo. Thus, the perhaps random name applied to Operation Carlota took on greater significance only after it had demonstrated success at Cuito Cuanavale and the impending demise of apartheid had become clear. Additionally, as predominantly white Cuban Americans often supported the FMLN's opposition, UNITA, Carlota and the construction of Afrocubanidad provided another chance for a jab at those who had left the revolutionary project—and who had successfully pressured Miami's city council into refusing to welcome the visiting Mandela.[lxxv]

At the July 30, 1991, rally in Matanzas, a few days after the monument to Carlota and her comrades had been dedicated, Mandela spoke prior to Castro, stating that South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle had followed in the example of a Cuban revolution, "kindled by many

early fighters for Cuban freedom," though he did not specifically mention rebellions by enslaved Cubans.[lxxvi] This visit served as part of Mandela's tour to thank supporters and ask for assistance after being released from prison. He had come via Jamaica from the United States, where President George Bush had urged him not to visit the object of America's trade embargo. Photos of the rally show a fairly diverse crowd, comprised both of Afro-Cubans and their lighter-skinned comrades, and Castro claimed that "tens of thousands" of loyal citizens attended.[lxxvii] Mandela outlined his country's relationship with Cuba, narrating mostly from the vantage point of the Angolan conflict. He argued that the Angolan government had pled with Cuba to bring aid in 1975, the same year South African Defense Force troops marched across Angola's southern border. He emphasized the strategic importance of the battle at Cuito Cuanavale. Mandela emphasized the cooperative nature of the defeat as well, reminding his audience that Cubans had fought alongside Angolans, Namibians, and South Africans as the only non-Africans in the conflict. He famously stated that the United States, whose government had largely supported the apartheid regime, could not presume to tell him forbid him or any other leader from fraternizing with a government that had supported his party for four decades.[lxxviii] The diplomatic conflicts leading up to this visit proved a perfect supporting point to Castro's argument that its northern neighbor believed itself to be the premier global hegemony, possessing the gall to tell African leaders what sites to visit and to avoid.

Though Mandela did not invoke the memory of slavery as actively as Castro, his speech did contain several key historical allusions. Like Castro, for example, he spoke of South Africa's achievements as being part of a continuum, rather than the result of a struggle that he and his contemporary comrades had waged. He mentioned early nineteenth-century freedom fighters as the individuals he hoped to avenge.[lxxix] Mandela also referred often to Marti and his struggle

against American hegemony and, like Castro, compared capitalism and slavery, arguing that both relied on the oppression and exploitation of Africans for the benefit of Western powers. He did not explicitly speak of the drama preceding his visit, but did often mention American hegemony, echoing language he had used during a press conference with Bush and in his public speech the following week in Venezuela, when he said, "If there is a diversity of opinions about Cuba, I understand that. The people of South Africa and the ANC are entitled to have our own friends and allies . . . and in this particular case, Cuba is our friend. We are now being advised about Cuba by people who have supported the Apartheid regime these last forty years. No honorable man or woman could ever accept advice from people who never cared for us at the most difficult times."[lxxx] Mandela's speech, however, perhaps served as the introduction to Castro's in which he made more striking comparisons between capitalism and slavery.

Castro's speech, "We will never return to the slave barracks," contained the oft-chanted refrain of "How far we slaves have come!" According to its transcript, the crowd vehemently chanted this mantra along with Castro. The narrative centered upon Cuba's early days of sugar production, and Castro contended that "We all cut the cane" during the days of enslavement.[lxxxi] He characterizes Cubans of all races and nationalities as having labored together under enslavement, and the title of his speech appears when he asserts that the West has sought to return the nation to the slave barracks through the imposition of sanctions.[lxxxii] In outlining his longue durée view of Cuban history, however, Castro seems to see a continuum only between slavery and the present, neglecting to mention the liberation struggle and events in between.

Despite the Castro brothers' speeches declaring Matanzas the site of a common Cuban spirit of resistance, divisions remain. Miguel A. Bretos, for example, has documented the tension between residents of Havana and Matanzas over the former's prominence as Cuba's most

cosmopolitan city. Many Cubans remain ambivalent about the past, often hesitating to embrace memories of slavery. Matanzas has branded itself as the "Athens of Cuba," trying to entice tourists with photographs of its impressive bridges and colonial buildings.[lxxxiii] The slave barracks have little place in this cultural tourism and receive little attention from Bretos. While the monument to Carlota and her comrades stands in the ruins of the Triumvirato Plantation near Matanzas, and several plantations are open for tours, the focus for many tourists has become this architectural and beach tourism. Memories of slavery and of rebellions by enslaved persons may bear out in daily relations, but their most public forms of remembrance did come from Operation Carlota and overt comparisons between slavery and imperial hegemony during Cuba's period of African involvement.

Conclusion

The Castro brothers' rhetoric evolved as public discussions regarding the memory of slavery developed during twentieth-century Africa campaigns. Portraying Operation Carlota as a means of avenging Carlota and her fellow rebels became obvious only after victory at Cuito Cuanavale and the imminent fall of Apartheid. Despite this rather late-realized connection between past and present, however, the memory of slavery—and particularly of rebellion by the enslaved—had been a part of Cuba's public memory beginning during the nineteenth century and continuing as discussions of race and class roles continued after the liberation struggle in the early twentieth century and the revolution later.

Carlota the Afro-Cuban and the woman had become an appropriate symbol for Cuban troops in Africa during the century preceding her use. Afro-Cubans served in their country's military in large numbers, and women enlisted during both the liberation struggle and the revolution. Thus, Carlota's race and gender made her an important individual for revolutionary

Cuban leaders to remember. In the twenty-first century Afro-Cubans often continue to wait in many ways for the revolution to change their lives. In utilizing Carlota the Castros have attempted to illustrate to these descendants of Africans not only the ties between themselves and the world's second-largest continent but have also tried to foster a spirit of Pan-Caribbeanism and of Pan-Americanism, linking the plights of all African-descended populations within the Americas.

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Notes on contributor

Myra Ann Houser is assistant professor of history at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

Notes

[i] E-mail: myra.ann.houser@gmail.com

[ii] Throughout this paper I will use the term "Third World" to refer to the countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that sought to remain non-aligned during the Cold War. This is in keeping with the term's original coinage at the Bandung Conference for the solidarity of Asian, African and Latin American Peoples in Indonesia. It is not intended to carry any economic or derogatory connotations.

[iii] Mandela and Castro, 1991.

[iv] Thompson, 1997.

[v] Thompson, 1997, 6.

[vi] Thompson, 1997, 23.

[vii] De la Fuente, 2001, 335.

[viii] Different accounts have also used the spelling "Carlotta," although I have adopted the more popular "Carlota" in this paper. Additionally, some reports have listed the military campaign as "Operation Black Carlota," though I have again chosen to employ the more commonly-appearing term.

[ix] Nora, 1989, 7-24.

[x] Bretos, Matanzas, 73.

[xi] Bretos, 2011, 73.

[xii] Finch, 2007, 1-2.

[xiii] Mandela and Castro, 1991, 32.

[xiv] Childs, 2006, 9.

[xv] Barcia, 2008, 3.

[xvi] Barcia, 2008, 3.

[xvii] Bretos, 2011, 70.

[xviii] Finch, 2007, 193.

[xix] Prados-Torreira, 2005, 1.

[xx] Barcia, 2008-26-28.

[xxi] Barcia, 2008, 23.

[xxii] Barcia, 2008, 41.

[xxiii] Bretos, 2011, 70; Childs, 2007, 176-177.

[xxiv] Barcia, 2008, 28-31.

[xxv] Barcia, 2008, 41.

[xxvi] Barcia, 2008, 14.

[xxvii] Barcia, 2002, 28.

[xxviii] Barcia, 2008, 14.

[xxix] Childs, 2007, 14.

[xxx] Prados-Torreira, 2005, 27 and Dubois, 2006, 430.

[xxxi] Thompson, 1997, 44.

[xxxii] Ferrer, 1999, 1.

[xxxiii] Thompson, 1997, 49.

[xxxiv] Perez, 2013, 2.

[xxxv] Perez, 2013, 7.

[xxxvi] Helg, 2007, 123.

[xxxvii] Helg, 2007, 126.

[xxxviii] Helg, 2007, 129.

[xxxix] Sawyer, 2005, 38.

[xl] Guerra, 2012, 19-20.

[xli] Guerra, 2012, 20.

[xlii] De la Fuente, 2001, 1.

[xliii] De la Fuente, 2001, 279.

[xliv] Perez, 2013, 196-198.

[xlv] Rodney, "The Angolan Question" in Minter, Hovey, and Cobb, 2005.

[xlvi] Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, 26.

[xlvii] Edgerton, 2002, xii.

[xlviii] Jewsiewicki, 2011, 2.

[xlix] Jewsiewicki, 2011, 4.

[l] Sawyer, 2005, xx-xxii.

[li] Sawyer, 2005,1.

[lii] Gleijeses, 2002, 6.

[liii] Gleijeses, 2002, 28.

[liv] Gleijeses, 2002, 13.

[lv] Gleijeses, 2002, 14.

[lvi] "Che Guevara at the United Nations."

[lvii] "Che Guevara at the United Nations."

[lviii] "Che Guevara at the United Nations."

[lix] Villafana, 2009, 8.

[lx] Villafana, 2009, 14.

[lxi] Garcia, "Slave Route Museum," 2009.

[lxii] Dreke, 2002.

[lxiii] George, 2005, 1.

[lxiv] Castro, 1976.

[lxv] Castro, 1976, 29.

[lxvi] Castro, 1976, 5 and 13.

[lxvii] Prados-Torreira, 2005, 5.

[lxviii] Prados-Torreira, 2005, 22-23.

[lxix] Gleijeses, 2002, 180.

[lxx] "Castro Decorates Machel," October 10, 1977, via "Castro Speech Database."

[lxxi] "Cuba-Mozambique Friendship Rally," October 11, 1977, via "Castro Speech Database."

[lxxii] "Castro in TV Film Discusses Angola, Southern Africa," July 26, 1977 via "Castro Speech Database."

[lxxiii] "Castro in TV Film Discusses Angola, Southern Africa."

[lxxiv] Castro, 1991.

[lxxv] De la Fuente, 2001, 306.

[lxxvi] Mandela and Castro, 1991, 19.

[lxxvii] Mandela and Castro, 1991, 7.

[lxxviii] Bordreaux, 1991.

[lxxix] Mandela and Castro, 1991, 21.

[lxxx] Bordreaux, 1991.

[lxxxi] Mandela and Castro, 1991, 38.

[lxxxii] Mandela and Castro, 1991, 44.

[lxxxiii] Bretos, 2011, 1.

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