"Count, Capture, and Reeducate": The Campaign to Rehabilitate Cuba's Female Sex Workers, 1959–1966

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In 1964 Cuba's fledgling movie industry collaborated with Soviet filmmakers to create *Soy Cuba* (I am Cuba), a dizzying expressionist tale of four Cubans whose problems were ameliorated by the revolution. One vignette features María, a young prostitute abandoned by her boyfriend after he finds her entertaining a US businessman.[1] The film insinuates that sex workers, once victims of US imperialism and capitalism, were rescued and reeducated by the government campaign against prostitution.[2] However, *Soy Cuba* received a cool reception on the island. Moviegoers and critics rejected the dream-like aesthetic of the film and demanded more "realistic" depictions of their revolution.[3] This perceived disconnect between cinematic representation and revolutionary reality parallels the disjuncture between the official discourse on prostitution and the complex experiences of female sex workers in early revolutionary Cuba.

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[1] Following the trend of recent publications, I use the terms "prostitution" and "prostitute" interchangeably with "sex work" and "sex worker."

[2] *Soy Cuba*, directed by Mikhail Kalatozov (Havana: Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industrias Cinematográficos [ICAIC]; Moscow: Mosfilm, 1964), DVD.

[3] Juan Antonio García Borrero, *Cine cubano de los sesenta: Mito y realidad* (Madrid: Ocho y Medio, 2007), 108–9; Rob Stone, "Mother Lands, Sister Nations: The Epic, Poetic, Propaganda Films of Cuba and the Basque Country," in *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture, and Politics in Film*, ed. Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), 65–72, 68.

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The Cuban government and the standard historical accounts both describe the campaign to rehabilitate prostitutes as one of the great successes of the revolution, a monolithic movement that supposedly originated at the top and was implemented uniformly across the island.[4] But this story obscures the lived experiences of state officials, provincial reformers, and sex workers who participated in a campaign that was complex, diverse, and conflictive. The campaign officially lasted from 1959 to 1965, during which time officials in the Department of Social Ills (Departamento de Lacras Sociales) at the Ministry of the Interior (MININT) decided policies, as did regional government officials and members of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), and other state organizations. Policies to combat sex work were initiated in all of the country's six provinces, and while some provincial reformers acted on their own initiative, efforts at reeducation (*reeducación*) ultimately complemented the rehabilitation efforts of high-level government agents.

This article examines the revolutionaries' initial attempts to rehabilitate the island's thirty to forty thousand sex workers, paying special attention to the rhetoric and strategies deployed by reformers outside of the capital city of Havana.[5] It argues that members from groups such as the FMC and National Revolutionary Police (PNR) helped initiate the antiprostitution campaign, often operating without official interference until 1962, when federal officials assumed greater control over the campaign and when penal work farms became a tool of reform. During the first six years of the revolution, official discourse transitioned from viewing sex workers as victims to categorizing them as counterrevolutionaries. Key to this analysis are the methods used to identify prostitutes (*prostitutas*). Rather than seeking confirmation that women exchanged sex for money, reformers identified sex workers according to their attire, behavior, race, place of residence, and sexual partners. I also demonstrate that the revolutionary campaign adopted a broad and flexible definition of *prostituta*, one that allowed government officials to target the behavior of all Cuban women, not merely that of those who identified as sex workers.

Revolutionary state formation was closely tied to the sexual practices of ordinary Cubans, and prostitutes were not alone in facing regulation. The new leadership emphasized that intimate behavior, including common-law

[4] United States Information Agency, *Cuba Annual Report: 1989* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 215; Noelle M. Stout, "Feminists, Queers, and Critics: Debating the Cuban Sex Trade," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 40, no. 4 (2008): 721–42, 728; Rosa del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution and the Struggle against Prostitution," trans. Daniel Sudran, *Crime and Social Justice* 12 (1979): 34–40, 38.

[5] This estimate is given by Armando Torres, former secretary general of the Supreme Council for Social Defense, in *Four Women: Living the Revolution: An Oral History of Contemporary Cuba*, by Oscar Lewis, Ruth Lewis, and Susan Rigdon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 279n7.

unions, homosexuality, and abortions, could challenge national security.[6] In 1961 authorities asserted that occupations were also governed by a kind of Marxist logic, coming to reflect concepts about what constituted productive labor and acceptable behavior in a quest to better the revolution. They judged as security risks the people and practices that did not fit into this developmental trajectory.[7] The campaign against sex work forms a part of this broader project to remake sexual norms and produce families deemed fitter than those under capitalism.[8]

Despite significant cultural, political, and social upheavals following the revolutionary takeover in 1959, the literature on prostitution in Cuba has focused on the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and specifically on sex workers (*jineteras*), who became increasingly visible in the economic crisis that preceded the fall of the Soviet Union. The term *jinetera* refers to women who support themselves through relationships with foreigners, and it is specific to prostitutes who began practicing in 1991 and afterward. Cubans used other terms, such as *prostituta* and *puta*, prior to this time.[9] Some scholars have studied the late colonial and early republican eras, analyzing the role of prostitution in the construction of national identity.[10]

[6] For additional information about how abortions, common-law unions, and *chulos* (kept men) also threatened national security, see Rachel M. Hynson, "Sex and State Making in Revolutionary Cuba, 1959–1968" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2014).

[7] "Empleo para todos, a los jefes de familia primero," *Revolución*, 25 September 1961, 1, 4–5, 10; Fidel Castro, "Fidel Castro en la asamblea de los comités de defensa," *Obra Revolucionaria*, 9 October 1961, 5–20, 10, 18; Julie Marie Bunck, *Fidel Castro and the Quest for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 129–33; "La patria potestad: Dos opiniones y un comentario," *Verde Olivo*, 1 October 1961, 25–27, 27; Fidel Castro, "Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz . . . en el acto de entrega de diplomas a los obreros más destacados en la zafra, efectuado en la playa de Varadero," 16 July 1962, in *Discursos e intervenciones del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente del Consejo de Estado de la República de Cuba*, *Government of Cuba*, http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1962/esp/f160762e.html, accessed 2 March 2014; Fidel Castro, "Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente de la República de Cuba, en acto conmemorativo del X aniversario de la creación del MININT, celebrado en el Teatro de la CTC," 6 June 1971, in ibid., http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1971/esp/f060671e.html, accessed 18 April 2013.

[8] Ley 993, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, 20 December 1961, 24687–88; Jorge, "La prostitución en Cuba," 68; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 24–25.

[9] In the 1990s Cubans began to refer to female sex workers as *jineteras*. As Nadie Fernández notes, "The term *jinetero* can be translated as 'jocky / horseback rider,' with obvious sexual and economic connotations involved in 'riding the tourist'" (*Revolutionizing Romance: Interracial Couples in Contemporary Cuba* [Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010], 131). See also Ana Alcázar Campos, "'Jineterismo': ¿Turismo sexual o uso táctico del sexo?" *Revista de Antropología Social* 19 (2010): 307–36; Amalia L. Cabezas, "Between Love and Money: Sex, Tourism, and Citizenship in Cuba and the Dominican Republic," *Signs* 29, no. 4 (2004): 987–1015; Rosa Miriam Elizalde, *Flores desechables ¿prostitución en Cuba?* (Havana: Ediciones Abril, 1996); Stout, "Feminists, Queers, and Critics."

[10] Tiffany A. Sippial, *Prostitution, Modernity, and the Making of the Cuban Republic, 1840–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Mayra Beers, "Murder

However, few have examined the early revolutionary, nationwide movement to reform the nation's sex workers.[11] Through the analysis of travel narratives, oral histories, government reports, newspaper accounts, memoirs, and speeches, I highlight the antiprostitution strategies of government leaders and provincial reformers who helped initiate the revolutionary campaign.[12]

Prerevolutionary Prostitution

There had long been concerted government efforts to regulate prostitution in Cuba. Rather unsuccessful reform efforts persisted throughout the US occupation of Cuba (1898–1902) and the republican era (1902–58), though prostitution was never criminalized.[13] The reformist strategies of Government Secretary Rogelio Zayas Bazán were particularly memorable, as he shut down Havana's many bars and brothels and prosecuted both prostitutes and pimps.[14] While these numerous campaigns were not effective at eliminating sex work or curtailing the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), they inhabited popular memory and reinforced the belief that no government would ever successfully eradicate prostitution. Havana sex worker Violeta recalled that after the revolution, prostitutes "yelled that it was monstrous that they wanted to eliminate the oldest profession on earth, that with that government policy of wanting to change everything, the Americans would be upset, and we would die of hunger if they did not buy our sugar."[15]

in San Isidro: Crime and Culture during the Second Cuban Republic," *Cuban Studies* 34 (2003): 97–129.

[11] Carrie Hamilton notes that the scholarship on Cuban sexuality "most notably [lacks] historical research on the pre-revolutionary and early revolutionary periods," specifically "detailed research on the revolutionary campaign to eradicate prostitution and rehabilitate prostitutes in the early 1960s" (*Sexual Revolutions in Cuba: Passion, Politics, and Memory* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012], 234–35). The few exceptions include Lillian Guerra's exploration of Artemisa reformers, Alyssa García's discussion of FMC involvement in the campaign, and Abel Sierra Madero's analysis of evolving state discourse on sexuality. Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959–1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 256–89; Alyssa García, "Continuous Moral Economies: The State Regulation of Bodies and Sex Work in Cuba," *Sexualities* 13, no. 2 (2010): 171–96, 176–78; Abel Sierra Madero, "Travestismo de estado: Los discursos de la diversidad y las identidades trans en la Cuba postsocialista," paper presented at the Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, 30 May–1 June 2013.

[12] This study finds inspiration in the work of Guerra, who demonstrates that regional FMC activists in the town of Artemisa became unintended dissidents when they sought to rehabilitate sex workers after the campaign officially ended and Fidel Castro declared the island cleansed of prostitution in 1966 (*Visions of Power*, 287–88).

[13] Sippial's recent publication (*Prostitution, Modernity*) reveals the long history of prostitution reform in colonial and republican Cuba. See also Beers, "Murder in San Isidro," 112–14.

[14] Hugh Thomas, *Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom*, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 573–74; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 34–40.

[15] Tomás Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1998), 110. Also, the Castro government routinely referenced the interrupted reform efforts of republican leaders, linking these failures to continued US intervention.

Sex work was a visible feature of the prerevolutionary Cuban landscape, assuming multiple forms and flowering in the midst of other perceived social ills. By the 1950s, hundreds of thousands of tourists traveled to Cuba each year, enjoying easy access to alcohol, drugs, gambling, and sex.[16] While these visitors mostly stayed in or around Havana, US military personnel sustained the lust-fueled economies of Guantánamo and Caimanera, cities in eastern Oriente province located outside of the Guantánamo Bay naval base.[17] But it was Cuban men who served as the primary clientele of the island's prostitutes.[18] They bought the services of male and female sex workers who labored throughout the country, often in red-light districts (*zonas de tolerancia*), where their practices were most tolerated.[19]

Poverty-stricken individuals from the countryside often migrated to cities like Havana and Guantánamo to take advantage of greater access to tourist dollars and health care and in order to work as maids, cooks, bartenders, and nannies.[20] The most economically vulnerable of them often fell victim to sex traffickers and were forced into prostitution against their wishes, eventually composing the majority of sex workers in the cities. One such woman was Herminia, who fled Camagüey to find work as a maid in Havana. Realizing too late that she had been deceived and forced into prostitution, Herminia later became a madam. Along with many others in her situation, she reconciled herself to sex work. Some women were too ashamed by their own experiences and lacked the money to return to their families. Others continued to practice sex work because it paid far better than other jobs available to them.[21] Black and mixed-race (*mulata*) women

[16] Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 52.

[17] Jana K. Lipman, *Guantánamo: A Working-Class History between Empire and Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 105–10.

[18] Lois M. Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 40; Carrie Hamilton, "Intervention: Public Women and Public History: Revolution, Prostitution, and Testimony in Cuba," *Rethinking History* 15, no. 2 (2011): 175–87, 182; Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution*, trans. Russ Davidson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 176.

[19] Ian Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 33–36; Rigoberto Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1977), 77; Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC), *Programa a la atención a la problemática de la prostitución*, government publication, October 1993, 23; Lipman, *Guantánamo*, 109–10; Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 19–24, 57–58.

[20] Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 303–4; Lipman, *Guantánamo*, 110, 301–3; Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 94.

[21] Estrella Marina Viñelas, *Cuban Madam: The Shocking Autobiography of the Woman Who Ruled Castro's White Slave Ring* (New York: Paperback Library, 1969), 20–32, 44–45; Laurette Séjourné, with Tatiana Coll, *La mujer cubana en el quehacer de la historia* (Mexico

encountered even more obstacles in the search for paid labor. When interviewed by French journalist Victor Franco, an Afro-Cuban security guard explained sex work in terms of race. According to him, a "whore" (*puta*) was "a girl who says 'I love you' to a white man for a few pesos, even if it's not true. What does he think, this white man who gives her two or three pesos and sometimes a pack of Camels [cigarettes]? He thinks: For two or three pesos, all black women will lie down, spread their legs, and say I love you."[22] Not only did women of color often occupy the lowest rung of the socioeconomic ladder, but the color of their skin marked them as sexually available.[23]

There was no universal sex worker experience. Prostitutes and reformers recalled that the accepted social hierarchy for female prostitutes classified the least mobile as the most respectable.[24] Women who worked in brothels and split their earnings with a madam (*matrona*) were ranked highest, followed by self-employed women who rented their rooms by the month. Prostitutes who doubled as waitresses or dancers in local bars, cabarets, and strip clubs (*academias de baile*) were lower on the hierarchy, but none of these women experienced as much disdain and disregard as the streetwalkers (*fleteras*). Not only did *fleteras* have sex in unsafe and unsanitary conditions, they also had to worry about accidentally propositioning an off-duty police officer.[25]

Unlike their female counterparts, male prostitutes rarely worked in brothels. The few male-only houses that existed in Caimanera and Havana were the exception. Men were more likely to find clients in movie theaters, bars, and other local cruising areas. However, the same-sex clients of male sex workers did not always identify as homosexuals; the distinction between active and passive partners allowed certain men to retain their sense of masculinity and identity as "real" men. Indeed, some clients were just as likely to pay men for sex as they were to pay for sex with women. Herminia, the sex worker who became a madam, dismissively noted that in Caimanera there were "faggots [*maricones*] who worked just like the women. They wore dresses and lingerie, applied make-up, and some wore wigs. The Americans went with the men as if they were women. Exactly the same!" But while clients did not always distinguish between male and female prostitutes, the revolutionary government certainly did. The campaign to rehabilitate and

City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1980), 38; Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 76–77, 86, 88–89, 94; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 280.

[22] Quoted in Victor Franco, *La revolución sensual*, trans. Marta Valentina Gómez de Muñoz (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Pomaire, 1962), 100.

[23] Susan Thomas, *Cuban Zarzuela: Performing Race and Gender on Havana's Lyric Stage* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 42; Pérez, *Between Reform and Revolution*, 306–7.

[24] Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 23.

[25] Margaret Randall, *Cuban Women Now: Interview with Cuban Women* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1974), 251; Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 23–26; Viñelas, *Cuban Madam*, 49.

reeducate sex workers was exclusively aimed at women. Authorities appear to have viewed male prostitutes as homosexuals, individuals whom they perceived as ideologically deviant and opposed to the revolution. Rather than offering them reeducation opportunities like those offered to the female sex workers, government officials sent gay men to forced-labor camps.[26]

Antecedents to the Campaign, 1959–1960

During February 1959, Cuban prostitutes expressed both support for the revolution and opposition to its reforms. In one of his first decisions as Fidel-appointed president, Manuel Urrutia ordered the closure of all casinos and brothels. He sought to eliminate the vice associated with Cuba's recent past, but he neglected to account for the response of Havana's employees. Faced with the prospect of losing their livelihoods, waiters, croupiers, entertainers, and sex workers traveled on foot to the Palacio de los Deportes (now the Ciudad Deportiva) and loudly complained to Fidel Castro that they could not support their families without jobs. Pastorita Guerra, wardrobe assistant at the Tropicana nightclub, described the moment as festive: "Some people carried *tambores* [drums]. Some had hidden bottles. That's the way we were in Cuba. All of us from Tropicana went. When we got there, Fidel was waiting for us. He listened to us. Then he talked and talked and said that he understood our problems and assured us that no one would lose his job."[27] The casinos subsequently reopened in March. While Fidel was not opposed to the changes, he believed that they should be delayed until the employees found alternative jobs.[28] Thanks to their lobbying, Havana's workers ensured that their jobs would continue, at least for the moment.[29]

While not all prostitutes chose to continue working after the revolution, several who did claimed that they experienced an increase in both demand and income. Various intersecting factors contributed to the rise in profits, including the departure of *matronas* and the owners (*dueñas*) of sex worker boardinghouses. Fearing possible arrest, some of these individuals abandoned their brothels, leaving them in the hands of the prostitutes themselves.[30] Pilar López González, a former sex worker interviewed by Oscar Lewis in 1970, recalled the moment when the *dueñas* of her residence

[26] Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 101 (quote), 77. See also Lillian Guerra, "Gender Policing, Homosexuality, and the New Patriarchy of the Cuban Revolution, 1965–70," *Social History* 35, no. 3 (August 2010): 268–89; Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays*, 32, 34, 65–66.

[27] Quoted in Rosa Lowinger and Ofelia Fox, *Tropicana Nights: The Life and Times of the Legendary Cuban Nightclub* (Orlando, FL: Mariner Books, 2007), 327–28.

[28] Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 170; Robert E. Quirk, *Fidel Castro* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), 227; Sáenz Rovner, *The Cuban Connection*, 124.

[29] Lowinger and Fox, *Tropicana Nights*, 326–28.

[30] Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 282–83; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 163.

left and earnings increased: "We girls started working for ourselves. . . . Of course we had to make a contribution toward the upkeep of the house, servants' wages and so on, but it wasn't like half the take." As Pilar had also noted, many madams and *dueñas* had kept up to 50 percent of sex workers' earnings in exchange for housing, bedding, toiletries, and food.[31] But prostitutes profited from the fact that they no longer had to allocate some of their earnings toward bribes. In order to protect themselves from arrest or mistreatment, most Havana prostitutes formerly paid the police a daily bribe of one-half to one peso. On a good day, Havana sex worker Violeta could make nearly thirty pesos, so the bribery "tax" was not so onerous. But for the *fleteras*, who could not earn as much money, the relative cost saving was significant.[32]

In addition to having more take-home pay, FMC member Lidia Ferrer noted that sex workers increased their clientele after the revolution.[33] Violeta agreed, noting that "at the beginning [of the Revolution], everyone was very happy, especially the owners of the bars and brothels since they no longer had to pay taxes to the mafia. People felt secure and went out to enjoy the new times." The increased earning power meant that prostitutes like Violeta initially refused to leave the profession: "In those days I was earning more money than ever. I didn't want to throw away that stroke of luck."[34] Bejuco, a prostitute in Artemisa, recalled the same increase in business under Fidel Castro: "I tell you that it was under this government that we all made the most money."[35] Of course, this was not the first regime change for Cuba's sex workers, and they were fearful about what it would mean for them.

Rumors (*bolas*) quickly began to circulate that the new government would severely repress prostitution. These *bolas* were given credence by the occasional raids on Havana brothels conducted by César Blanco, chief of public order in the Ministry of Government (Ministerio de Gobernación).[36] After government officials ordered Havana prostitutes to don more clothing when soliciting customers from their doorways, rumors began to spread that prostitution itself would soon be outlawed. Violeta recalled that similar *bolas* prophesied the end of madams, *chulos* (kept men), and gambling.[37]

[31] Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 82, 96; Randall, *Cuban Women Now*, 243.

[32] Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 24, 79, 109; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 276.

[33] Olga Ferrer was a member of the FMC and MININT. See Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 163.

[34] Quoted in Fernández Robaina, Historias de *mujeres públicas*, 79, 109.

[35] Quoted in Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 283.

[36] The Ministry of Government became the Ministry of the Interior in 1961. See Leopoldo Fornés Bonavia, *Cuba cronológica: Cinco siglos de historia, política y cultura* (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2003), 219; "Nuevos prostíbulos fueron clausurados," *Revolución*, 24 April 1959, 7; Sáenz Rovner, *The Cuban Connection*, 201n34.

[37] English-language scholars of Cuba have historically translated *chulo* or *proxeneta* to mean "pimp," a translation that appears appropriate for early twentieth-century analyses.

Other rumors were more specific. Pilar noted that "madams and pimps spread rumors that the new government would be ruthless with prostitutes. They made a great deal of that kind of propaganda. They said prostitutes would be jailed if they were lucky enough to escape the firing squad."[38] In the midst of conflicting information from official sources, Cubans created their own interpretations of reality. These and other unofficial stories ultimately threatened the authority of the state. Lillian Guerra notes that in 1962, the revolutionary government viewed all *bolas*, not just those about prostitution, "as the greatest threat to Cuba's internal national security."[39]

In the midst of new and inconsistently applied laws and regulations, rumors also prompted people to leave Cuba. Unsure of their status under the revolutionary regime, high-class sex workers (*cortesanas*) and *chulos* whose contact with foreign men gave them the means and connections to migrate elsewhere fled to such places as Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and the United States.[40] Those who went to the United States often joined children who were studying abroad. Others departed with their partners and *chulos* for the nightlife of San Juan, New York, or Miami. Following the revolution, international crime syndicates also transferred their businesses from Cuba to Puerto Rico, converting it into what some termed the new "brothel of the Americas."[41] Other elite prostitutes remained in Cuba until revolutionary officials pressured them to leave. Following interviews with leaders of the program to rehabilitate sex workers, Venezuelan criminologist Rosa del Olmo reported that "those in charge of dealing with the problem knew that [high-class prostitutes] had nothing to offer the Revolution and would never fit into the rehabilitation program, because they were used to living in luxury and to receiving large sums of money."[42] This detail underscores the mitigated "success" of the campaign to eliminate sex work. While sex work as an institution certainly disappeared, it did so by exiling rather than reforming the island's most successful prostitutes.

Throughout 1959 and 1960, government reformers implemented various strategies for observing and "sanitizing" sex work in Havana.[43] These early approaches, however, were sporadic, disorganized, and ineffective. In conjunction with the brothel closures carried out by César Blanco, police officers

But the term *chulo* evolved from the early to mid-twentieth century, necessitating studies of the later period to adopt an alternative translation. "Kept man" more accurately reflects the meaning of *chulo* in 1950s and 1960s Cuba. See Fernández Robaina, Historias de *mujeres públicas*, 69.

[38] Quoted in Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 276.

[39] Juan J. Cordovin, *Lo que yo vi en Cuba* (Buenos Aires: Editorial San Isidro, 1962), 85; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 211.

[40] Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 20; Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 111.

[41] Luis A. López Rojas, *La mafia en Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Editorial Isla Negra, 2004), 77; Randall, *Cuban Women Now*, 237.

[42] Del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 35. See also Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 39.

[43] This term is referenced in Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 134.

conducted raids of the Havana neighborhoods that they perceived as most ridden by vice.[44] They rounded up, fingerprinted, and photographed prostitutes. They also attempted to restrict the areas in which sex work was practiced by eliminating some of the city's red-light districts and restricting the size of others. In the absence of any rehabilitation plan, police officers compelled sex workers to carry up-to-date certificates of their venereal health.[45] But many prostitutes easily avoided observation by providing authorities with fake names and addresses or by purchasing certificates from private laboratories.[46]

While revolutionary officials ultimately aimed to eliminate prostitution, they recognized that it was first necessary to make sex work understandable to the state. One effective strategy was the census of Havana's red-light districts.[47] Since 1959 the capital's Tourism Police had been responsible for registering sex workers, obtaining detailed information about the women and their families. The police canvassed Barrio Colón, located between Galiano and Monserrate Boulevards and densely populated by tourists, vendors, and entertainers. Census takers also visited and documented prostitutes operating out of Barrio Atares in El Cerro and La Victoria in central Havana.[48] The information obtained informed future reforms and interventions. Havana itself was the testing ground for many projects, including the census, later implemented on the rest of the island.

Throughout 1960 and 1961, the government leadership discussed what to do next to eradicate Cuban prostitution. The Supreme Council of Social Defense (Consejo Superior de Defensa Social) was given responsibility for eliminating sex work, a task later overseen by the Ministry of the Interior.[49] Armando Torres, secretary general of the Supreme Council, confessed: "At the beginning, we didn't have any definite plans as to how to undertake this work. . . . [E]verything came into being spontaneously." None of the coordinators had any experience working with sex workers or establishing a rehabilitation campaign. María Bosch, one of the early organizers, admitted: "At the start, our experience was really very limited."[50] During one

[44] "Nuevos prostíbulos," 7.

[45] Luis Salas, *Social Control and Deviance in Cuba* (New York: Praeger, 1979), 100; Teresa Jorge, "La prostitución en Cuba," *Mujeres*, 8 August 1973, 62–69, 69; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 276.

[46] MININT eventually collaborated with the Ministry of Health and founded local clinics where sex workers were examined and treated for venereal diseases. See FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 17–18, 22.

[47] Ibid., 17–18; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 36.

[48] Sippial, *Prostitution, Modernity*, 177; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 17, 23.

[49] The Supreme Council of Social Defense was later incorporated into the Ministry of the Interior. See Francisco Morán, ed., *La Habana elegante: Número especial por el V aniversario de la edición electrónica de La Habana elegante, diciembre de 2003* (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2004), 69n1.

[50] Quoted in Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 166. See also Francisco Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Elena, 1965), 49; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7.

brain-storming session, participants suggested arresting and incarcerating all prostitutes on the island.[51] This recommendation was reminiscent of prior campaigns to combat Cuban sex work, movements that merely drove prostitution underground. Aware of Chairman Mao's claim to have completely eradicated sex work, some coordinators proposed flying to China and studying the work of its reformers. In the end, the organizers sought to avoid the mistakes of previous campaigns by prioritizing reeducation over imprisonment.[52]

Phase One: Census, Outreach, and Persuasion, 1961–1964

Under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior and with the support of the Federation of Cuban Women and other state organizations, the Havana campaign to eliminate prostitution officially began in 1961 with a phase of "censo, acercamiento y persuación" (census, outreach, and persuasion). Throughout the year, reformers sought to reeducate prostitutes in cities across the island. Reformers appeared to have had the least autonomy in Havana, where officials from the Ministry of Health, National Revolutionary Police (PNR), and MININT directly participated in the campaign. FMC members (*federadas*) delineated a detailed approach for "capturing" the country's sex workers, one that began with the census. Reformers enacted variations of this plan around the island.[53] In Havana, *federadas* continued the project begun by the police force, approaching *fleteras* and entering brothels, boardinghouses, and bars in order to count the capital's prostitutes. Following the census, the women returned to speak with and persuade the women to abandon their work.[54] During this early stage of rehabilitation efforts, reformers viewed (lower-class) female prostitutes as victims, even if the women themselves did not identify as sex workers or victims.[55]

Reformers, both federal and provincial, identified women as prostitutes if they appeared to be sexually available. Because the perception of availability mattered more than sexual acts, reformers did not seek confirmation that money was exchanged for sex. There was nothing inevitable about this category; indeed, it challenged the definitions of sex work assumed by

[51] Comments by Abdo Canasí (Conferencia Nacional de Instituciones Psiquiátricas, Havana, Cuba, 2 June 1963), reprinted in *La Habana elegante: Panóptico*, http://www.habanaelegante.com/Panoptico/Panoptico_Psiq_Conferencia.html.

[52] Jinghao Zhou, *China's Peaceful Rise in a Global Context: A Domestic Aspect of China's Road Map to Democratization* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 73–74; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 166; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 35.

[53] Carlos Franqui, *Family Portrait with Fidel: A Memoir*, trans. Alfred MacAdam (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 141; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 19; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 36; Salas, *Social Control*, 100.

[54] Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha*, 49; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7.

[55] See, for example, Jorge, "La prostitución en Cuba," 62; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 34–35; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 3, 17, 19–25, 29–35; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 38–40, 162–64.

the sex workers themselves. For example, prostitutes who worked out of bars felt no kinship with streetwalkers, and reformers exerted considerable effort to convince them that they shared a fate. Havana prostitute Violeta recalled one woman who attempted to improve her standing by leaving the streets to work in a bar. But her efforts were unsuccessful, as the bar owner knew her to be "one of those [women] who whored [*puteaban*]" on the street.[56] Of course, this mattered little to FMC member Olga Ferrer, who later declared, "For me, the classes [of sex workers] that the women established did not really exist, as all of them were the same; they all performed the same services."[57]

But government officials did not merely modify preexisting definitions of sex workers, they also broadened the term. Women laboring or living in red-light districts fell into this category. According to former secret service member Andrés Alfaya Torrado (who wrote under the pseudonym Juan Vivés), so too did women who slept with foreign men. Former madam Estrella Marina Viñelas recalled that females who walked unescorted down city streets also occasionally risked being viewed as sex workers.[58] Indeed, early revolutionary reformers did not conceive of prostitution as an occupation or an identity. Rather, they defined sex work as a pathology of imperialism, one marked for extinction in the new era. But by identifying prostitutes by perceived sexual availability rather than wages, reformers demonstrated that an unwillingness to abide by gender norms could also be constructed as opposition to the revolution.[59]

During this campaign, reflecting on the fact that the campaign had led many *federadas* to enter Havana brothels for the first time in their lives, Secretary General Torres recalled: "We were a trifle romantic" about the door-to-door approach.[60] The Supreme Council selected Cubans without any formal training who were "ideologically sound, good revolutionaries, with a big heart, and a desire to solve problems." Very few of them had

[56] Juan Vivés (pseud.), *Los amos de Cuba*, trans. Zoraida Valcárcel (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1982), 238; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 17–19, 22, 30; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 38–39, 166; quoted in Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 24–26.

[57] Quoted in Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 39.

[58] Vivés, *Los amos de Cuba*, 238; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7; Viñelas, *Cuban Madam*, 145–46.

[59] Recasting the Cuban prostitute "as a symbol of the prostituted Cuban nation writ large" was nothing new. Sippial (*Prostitution, Modernity*, 8–9) demonstrates that reformers in republican Cuba associated prostitution with colonialism and viewed female sex workers as manifestations of a nation in need of rescue and advancement. See also Ernesto Cardenal, *In Cuba*, trans. Donald D. Walsh (New York: New Directions, 1974), 61–62; Castro, "Fidel Castro en la asamblea de los comités de defensa," 10, 18; Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha*, 50; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 38, 164; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 36–37; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 17–19, 22, 30, 36.

[60] Quoted in Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7.

any experience in rehabilitation.[61] When Lieutenant Olga Ferrer began working with the prostitutes, she was a self-described "spoiled girl" who wanted nothing more than to "run away from there." But like many other *federadas*, she became deeply committed to her work. FMC member Lidia Ferrer remembered, "I was convinced that I would persuade [the women] because I knew that I carried a powerful weapon in my hands . . . the truth."[62] Reformers dutifully replicated official discourse by informing sex workers that they were victims of capitalism, US imperialism, and the men who profited from their labor. They also offered the women alternative work options, vocational training, educational opportunities, and free childcare.[63]

In Guantánamo and Caimanera, officials justifiably viewed prostitution as a consequence of chronic unemployment and the proximity of the US naval base. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, US sailors had not only provided the chief source of revenue but also reinforced the imperial project and Cuba's inferiority; indeed, "access, control, and regulation of [Cuban] women's bodies and sexuality . . . was the way in which the US military presence exerted its strength on a daily basis and intervened in Guantánamo's social fabric."[64] Josefina Rodríguez was one of numerous rural women (*campesinas*) who had migrated to Guantánamo prior to 1959 to labor as housekeepers only to learn that a traveling *matrona* had actually recruited them for sex work. After splitting their earnings with the madam, many women remitted a portion of their earnings home to their families. US military personnel increasingly viewed all Cuban women as sexually available, not merely those classified as prostitutes. This notion was supported by the United Service Organization (USO), which arranged dances for US military officers and elite Cuban women.[65] These cross-cultural encounters did not always end with the cha-cha-cha. Resident Benigno Milia recalled, "Many [pregnant] bellies emerged from those dances."[66]

Revolutionary officials in Guantánamo began their campaign against sex work by intercepting trains that took upper-class Cuban women to USO-sponsored dances. The police apprehended over one hundred women in the first raid. After transporting them to the local precinct, officers registered the

[61] Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha*, 49; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7.

[62] Quoted in Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 38, 162, 165; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 21.

[63] Fidel Castro, "Fidel Castro en la asamblea de los comités de defensa," 18; Juan Vega Vega, "El proxenetismo como índice de peligrosidad: Un comentario a la Ley 993 de 1961," *Revista Cubana de Jurisprudencia* 3 (1962): 33–36; Daura Olema, "Hacia una vida nueva," *Bohemia*, 11 January 1963, 40–44; Teresa Díaz Canals and Graciela González Olmedo, "Cultura y prostitución: Una solución posible," *Papers* 52 (1997): 167–75, 169; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279, 279n7; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 162; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 36, 39n5; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 20.

[64] Lipman, *Guantánamo*, 110.

[65] Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 91–94, 104; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 36–37; Olema, "Hacia una vida nueva," 42; Lipman, *Guantánamo*, 110, 115, 117; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 29.

[66] Quoted in Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 113.

women and summoned their parents. Given that elite Guantánamo families had encouraged their daughters to fraternize with US military officers in the hopes of securing a marriage, the parents were surely furious at the police's unprecedented treatment of their daughters. Lieutenant Colonel Arturo Olivares Acosta later noted that bourgeois society once looked upon USO events with "pleasure" (*beneplacito*), as the dances occasionally resulted in an "advantageous marriage." Revolutionary reformers, however, rejected this socializing because it seemed to encourage sexual relations before marriage.[67] They perceived elite Guantánamo women as sexually accessible to US men and thereby categorized them as sex workers, thereby redefining prostitution in a way that painted all promiscuous women—particularly those who had sex with foreigners—as prostitutes.

Federadas deployed aggressive strategies to recover the prostitutes who worked in brothels, in boardinghouses, in bars, and on the streets of Guantánamo and Caimanera. They referred to this project as "rescatar y rehabilitación" (rescue and rehabilitation), illustrating the perceived moral component of their actions and demonstrating that they defined rehabilitation as a return to life as part of a nuclear family. In this region as elsewhere on the island, reformers saw their campaign as part of a larger social project aimed at reforming the Cuban family, preserving marriage, and encouraging higher birthrates. Before meeting with the women in boardinghouses and brothels, FMC members spoke with local madams, informing them of the impending reforms. MININT members recruited the help of families whose female members worked as prostitutes, summoning many from the countryside to collect their daughters.[68] By relying on the support and consent of parents to "rescue" sex workers, MININT reinforced the hegemony of paternalism, an ideology to which revolutionaries and nonrevolutionaries alike could adhere.

While the police officers who entered the brothels of Camagüey in March 1961 demonstrated a commitment to paternalism and family formation, sex workers initially responded to them with violence. One woman wielded a razor blade and sliced open the cheek of Officer Lorenzo Mora, and another pulled out a knife and tried to attack Mora and his partner, Officer Osvaldo Fleitas. The two men even had to fight off a prostitute who lunged for a weapon.

But while officials in Guantánamo sought to reunify women and their parents, police officers in Camagüey demonstrated a different kind of support for the family in serving as substitute partners, uncles, and fathers to the prostitutes. When questioned by journalist Darío Carmona about their experiences, Officers Mora and Fleitas stated: "We were a type of paternal

[67] Between 1931 and 1958 in Guantánamo, 101 Cuban women married US men. See Lipman, *Guantánamo*, 117, 124; quoted in FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 29, 31; Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 110–12.

[68] For information on notions of the family in early revolutionary Cuba, see Hynson, "Sex and State Making," 1–17; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 29–31.

police. We resolved [the sex workers'] most urgent problems: we assumed responsibility for their children, clothing, and personal situations. Now we have a great deal of respect for these women whom we helped escape from 'the tunnel.' For us, they are now a part of our family."[69] The men assumed responsibility not only for the welfare of the sex workers but also for that of their children. They informed Carmona that when the PNR determined that ex-prostitutes had sons and daughters who lived elsewhere, they located the children and reunited them with their mothers. Officers Mora and Fleitas viewed female sex workers as victims of madams, *chulos*, and partners who supposedly exploited the women and prevented their escape from prostitution.[70] But when police officers and *federadas* "rescued" sex workers from their perceived oppression, they rarely left the women unsupervised. The women were generally kept under the supervision of government officials tasked with overseeing the women's daily lives in order to ensure their continued rehabilitation.

The discourse adopted by the Camagüey PNR paralleled rhetoric deployed throughout the island, but the origin of their reforms differed from that of many other regional campaigns. Reformers in Havana, for example, only entered brothels after receiving orders from MININT. The "self-styled revolutionaries" or activists of Camagüey received no such commands from MININT, and the rehabilitation campaign arose on the officers' own initiative.[71] The credentials of their captain likely afforded them greater legitimacy. Led by former combatant and Communist Party member Captain Medardo Cabrera Portal, who had fought alongside Ernest "Che" Guevara, the police claimed to have only been inspired by their own sense of justice.[72] According to Guerra, men like these formed part of "an overly enthusiastic vanguard of educated and dedicated young people" who sought to further improve revolutionary society. Revolutionary leadership encouraged Cubans to consistently improve upon revolution ideals without considering that the country's youth might initiate reforms without state approval. For this reason, the new regime unwittingly encouraged these activists, inspiring them to reform the country, just as the police officers of Camagüey did in 1961 and 1962.[73]

[69] Quoted in Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 18–19.

[70] Ibid., 19, 21.

[71] Guerra uses the term "self-styled revolutionaries" to refer to individuals who sought to advance the revolution on their own terms rather than those defined by the government in *Visions of Power*, 8.

[72] Joel Iglesias Leyva, *De la Sierra Maestra al Escambray* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1979), 319–20; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 18.

[73] Diego González Martín, "Estado actual y perspectivas de la labor de la higiene mental," paper presented at the Conferencia Nacional de Instituciones Psiquiátricas, Havana, Cuba, 31 May 1963, reprinted in *La Habana elegante: Panóptico*, http://www.habanaelegante.com/Panoptico/Panoptico_Psiq_Conferencia.html, accessed 4 April 2013; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 8, 185, 256.

Like the antiprostitution endeavors in Havana and Guantánamo, attempts to reform the sex workers of Santiago, the capital of Oriente, began in 1961. But in this case, efforts originated with volunteer teachers and literacy workers (*brigadistas*) stationed in the city who formed part of a large movement to promote literacy on the island. The teachers entered brothels in Santiago and beseeched the prostitutes to attend class and give up sex work. *Federadas* followed the initiative of literacy workers, arranging meetings with the prostitutes, just as their colleagues were doing with Guantánamo sex workers.[74]

Phases Two and Three: Reeducation and Repression, 1962–1964

In early 1962, many provincial reformers turned their attention toward rehabilitation. Members of the FMC identified "reeducation" as the second step of the movement, which was preceded by "census, outreach, and persuasion." In Havana, Matanzas, Camagüey, and Santiago, reformers established reeducation centers and farms, where sex workers lived, worked, and attended school, while in other regions reformers sent local prostitutes to Havana's reeducation center. Although only a minority of former prostitutes took part in reeducation programs, those who did fell under fundamentally similar policies in what had become a federally coordinated program.[75] This transition exemplifies how the federal government assumed greater control over rehabilitation of sex workers, even as prostitution persisted and some reformers operated without official oversight.[76]

One illustration of greater federal oversight was the 1962 establishment of the Havana Granja América Libre (Free America Work Farm), which was located on the confiscated Miramar estate of revolutionaries turned counterrevolutionaries Amador Odio Padrón and Sara del Toro.[77] Over the next several years, more than five hundred sex workers would pass through its doors. Most originated from Havana, but some women traveled from as far away as Las Villas. The prostitutes arrived at América Libre in a variety of ways: at the recommendation of MININT, escorted by a *federada*, or unaccompanied. Following a medical exam, Director María Bosch placed

[74] Denise F. Blum, *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 48–49; Bunck, *Fidel Castro and the Quest*, 23–27; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 19.

[75] Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 163–64; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 3, 19, 25–26, 30–31, 35.

[76] See, for example, Amir Valle, *Jineteras* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta Colombiana, 2006), 193–95; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 256–89.

[77] Miramar was an upscale residential area of Havana. Margaria Fichtner, "César Odio's Low-Profile Style: He Sees Himself as Government's Good Gray Man—Competent, Not Flashy," *Miami Herald*, 31 July 1988, 1G; Luis Enrique Délano, *Cuba 66* (Santiago, Chile: Editora Austral, 1966), 158; Marcos Portnoy, *Testimonio sobre Cuba* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones del Litoral, 1964), 95; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37.

each woman in a thirty-person brigade consisting entirely of new arrivals. Bosch recalled that the sex workers were initially "dazzled" by the luxury of the rural manor, but their wonder quickly changed to disenchantment, and many subsequently tried to escape or commit suicide.[78] Those caught trying to leave faced punishment. Even those who had entered the work camp (*granja*) voluntarily could not choose when they left. In the same way that prostitutes often experienced persuasion and coercion as analogous and complementary methods of "capture," they remained inmates at rehabilitation camps for reasons that blurred the distinction between voluntary and compulsory.[79]

Inmates at América Libre followed a schedule carefully designed to create disciplined, productive, and gendered citizens. According to Oscar Fernández Padilla, then vice-minister of MININT, reeducation was a three-step process that involved instruction in political ideology, basic education classes, and collective labor.[80] In reality, there was little difference between the courses on literacy and those on politics. Similar to the nationwide "Battle for the Sixth Grade," in which peasants learned to read and write through the exclusive study of revolutionary reading material, América Libre residents followed a curriculum that included discussions of Fidel's speeches and films about the guerrilla war against dictator Fulgencio Batista.[81] Female instructors also led conversations about personal hygiene, sexual health, physical appearance, and proper conduct. Rehabilitation programs directed at former maids, teenage *campesinas*, and the wives of political prisoners relied on similar techniques to homogenize femininity according to revolutionary guidelines.[82]

As the most salient symbol of sexual eroticism, inferior culture, and the US violation of Cuba, the *mulata* quietly existed at the center of the anti-prostitution movement. It is no coincidence that María, the sex worker in

[78] There are no statistics for the rate of suicide at América Libre, but Cuba has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and Luis A. Pérez, Jr., argues that Cubans have historically relied on suicide as an expression of agency. See *To Die in Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Olema, "Hacia una vida nueva," 42; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 28; Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha*, 50; Salas, *Social Control*, 101.

[79] In recognition of their internment, I will refer to the former sex workers as inmates, as does Délano, *Cuba 66*, 158; and FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 28, 35, 43. See also Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 24; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 163, 164–66, 168–69.

[80] FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 26; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37.

[81] See the reminiscences of one former resident, Alicia, in Randall, *Cuban Women Now*, 248; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 191.

[82] C. A., "En la educación del pueblo está la gran fuerza revolucionaria," *Mujeres*, 1 December 1961, 10–11, 11; Justina Álvarez, "Serán más lindas las mujeres de los montes cubanos," *ANAP (Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños)* 1, no. 1 (1961): 15–17, 16–17; Lee Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel: An American Journalist's Inside Look at Today's Cuba in Text and Picture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 264; Délano, *Cuba 66*, 159; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 25–26; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7.

Soy Cuba, was a *mulata*. While the presence of the *mulata* was rhetorically obscured by discussions of class and cultural advancement, contemporary observers noted that revolutionary leaders conflated racial identity, cultural forms, and sex work. In 1970 Cuban dance instructor Teresa González lamented, "All the boys who went up to the Sierra Maestra with Fidel always believed that the [Afro-Cuban] rumba and prostitution were the same thing. . . . So our music and dance have been marginalized a little, because there are a lot of people at the highest levels of leadership—and I don't like saying so—who are ashamed of everything Cuban and think our culture is decadent."[83] As González observed in her conversation with Mexican dancer Alma Guillermoprieto, government officials appear to have viewed sex work as an expression of lower-class, Afro-Cuban culture, and their attempts to foment cultural "progress" revealed a revolutionary ideal that was defined as much by race as by class.

Antiprostitution reformers sought to improve the behavior, speech, dress, and other forms of cultural expression associated with lower-class women and women of color. While they made no reference to race in their quest to restructure Cuban forms of intimacy, officials adopted the early twentieth-century rhetoric of cultural evolutionism, which "based racial pronouncements on psychological or cultural criteria."[84] By early 1960, official conversations about class overshadowed prior conversations about racial inequality. But Cubans continued to talk about race, albeit in less obvious ways. Spanish exile and journalist Darío Carmona observed that during rehabilitation, many former sex workers "don't wear make-up and dress simply, as if they didn't want to call attention [to themselves]. One passes by, her heels clicking loudly. She swings her hips, but there are few who retain the custom."[85] By advocating for cultural improvement, reformers revealed the desire to reform Cuban sex workers according to white, middle-class ideals. They asserted that sex workers needed to abandon prostitution, engage in productive labor, and achieve cultural advancement.[86]

MININT officials and staff members at América Libre promoted a version of femininity that was middle class, white, and fashion forward. Director Bosch refused to release former prostitutes until "they carried themselves like normal women," a task that did not come easily to inmates raised in

[83] Quoted in Alma Guillermoprieto, *Dancing with Cuba: A Memoir of the Revolution*, trans. Esther Allen (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 60.

[84] Amando Fernández-Moure, Jr., *Ámbitos de la nacionalidad* (Puerto Rico: Cumbresa Ediciones, 1967), 134, 141; Robin Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920–1940* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1997), 10, 32; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 25; Valle, *Jineteras*, 194.

[85] Devyn Spence Benson, "Not Blacks, but Citizens! Racial Politics in Revolutionary Cuba, 1959–1961" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009), 128–29, 136; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 22.

[86] For references to cultural improvement, see del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37, 42; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 26.

rural poverty and with little education.[87] The staff believed that former sex workers had hairstyles that were "overornate" and inappropriate for revolutionary life, so they gave the women lessons in hairdressing. They also learned "better," ostensibly simpler, methods of makeup application. These seminars occurred in beauty parlors, where some inmates also received job training as hairstylists.[88]

The attempt to teach the residents of América Libre middle-class standards of femininity and comportment was also demonstrated in the courses on fashion. Although the former prostitutes wore uniforms while at América Libre, camp instructors wanted to ensure that they would acquire an "appropriate wardrobe" following their release.[89] In the process, the instructors revealed their assumptions about the inferiority of lower-class and Afro-Cuban culture, as reformers believed that sex workers would demonstrate revolutionary commitment and reform by modeling a simpler, socialist aesthetic, one that was ostensibly white.[90] Ironically, the América Libre staff lauded alternative hairstyles, makeup, and clothing at a time when body products, cosmetics, and fabric were increasingly unavailable on the island.[91]

Aside from these courses, residents of América Libre also engaged in collective labor and job training. The inmates were first sent to work at nearby factories, but many of them experienced significant discrimination and hostility from the other employees, particularly from other women. Secretary General Torres recalled that extensive efforts were required to eliminate the workplace discrimination.[92] It is seemingly to protect residents from this harassment that authorities approved the construction of a textile factory at América Libre. In this way, residents could learn a trade without leaving the compound. Senior inmates were still permitted to work outside the camp in local factories or laboratories. Administrators considered work to be a necessary part of the rehabilitation of former prostitutes. According to Director Bosch, it was important that the women "not have free time to think about things they shouldn't."[93]

[87] Quoted in Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 167.

[88] Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7; Salas, *Social Control*, 101; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 26; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 222–23; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37.

[89] Quoted in FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 25.

[90] Guerra discusses the importance of middle-class culture to the FMC activists at the Ana Betancourt School for peasant girls in *Visions of Power*, 222–23.

[91] Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7, 281; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37; Délano, *Cuba 66*, 158; Mohammed A. Rauf, Jr., *Cuban Journal: Castro's Cuba as It Really Is—an Eyewitness Account by an American Reporter* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964), 70–71; Évora Tamayo, "Vísteme despacio que voy de prisa," *Pa'lante*, 30 July 1964, 14.

[92] FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 26, 43; Salas, *Social Control*, 101.

[93] Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha*, 50; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 164–65, 167; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37–38; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7, 282; Olema, "Hacia una vida nueva," 43.

Another reeducation center was founded in Matanzas in 1962. As at América Libre, a combined program of work and study was created to reform the former sex workers, who were called "pupils" and taught seminars on etiquette, makeup application, and job skills. Rosi López, a Nicaraguan expatriate, cofounder of the center, and MININT employee, recalled that the institution was necessary so that former prostitutes "could be taught to work." Her belief that prostitution did not count as work experience paralleled that of criminologist Rosa del Olmo, who later claimed that former sex workers needed to be "taught how to work." While López asserted that the inmates "were not delinquents; they were more like the victims of capitalism," her inability to recognize prostitution as a legitimate form of labor painted prostitutes as exclusively victims and denied them the agency of having made their own choices. López was not alone in this evaluation. She was reflecting the general attitude of government authorities who argued that sex work was unnecessary to the revolution because it did not produce material goods.[94]

Believing that many former prostitutes did not love their children and had "traumatized" them, López and other staff in Matanzas relied upon group therapy and the help of psychiatrists to teach the women that there was "honor" in being a mother.[95] In an attempt to awake the supposedly dormant maternal instincts of former sex workers, MININT members promoted traditional notions of female worth while emphasizing the importance of nuclear families. Around the country, MININT and the FMC used information gained from the recent census to locate and reunite former prostitutes with their families. Staff members at the Matanzas center ensured that the children were in school or daycare, while reeducation centers in Havana and Camagüey opened on-site daycare facilities where children could stay while their mothers were in the program.[96] By encouraging the relationships between pupils and their children, reformers reinforced women's traditional role as nurturers and caretakers. The staff tried not only to "rescue" women from sex work but also to rebuild the nuclear Cuban family. In 1965 Director Bosch informed Costa Rican journalist Francisco Gamboa that thanks to help from MININT, "many [women] have become reintegrated into family life."[97]

For the former prostitutes of Camagüey, reeducation took place in a building that had formerly been a home for the elderly and that the police

[94] Quoted in Cardenal, *In Cuba*, 61; Hamilton, *Sexual Revolutions in Cuba*, 33; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37.

[95] Quoted in Cardenal, *In Cuba*, 61.

[96] In some cases, the family members received a stipend to replace the income the women would have earned as prostitutes (ibid.). See also Olema, "Hacia una vida nueva," 41, 43; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 21; Randall, *Cuban Women Now*, 238; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37–38; Délano, *Cuba 66*, 159; Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha*, 49–50. On efforts in Guantánamo and Havana, see FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 30–31.

[97] Quoted in Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha*, 50.

(PNR) renovated and renamed the Center for Artisanship (Centro de Producción Artesanal, or CPA) in February 1962. Within a year, the CPA housed 218 mostly *campesina* women between the ages of fifteen and seventy-two. This included several former madams plus fifty children of sex workers.[98] Overseen by Director Carmen Viamontes, *federadas*, and volunteer teachers, the inmates attended classes on writing and arithmetic, learned basket weaving, improved their sewing skills, played sports, and farmed the fifty acres of land surrounding the center. Like Director Bosch, Director Viamontes believed that reeducation should last no less than one year. But the CPA was unique in also housing approximately fifty children. Director Viamontes had quickly grown weary of consoling so many lonely mothers, as she later told her granddaughter, and after the opening of the center, she coordinated efforts with the FMC to make it possible for the inmates to keep their children with them. For some women, this was a significant adjustment, since they had not previously lived with their children. This policy demonstrates the overlapping agendas of the PNR, FMC, and Director Viamontes to eliminate prostitution, encourage maternalism, and strengthen the Cuban family.[99]

Since official discourse categorized sex workers as innocent victims who could not legitimately consent to prostitution, it is not surprising that Camagüey *federadas* and others employed paternalistic rhetoric that infantilized the former sex workers. After visiting the CPA, Darío Carmona wrote glowingly of the facility and the care provided to the "women without a past." One of the staff members he interviewed spoke about the need "to reeducate these women, recuperate them, and instruct them."[100] Both of these statements hint at the rebirth and renewal expected of the inmates, a process that required constant supervision and patience. Demonstrating the prevalence of paternalistic attitudes in reeducation efforts, Director Bosch of América Libre insisted upon meeting women's fiancés when they became engaged so he could tell the men about "the responsibility that they were assuming."[101]

Yolanda Carbonell, then president of the FMC in Oriente, similarly assumed a maternal role with the former prostitutes of Santiago. In March 1962 *federadas* founded La Fortaleza (The Fortress) house and the América Lavadi School, the latter named after a 1930s female martyr for Communism.[102] Efforts to rehabilitate and insure the "cultural progression"

[98] FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 34.

[99] Elena María Palacio Ramé, "Gioia mía en La Habana," in *Piezas para armar nuestra memoria (Antología)*, ed. Nora Franco (Havana: Ediciones La Memoria, Centro Cultural Pablo de la Torriente Brau, 2004), 77–88; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 15, 17–18, 21–23, 21–24; Portnoy, *Testimonio sobre Cuba*, 95, 106; Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 167; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 38.

[100] Quoted in Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 15, 20.

[101] Gamboa, *Cuba en marcha*, 50.

[102] José Duarte Oropesa, *Historiología cubana: Desde 1959 hasta 1980* (Miami: Ediciones

of the 150 inmates closely resembled policies at the other institutions I have described: former prostitutes learned to sew, garden, and dress in a more "appropriate" fashion. Carbonell worked alongside twenty-seven other *federadas*, and she recalled that they would occasionally accompany the inmates on trips into town "so that they could see that we had no prejudices in terms of going out with them, and we told them that one day they would come to be better than us." Carbonell believed that this engagement produced an atmosphere of trust that made it much easier to encourage the women to transform themselves into good mothers and proper revolutionaries.[103]

Despite the efforts of reformers, many prostitutes refused to abandon sex work. Women resisted reform at every step of the campaign. As we have seen, high-class prostitutes with money and means generally left the country.[104] But many others remained and operated out of cabarets, bars, and hotels. In some cases prostitutes even found safety from government efforts to reform them in their clients' homes. According to journalist Amir Valle, there were also whole new types of prostitution. Some women, for instance, began offering sex to government officials to obtain the jobs that had been vacated by émigrés and political dissidents. This was particularly common in the entertainment industry, which offered the possibility of international travel and escape from the island. Another example of the changing nature and continued prevalence of prostitution is the fact that by the mid-1960s, sex workers were targeting tourists in order to acquire the goods that were by then only available in foreigner-only stores.[105] Dulce Zumbado recalled that during this period "there was a lot of money but nothing to buy in the stores."[106] Nearly everything was rationed, and nylons were particularly difficult to find. Little wonder that former secret service member Alfaya Torrado knew of women who worked "in exchange for products horribly lacking in Cuba: a pair of shoes, a dress, a pair of stockings, or some dollars."[107]

While revolutionary leaders sympathized with the difficulties faced by sex workers prior to the revolution, they could not understand or accept the continued existence of prostitution. In October 1961 Fidel declared that sex work was a "social evil" (*lacra social*) and "a consequence of the regime of exploitation, one man by another." A staff member at the Camagüey

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Universal, 1993), 22; Enrique de la Osa, *Crónica del año 33* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1989), 32.

[103] Quoted in FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 27–28, 33, 41. Translated by García, "(Re)covering Women," 142.

[104] Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 20; Randall, *Cuban Women Now*, 237; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 35; Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 111.

[105] Vivés, *Los amos de Cuba*, 238–39; Valle, *Jineteras*, 196; Rauf, *Cuban Journal*, 160–62.

[106] The names of all interview subjects have been anonymized. Interview with Dulce Zumbado (pseudonym) by the author, 19 December 2011, Havana, Cuba.

[107] Vivés, *Los amos de Cuba*, 239; Rauf, *Cuban Journal*, 69–70.

CPA echoed this sentiment when she declared, "Prostitution emerged easily from misery, ignorance, and hypocrisy. . . . But now it doesn't fit with the cleanliness and essence of a Socialist Revolution."[108] Because reformers believed that women became and remained prostitutes exclusively because of economic hardship and exploitation, many were convinced that sex work could be abolished by eliminating *chulos* and providing the women with education and jobs.[109]

But when presented with the opportunity, many women rejected reeducation. Violeta, a former Havana prostitute, declared, "Many of us opposed the change. . . . Some alleged that they did not know how to do anything else besides sex work, that they did not have a head for letters or numbers. There was no shortage of women who said that they were too old [to change]."[110] In response to resistance, police officers began harassing and arresting prostitutes, even as reformers met with the women to stress the importance of reeducation. In many regions, threats and coercion had become commonplace by late 1962 and 1963, encouraging many sex workers to leave the island, abandon their work, or become more discrete in their practices. Those who remained symbolized to government officials the continued presence of prerevolutionary norms.[111]

Between 1959 and 1965 various health agencies conducted research in order to determine why sex workers would refuse reeducation. Dr. Amando Fernández-Moure, Jr., took part in one of these studies, and he claimed that a large number of Cuban women had "overactive libidos" that they satisfied through prostitution. He declared that the women suffered from what was commonly known as "uterine fire" (*fuego uterino*). According to Fernández-Moure, women of mixed Spanish and African descent were more likely to experience this sexual compulsion. He argued that when combined, the social and biological idiosyncrasies of these races created the "Latino," a race endowed with an uncommon and intense desire for sex. According to

[108] Castro, "Fidel Castro en la asamblea de los comités de defensa," 18; quoted in Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 15.

[109] See, for example, Castro, "Fidel Castro en la asamblea de los comités de defensa," 18. See also Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 15; Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 110; Portnoy, *Testimonio sobre Cuba*, 106.

[110] Quoted in Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 110. See also Délano, *Cuba 66*, 156; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 20, 35; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 279n7.

[111] Fidel Castro, "Discurso pronunciado por Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente de la República de Cuba, en el acto de la clausura del Primer Congreso de los CDR en el XVII aniversario de su fundación, en la Plaza de la Revolución, Ciudad de la Habana," 28 September 1977, in *Discursos e intervenciones del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente del Consejo de Estado de la República de Cuba, Government of Cuba*, http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1977/esp/f280977e.html, accessed 15 April 2013; Salas, *Social Control*, 102–3; Díaz and González, "Cultura y prostitución," 169; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 15; Valle, *Jineteras*, 193–96; Fernández Robaina, *Historias de mujeres públicas*, 111; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 35; Cruz Díaz, *Guantánamo Bay*, 134.

Fernández-Moure, about three thousand women between twenty-one and twenty-eight years of age claimed to suffer from uterine fire. Their quest for biological satisfaction, asserted Fernández-Moure, underscored why so many prostitutes rejected rehabilitation. While Fernández-Moure relied on science to explain the sexual urges of "Latina" women, his conclusions were nothing new.[112]

Fernández-Moure merely repackaged and reinforced existing notions about *mulata* sexuality, blaming race and gender for the continued existence of sex work. As Vera Kutzinski has argued, discussions about *mulatas* indicate "areas of structural instability and ideological volatility in Cuban society, areas that have to be hidden from view to maintain the political fiction of cultural cohesion and synthesis."[113] By pointing to *mulatas* as the explanation for the persistence of sex work, Fernández-Moure revealed the value that government leaders placed on the antiprostitution campaign and their willingness to blame prostitutes of color for its perceived failures.

In reality, prostitutes of all races faced pressure to change.[114] But because the *mulata* had been "lionized in verse and song as a skilled and compliant temptress" since the 1830s, it is likely that some white sex workers were invisible to reeducation reformers. Cubans today incorrectly believe that most of the island's prostitutes are people of color.[115] The same was likely true in the early revolutionary period.

Relocation and Job Placement

Having failed to convince every prostitute of the merits of rehabilitation, authorities directed their attention toward preventing recidivism and reeducating sex workers. After inmates learned to read, work, and carry themselves like "normal women," administrators organized a graduation ceremony. Commenting on her participation in such events, former sex worker Pilar López González recalled: "The comrades from the Ministry told us our graduation meant that we no longer owed anyone a debt. From that moment on, they said, we were just like everybody else; we had earned a place in society."[116] Through this ceremony, former prostitutes were symbolically reborn as revolutionary citizens and ushered into the new Cuban society.

[112] Fernández-Moure, *Ámbitos de la nacionalidad*, 134, 141; Valle, *Jineteras*, 194.

[113] Vera M. Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban Nationalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 172.

[114] Foreign visitors to reeducation centers often mentioned the inmates' races. See, for example, Portnoy, *Testimonio sobre Cuba*, 165; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 21–22.

[115] L. Kaifa Roland, *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 38; T. J. English, *Havana Nocturne: How the Mob Owned Cuba and Then Lost It to the Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 211; Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 14; Sippial, *Prostitution, Modernity*, 89–91.

[116] Quoted in Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 284. See also Séjourné, *La mujer cubana*, 167; Salas, *Social Control*, 101.

Some entered jobs assigned to them by the Confederation of Cuban Workers (Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, CTC), and they began working in factories, shops, and farms. A large number of former prostitutes became taxi drivers in Havana. Others found jobs as prison guards on the Isle of Pines. The FMC and other organizations hoped that existing employees would welcome and support former prostitutes in their new jobs. Director Viamontes organized outings to nearby factories and farms so that employees could meet their new coworkers and learn to accept them as peers. Nevertheless, the women still often encountered discrimination from employees who rejected the idea of working alongside former prostitutes.[117]

In addition to finding jobs for former sex workers, the government also assigned them housing. Just as they had done with the inmates' future employees, reformers met with the neighbors of rehabilitated women, knocking on their doors and informing them that the women "had been victims of the previous system, and that now, through work and education, they had taken on new lives—that the Revolution considered them to be ready to rejoin society."[118] Some individuals returned to their original houses, while others received apartments near their new jobs. Pilar moved into a house owned by a man who immigrated to the United States. When possible, the offices of Urban Reform assigned women homes that were big enough to also hold their children. In the midst of housing shortages in Havana, the government also occasionally assigned housing to former sex workers before granting accommodations to ordinary citizens. While authorities attempted to alleviate discrimination against rehabilitated prostitutes, their task was surely made more difficult by the official privileges granted to the women. When helping former *chulos* find jobs, government authorities encountered resistance from existing employees who were frustrated at the preference given to former social deviants.[119] It is likely that former sex workers confronted similar rejection from Cubans desperate for employment or homes, especially in an era of chronic housing shortages.[120]

[117] German Wettstein, *Vivir en revolución: 20 semanas en Cuba* (Montevideo: Editorial Signo, 1969), 56; Palacio Ramé, "Gioia mía," 80–81; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 38; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 35, 42; Portnoy, *Testimonio sobre Cuba*, 104; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 286.

[118] Del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 38.

[119] The government both constructed new housing and confiscated homes left empty by Cubans who fled the country. These houses were then distributed to individuals without housing and tenants living in substandard dwellings. Carrie Hamilton, "Sexual Politics and Socialist Housing," *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (November 2009): 608–27; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 42; Randall, *Cuban Women Now*, 248; del Olmo, "The Cuban Revolution," 37–38; Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon, *Four Women*, 284–85; Salas, *Social Control*, 101.

[120] For discussions about the chronic housing shortage that emerged in Havana in 1963–64, see Paula E. Hollerbach and Sergio Diaz-Briquets, *Fertility Determinants in Cuba* (New York: Population Council, 1983), 63; Barent F. Landstreet, Jr., "Cuban Population Issues in Historical and Comparative Perspective" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1976), 150, 205; Rauf, *Cuban Journal*, 164; Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba*, 105.

The End of the Official Campaign, 1964–1965

Prior to the end of the national campaign, provincial reformers had been closing brothels and reeducation facilities and transferring prostitutes to the still-operational CPA and América Libre.[121] In 1962 Santiago reformers shipped sex workers who remained in the city to the CPA and formally declared an end to the antiprostitution campaign in Santiago. At the same time, MININT members in Las Villas closed local brothels and sent the women who consented to *reeducación* to América Libre. The former tourist destinations of Guantánamo and Havana seem to have been the last holdouts in the battle against sex work, and prostitutes who continued to work in the capital city encountered increasing pressure to accept rehabilitation and limited space in which to practice sex work. The final drive against Havana prostitutes began in 1964, and those who still remained the following year faced internment or hard labor. After this, Cuban officials ceased to view sex workers as victims and recategorized them as counterrevolutionaries. Revolutionary leadership believed that women who rejected reeducation were in effect repudiating the revolution and its opportunities. This shift was also reflected in a process of internal reorganization within MININT.[122]

Former secret service agent Alfaya Torrado noted that prior to 1965, the Department of Social Ills (Departamento de Lacras Sociales) at MININT oversaw the antiprostitution campaign and the broad regulation of sex work. But by middecade, these activities had come under the purview of the Mundana, a subsection of MININT and the Cuban secret police (G2), which recruited the help of Soviet specialists to restructure its organization.[123] Under the Mundana, prostitutes, presumed homosexuals, intellectuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, would-be émigrés, and other opponents of the regime were much more likely to be incarcerated or blackmailed into reeducation.[124] The most symbolic illustration of the transition was the conversion of América Libre into a prison for female dissidents. Within months of the reorganization, the Mundana established Military Units to Aid Production (Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción), better known as UMAP camps. In these work camps, officials sought to reform "individuals whose attitudes and behavior were perceived as being non-

[121] The CPA eventually closed in 1967.

[122] Castro, "Discurso pronunciado por Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente de la República de Cuba, en el acto de la clausura del Primer Congreso de los CDR en el XVII aniversario de su fundación, en la Plaza de la Revolución, Ciudad de la Habana," n.p.; Carmona, *Prohibida la sombra*, 15; Vivés, *Los amos de Cuba*, 236–38; FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 33–35; Salas, *Social Control*, 101–3; Jorge, "La prostitución en Cuba," 67; Díaz and González, "Cultura y prostitución," 169; Valle, *Jineteras*, 194–95.

[123] The G2 was also a part of MININT. See Vivés, *Los amos de Cuba*, 236.

[124] Guerra notes that 1965 was a turning point for the revolution, as the second half of the 1960s "marked a critical phase in the construction of a society in which scrutinizing attitudes and silencing dissent would become normalized as necessary in the fight against US imperialism" (*Visions of Power*, 227). See also Vivés, *Los amos de Cuba*, 237–38.

conformist, self-indulgent, and unproductive—in short, nonrevolutionary by the standards of the revolution."[125] Havana resident Arnaldo Agüero described how authorities had sent him to a UMAP camp because he was "a member of the bourgeoisie, a stigmatized group." At least one all-female UMAP camp existed in Camagüey, which held women presumed to be lesbians or sex workers. According to Torrado, the Mundana especially targeted women (and men) who dated or slept with foreigners, threatening to charge them with prostitution if they did not agree to serve as spies. When faced with the possibility of hard labor or jail time, many individuals "consented" to work for the Mundana, serving concurrently as sex workers and informants.[126]

By entrusting the Mundana with oversight of the country's sex workers, government authorities officially ended the reeducation campaign. Mundana agents followed in the footsteps of previous antiprostitution government campaigns in equating prostitution with sexual availability, but instead of treating the women like victims of economic circumstances, the Mundana coerced these women into working for the revolution by laboring as spies.

On 1 May 1966 Fidel declared that the revolution had "nearly eliminated" prostitution; his pronouncement symbolized the supposed success and culmination of the campaign against sex work.[127] But sex work persisted on the island, and not just prostitution sanctioned by the Mundana. The graduates of reeducation centers sometimes returned to their former occupation, other individuals never abandoned sex work, and untold numbers of women began to practice prostitution, often out of economic necessity. Authorities attempted to limit recidivism by asking CDRs to watch rehabilitated sex workers and report on any recidivists, while *federadas* and MININT officials also periodically met with reeducation center graduates. Yet despite experiences with model inmates who professed a desire to become good citizens, many women who were released from the reeducation centers never showed up for their assigned jobs and presumably continued to practice sex work.[128]

[125] For interviews with prisoners formerly interned at América Libre, see Mignon Medrano, *Todo lo dieron por Cuba* (Miami: Fundación Nacional Cubano Americana, 1995). See also Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays*, 65.

[126] Interview with Arnaldo Agüero (pseudonym) by the author, 20 December 2011, Havana; Cuba Vivés, *Los amos de Cuba*, 238; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 254.

[127] Fidel Castro, "Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba y Primer Ministro del Gobierno Revolucionario, en la conmemoración del Primero de Mayo, Día Internacional del Trabajo, en la Plaza de la Revolución," 1 May 1966, in *Discursos e intervenciones del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente del Consejo de Estado de la República de Cuba, Government of Cuba*, http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1966/esp/f010566e.html, accessed 17 April 2013.

[128] FMC, *Programa a la atención*, 42; Valle, *Jineteras*, 195; Fernández-Moure, *Ámbitos de la nacionalidad*, 163; Salas, *Social Control*, 101.

Other prostitutes practiced without hindrance throughout the first half of the 1960s. It appears that the reeducation campaign overlooked sex workers in small towns like Artemisa, where women only faced (unofficial) rehabilitation in the second half of the decade. In 1967 a resident of Mayarí, a town in Oriente province, noted that increasing economic difficulties led to an increase in the number of part-time prostitutes.[129] As journalist Amir Valle notes, sex remained an important means of acquiring foodstuffs, clothing, and jobs, which government regulation had made increasingly inaccessible. Despite Fidel Castro's claims to the contrary, the revolution had not produced material wealth for most Cubans, and women continued to resort to sex work in order to purchase eggs, diapers, dresses, and other goods.[130]

By the 1970s, government leaders identified sex workers as delinquents rather than victims. In a June 1971 speech commemorating the tenth anniversary of MININT, Fidel placed prostitution in the category of social crimes. While still asserting that sex work had been eliminated, he argued that "eradication does not mean that [crimes] cannot appear or that individual signs of prostitution, sex trafficking, gambling, and drug trafficking do not indeed appear on a small scale. . . . But certainly, as institutions, they have been eradicated. Nonetheless, we should be alert. And we should not simply believe that because the politics of the Revolution in this country are just that they are also humane."[131] Rather than viewing sex workers as victims or seeking to rescue them from the exploitation of foreigners and sex traffickers, Fidel painted sex workers as "dangerous" (*estado peligroso*). In 1977, when the revolutionary leadership began to worry that sex work was on the rise, Fidel proclaimed that "with the Revolution, prostitution became a crime."[132] He conveniently ignored the first several years of the revolution, when prostitutes received sympathy, support, and rehabilitation

[129] Quoted in José Yglesias, *In the Fist of the Revolution: Life in a Cuban Country Town* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), 190.

[130] Fidel Castro, "Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba y Primer Ministro del Gobierno Revolucionario, en la inauguración de las obras de San Andrés de Caiguanabo, Pinar del Rio," 28 January 1967, *Discursos e intervenciones del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente del Consejo de Estado de la República de Cuba, Government of Cuba*, http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1967/esp/f280167e.html, accessed 17 April 2014; Monika Krause-Fuchs, *Monika y la revolución: Una mirada singular sobre la historia reciente de Cuba* (Tenerife, Spain: Centro de la Cultura Popular Canaria, 2002), 87, 95; Vivés, *Los amos de Cuba*, 239; Guerra, *Visions of Power*, 257; Cardenal, *In Cuba*, 20; Valle, *Jineteras*, 196.

[131] Castro, "Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente de la República de Cuba, en acto conmemorativo del X aniversario de la creación del MININT, celebrado en el Teatro de la CTC," n.p.

[132] Castro, "Discurso pronunciado por Fidel Castro Ruz, Presidente de la República de Cuba, en el acto de la clausura del Primer Congreso de los CDR en el XVII aniversario de su fundación, en la Plaza de la Revolución, Ciudad de la Habana," n.p.

from government reformers. These pronouncements foreshadowed the 1979 law that classified sex workers as precriminals for "conduct observed to be in clear opposition to the norms of socialist morality."[133]

Conclusion

The Cuban antiprostitution campaign illustrates how government reformers enforced revolutionary ideals of femininity, motherhood, and sexual and racial normativity upon sex workers and other women. When prostitutes rejected rehabilitation and revolutionary norms of femininity, they faced repression and even incarceration, highlighting the legal component of the standards by which they were gauged. I have argued that the agency and initiative of provincial reformers were essential to this campaign, especially throughout 1961. But while the methods of reeducation differed, nearly all reformers initially relied on a discourse of paternalism and maternalism to rescue prostitutes from their supposed victimization under capitalism. This rhetoric infantilized the women and allowed them autonomy only once they accepted the gendered norms of the revolution. The sex workers who accepted reeducation became important symbols of revolutionary advancement, while those who continued to practice sex work became scapegoats for the perceived failures of the campaign. The twenty-first-century Cuban government continues to classify sex workers as counterrevolutionaries, underscoring the persistence of early revolutionary gender norms and the legacy of the antiprostitution campaign.

About the Author

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[133] Ley No. 21 Código Penal, 28–30 December 1978, in *Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular: Cuba*, http://www.parlamentocubano.cu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=236:ley-no-21-codigo-penal&catid=46:leyes&Itemid=79, accessed 25 April 2013; Salas, *Social Control*, 102–3; Ley 993, in *Gaceta Oficial*, 24687–88.