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Boletín Martiano



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Boletín Martiano

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

Editor: Denis Rey, Ph.D.

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Message from the Editor

By Denis Rey, Ph.D.



This January the Center for José Martí Studies Affiliate (CJM-SA) at the University of Tampa held its inaugural conference, *Envisaging José Martí in 2021: History, Culture, and Education*, in commemoration of the birth of the great Cuban hero and intellectual. Drs. Denis Rey and James Lopez, who co-direct the center, teamed up with Dr. Kenya Dworkin, professor of Hispanic Studies and Translation at Carnegie Mellon University, and Dr. Lisa Nalbone, associate professor of Modern Languages and Literature at University of Central Florida, to organize the biannual event. The three-day conference proved a huge success, with close to 30 presenters comprising eight eclectic panels ranging in topics from gender to journalism. This year's meeting showcased the work of many of the NEH Scholars who participated in the 2019 NEH summer institute, *José Martí and the Immigrant Communities of Florida in Cuban Independence and the Dawn of the American Century*, also hosted by CJM-SA and the University of Tampa. The conference began on January 28 –Martí's birthday—with readings from authors who touched upon the people and places that we find so interesting. In this edition of *Boletín Martiano* we publish excerpts of those readings starting with Dr. Joy Castro, Willa Cather Professor of English and Ethnic Studies at the University of Nebraska, who shares the opening chapter from the novel she is currently writing, *Smoke*. Next is a passage from the recently published *A Latino Memoir: Exploring Family, Identity and the Common Good*, written by Dr. Gerald Poyo, O'Connor Professor in the History of Hispanic Texas and the Southwest and chair of the history department at St. Mary's University. His work is followed by a reading from *When 'HISTORY' and 'history' Meet: Memories of a Tampa Cuban Girl in the Land That Tobacco and Revolution Built*, a delightful memoir by local West Tampa community historian Maura Barrios. In closing, Gabriel Cartaya, a renowned scholar of the writings of José Martí and the Spanish-language editor of *La Gaceta*, Tampa's trilingual newspaper, shares a passage from his book, *Domingos de tanta luz*. Dr. Kenya Dworkin, professor of Hispanic Studies and Translation at Carnegie Mellon University, who translated the book, also provides an introduction. I hope you enjoy reading these selections as much as we enjoyed listening to them.

SMOKE: A Novel

Joy Castro, Ph.D.

for those who burn

“You are not in your right mind.”

“That is quite possible; but let me continue.”

—Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*, 1870

Just after dusk on the evening of Friday, August 12, 1898, when the heat of the day had passed—the bank’s mercury thermometer read only 82 degrees—my mother and I, both freshly scrubbed, perfumed, and dressed in our finest after the long workday, entered the San Carlos to play bolita.



It was a very ordinary Key West night. A soft, salt-scented wind blew through the open windows, stirring the cloth of our skirts against our calves and sifting the tendrils that escaped down the backs of our necks. The men were in their best dark trousers and white guayaberas, the thin pleats crisply pressed, and the women wore bright sleek dresses that bared their collarbones and more—unless they were quite old, in which case they wore sober black and pursed their mouths at the rest of us. Little clusters—couples, families, friends arm-in-arm—promenaded from room to room, pausing, chatting, moving on, as waiters whisked through, offering little glasses of sherry and thimble-sized cups of cafecito from round trays. Children raced about, laughing, playing tag or hide-and-seek. Gauzy blue veils of cigar smoke hung in the air.

Strains of music wafted from the ballroom, where couples whirled in each other’s arms, oblivious to the rest of us.



Though already eight years old, the San Carlos was still new enough to inspire admiration, and as we strolled we waxed rhapsodic, as Cubans will, remarking with pride upon the sweeping staircase of white marble imported from the Isle of Pines, the Moorish arches as high as those of any palace in Havana (or so claimed those who’d been there), the walls shimmering with hand-painted tiles in shades of turquoise and teal that would put peacocks to shame. The ballroom glittered with real chandeliers.

Key West’s Cuban community had long outgrown the original San Carlos, the little wooden one on Anne Street founded by the first wave of ragged refugees, and after the second San Carlos around the corner on Fleming Street—the one I’d known best—burned to the ground, we’d saved and donated and debated architectural

sketches for four years. This new San Carlos gave us grandeur, and it belonged to us all.

It was a glamorous and stately affair. From its lending library, we borrowed books. In its lounges, we met to sip coffee. The gallery of portraits showed off our heroes—Simón Bolívar, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, José Martí, and a stern array of generals—as well as our queen: the Virgin de la Caridad del Cobre. Upstairs were the schoolrooms where I gave lessons in Spanish and English to children of all shades. In the mahogany-paneled conference room, the Cuban leaders of the town, men and women, black and brown and white, argued and planned and collected funds for the passion that united us all: Cuba's fight for independence.



My mother and I drifted slowly toward the theater, where the winning bolita ball would be drawn. Her ticket, I knew, was safely folded in her reticule. Each week she invested a nickel of her profits from the boardinghouse, hoping for the eighty-to-one payoff that could turn five cents into four dollars, as much as she earned from a cigar factory worker for a whole week's room and board.



Across the wide and crowded hallway, a man yelled something about Spain—"those gutless bastards"—and gave someone a shove. His companions merely burst into raucous laughter, lifting their drained sherry glasses, and nodded, clapping him on the shoulder. Frustrated, he stormed away, weaving a little as he exited.



It was understandable. We were all on edge. The United States had joined our war against Spain in June. Each day, reports came on the telegraph cable from Havana, and we all held our breath, hoping that President McKinley and his generals really could wrest our homeland, the Pearl of the Antilles, from the grip of Spain's imperial lion—if only to grab her in their own paws, many of us feared. There were many ways to own another nation, and the United States seemed good at all of them.

The North Americans had been fighting for two months, but we Cubans had been at war our whole lives, from the moment thirty years ago when plantation owner Carlos Manuel de Céspedes freed his slaves and took up arms in 1868, when the Ten Years' War began. Since then, our tiny coral island at the tip of the United States had become not only a prosperous and bustling village, thanks to the cigar industry, but a tinderbox of Cuban revolution, a rebel base for the insurgency. Even when official truces were called, the skirmishes did not stop on Cuban soil. Wounded guerilla soldiers came to us to recuperate, and we gathered funds and weapons to send them back across the sea to fight. All of us had lost men. My mother had worn widow's black when I was a child.

Key West had also seen more than our share of riots and strikes. Because disgruntled cigar-workers could catch a steamer to Tampa or New York or even back to Havana any week of the year, factory owners had to listen to their demands, which they hardly enjoyed. And because the lectors—hired by the cigar rollers

themselves—read aloud in the factories not only three newspapers a day but the work of radicals like Marx and novels by Hugo and Tolstoy, the workers had restless minds, as well. During strikes, we supported our own. We had our own grocers and bakers and teachers. Half the population of Key West was Cuban.

But no one liked not working. There weren't enough dominoes in the world to fill the time, which hung heavy in the hands of men and women accustomed to rolling a hundred cigars a day.

Yes, we were all on edge.



The red velvet chairs of the theater, with its sweeping balcony and high stage, seated three hundred and fifty souls, and they were filling up fast. My mother and I settled ourselves in a row near the front, and she drew her folded bolita ticket from her reticule, rubbing it with her thumbs for luck. People streamed in, milling about in the aisles, chattering. At nine o'clock precisely, six men would ascend the stage and toss the bolita bag to each other until the hundred numbered ivory balls were thoroughly mixed. Then the town's beauty du jour would climb the steps, grip one ball, hold it tight while it was cut free from the bag with scissors, and cry out the winning number.

A shout erupted at the back of the theater, and my mother and I spun in our seats, craning to see. "Telegram!" A lone hand shot above the crowd, clutching and waving a slip of yellow paper. "Telegram from Washington! They've signed the protocol!"

My mother gripped my arm, her dark eyes wide, as we stumbled to our feet. All around us, the crowd exploded in deafening cheers. People grabbed and kissed each other. Men lifted the telegraph-office boy onto their shoulders and paraded him down the center aisle. The bolita bag lay forgotten on the stage.

My eyes searched the crowd until they found Roméo, standing several rows behind us with his wife. Our eyes locked. I didn't move, didn't change my expression, didn't lean even slightly in his direction; his wife clung to his arm.

His gaze bore into mine. Was he, too, remembering that night a dozen years ago?

My mother squeezed my arm.

—My daughter. Like so many, she was weeping openly with joy. My daughter. Can it be true?



The ruckus took time to die down. But eventually—when we'd been kissed and embraced six dozen times, when celebratory sherry had been poured and drunk and poured and drunk again, when the lectors and their acolytes had opined loudly about how it would still be months before any treaty could be signed (the conference wouldn't even begin until October, in Paris, they said)—I took my mother's arm.

—Mama. I feel tired.

If I'd simply suggested that we leave the festivities, she'd have resisted with every stubborn fiber of her body.

But she'd always had a weakness for my feelings—since I expressed, I suppose, so few.

—Yes, let's go, then, my daughter. She patted my hand, and we made our way through the happy throngs.



The night was dark and soft. Clouds covered the moon as we made our way back to the boardinghouse.

—This will change things, my mother said, glancing at me. Maybe it will be safe to go to Cuba now.

We walked between the palm trees and shuttered houses.

—And maybe people will come back here, she continued, now that the fighting's done. Old friends, maybe.

—Mama. Enough. I'm middle-aged.

—You're twenty-nine.

—As I said, I laughed. Twenty-nine and a schoolmistress and a spinster.

—Prettiest schoolmistress on the island.

—Mama, I'm not looking for a husband.

Her smile was sly.

—Did I say anything about a husband?

We walked on through the quiet streets.



In the shadowed front room of the boardinghouse stood a vast mahogany china cabinet, my mother's pride and showcase, a far cry from the raw wooden shelves that had held tin plates in my childhood. I wanted to be alone, but she lit a lamp and stood near me, watching, as I reached into my small handbag, snapped open the tiny coin purse, and withdrew its sole contents, a brass key, from where it lay nestled in the satin folds. I turned it in the lock and pulled open the china cabinet's center drawer, the one my mother had given me as a place to store my teaching certificates and important papers.

I drew out the old Las Flores cigar box, adorned with its two bare-breasted beauties, mirror images of each other, one light, one dark, floating on clouds of roses, with a misted green view of Cuba behind them.

I turned and set the box on the dining table and sat down, trying to ward off the strange sensation in my knees, as if they had begun to liquefy. My mother pulled out the chair next to mine. We had chairs now, up-

holstered with needlepoint cushions, not the rough benches of my childhood. Her boardinghouse had flourished, but it was my schoolteacher's wages that had finally bought the things for which my mother—raised in slavery, married to a penniless journalist, and widowed young—had always dreamed.

I would not regret my choice. I had promised myself never to regret my choice.

—Ay, said my mother, reaching out to draw a finger across the long black braids of the dark beauty. To be young again.

A tremor ran through my hands as I opened the box.

Inside: a small white shell, pearly. I set it on the table. A single brown tobacco leaf, so brittle with age that, though I drew it out carefully, fragments broke away, crumbling at the gentlest touch of my fingertips. Below lay stiff sheets of paper, thrice folded to fit: broadsides, printed with poems. I didn't need to open them to hear their lines echo in my mind. I lifted them out and set them aside.

And there they lay: ghost faces. From the bottom of the box gazed a cast of characters from a dozen years ago. A shudder of pain ran through me.

—Ay, how beautiful, my mother said. So young and beautiful.

It was a photograph, taken before I knew I'd never see most of them again.

We girls stood in a row, formally arranged for the pageant—I remembered holding my smile until my cheeks ached. The young men hovered at the periphery.

—Look at you all, she said. All of you. So young, so innocent.

I swung my eyes to her.



March 30, 1886. That night of terror, the air was black and windy—flames leapt from house to house. Our little island's only firefighting steam engine had been hauled north to New York for repairs, so we had to hurl by hand each precious drop of water we'd collected in cisterns as the military firemen used hand pumpers—to no avail. Choking clouds of black smoke billowed. The air rippled with unbearable heat. Each face wore a mask of rigid desperation lit by flames as we worked with buckets to save what we could—which was, finally, so little. Scraps. Frantic, we watched in speechless horror as our small city, the center of our world, roared up in flames that seemed unstoppable.

More than six hundred homes were swallowed by the fire that night: six hundred families without shelter. Eighteen of the cigar factories that furnished the livelihoods, directly or indirectly, of everyone we knew, burned to the ground. Churches. Warehouses. City Hall. Grown men sobbed in the streets.

Was it accident or arson? The authorities investigated, but they could never prove a thing.

We only knew it turned our lives to ash.

•

The next day, bleak crowds lined the docks, gripping their valises, shuffling numbly onto the steamship that waited—too conveniently?—to take them to Havana or north to Tampa, where the owners of newly built cigar factories needed their nimble fingers but would not tolerate the labor strikes that happened in Key West. I saw the stoicism in the émigrés' eyes: that beaten expression that says, Again, my life collapses. Again, with nearly nothing, I cross the water to a strange and unknown land. I clutched my mother's hand as we watched our neighbors disappear.

My friends and I were all so young, only seventeen or eighteen—except Feliciano, the dashing Galician lector with his fiery speeches about anarchism and liberty, and even he was only twenty-four. All so young. Yet we thought we were grown up: wealthy Sofia fluttering her lace fans, flaunting her status as the daughter of a factory owner; Roméo, the poor young cafetero, kind and silent, his hesitating eyes unsure; Maceo, dark like me and named for a hero, the brave and handsome soldier who fought a brutal undertow. And Chaveta, the girl named for a knife, my companion, my comrade, my conspirator—gone now, all these years, scattered to the winds by that night of flames.

And I, Zenaida—reluctant beauty-pageant queen, daughter of a slain Havana printer and the freed slave woman who ran Key West's cleanest boardinghouse—I brimmed with secrets of my own.

I looked down at our small fading faces. It's true we were all so young then, so fresh and full of hope and desire: desire for freedom, desire for a future in which we could believe. Desire for each other.

Young: yes. And fresh, and eager.

But not innocent.

—No, I said to my mother. Not so innocent, I think.



Dr. Joy Castro is the Willa Cather Professor of English and Ethnic Studies at the University of Nebraska, an award-winning novelist, short story writer, and essayist. She also happens to be the great-granddaughter of Cuban emigres to Key West who were deeply involved in the political movement of which Martí would later become the leader. Her collection of essays about Key West, *Island of Bones*, was awarded the 2013 International Latino Book Award, and was a finalist for the Pen Center USA Literary Award. Her novel *Flight Risk* is forthcoming in October 2021.

From: A Latino Memoir. Exploring Identity, Family, and the Common Good

Gerald E. Poyo, Ph.D.

The first part of the book is a family memoir of four generations while the second part speaks to how those generations influenced my life. I will read a brief passage from each part.

Passage 1: "Ambiguity": Francisco Andres Poyo (b. 1872, Key West- d. 1961, Havana)

Contextual information:

Son of José D. Poyo who returned to Cuba in late 1898

Cigarmaker in Key West, baseball player, manager & umpire in Havana and worked for Havana city government.

Raoul Alpizar Poyo was Francisco's cousin and biographer of Poyo

A humorous and talkative abuelo often took his grandsons to see their favorite baseball team, Almendares, at Estadio Tropical and regaled them with tales of his own career as a player and umpire. He showed them letters addressed to his father from José Martí and independence war generals Máximo Gómez, Antonio Maceo and Calixto García. He explained how together they had struggled for a nation. They also experienced a brooding abuelo. The family retellings were never very detailed, but the anecdotes suggested an unhealthy dichotomy that pitted Pancho's love of Cuba that he acquired in Key West against his disappointment in the aftermath of the family's return.

Many times Pancho said he could have gotten rich working at his job in Havana's municipal offices. Many did. Despite the independence wars' goal to rid Cuba of tyranny and corruption, he said that Cubans in the end acted just like Spaniards because "we carry their blood in our veins." Not at first, but eventually, ambiguity colored Pancho's attitude toward Cuba. If José Dolores' generation cultivated nationalism, Pancho's generation faced disconcerting confusion in the face of United States interference and Cubans' acquiescence to that reality.

As a practical matter, the Cuban republic inaugurated on May 20, 1902, succumbed to the political, economic, and cultural influence of the United States, provoking different kinds of reactions. Cubans had little choice but to participate and collaborate with the new but deeply flawed republic. The only alternative was returning to the insurrectionary field, a difficult option in the face of overwhelming United States military power and proximity. Those who did paid with their lives. Some Cubans concluded that the nationalist project had done what it could and turned their attention to making a living within the new neocolonial situation as best they could.

Pancho's struggle for economic security reflected the dilemma facing thousands of unemployed or underem-

ployed Cubans in the American-dominated economy. With limited options in the private economy, they looked for government work, and Pancho landed a municipal job in Havana. By his own account, Pancho's awareness of the intricate world of Cuban corruption began with his work in city government. At all levels, government officials accumulated power and wealth through political patronage and public corruption, but they could do little to promote the interests of the Cuban business class.

Pancho took Cuba's deficiencies to heart; not only had his father spent his life fighting to create a republic, but his own life had been defined by that nationalist world in which he was raised. It all seemed for naught. My father's stories suggested that Pancho's greatest disappointment was with Cubans themselves. Pancho knew well the consequences of the United States imposed Platt Amendment for Cuba, but blamed Cubans for most of the country's problems. It mattered that Americans pursued their own interests and structured economic and political matters for their advantage, but Cubans should have acted with honesty, integrity and concern for national dignity. Pancho remembered that his father had stood defiantly against those who preferred annexation to the United States, declaring that the Cuban people were perfectly competent and capable of ruling themselves. In his newspaper writings, José Dolores Poyo had also frequently pointed to corruption as one of the fatal flaws of Spanish colonialism, and now Pancho saw Cubans fall into a state of profound corruption in politics and civic life. They struggled for economic and political advantage over each other without concern for Martí's revolutionary ideals expressed in the phrase Cuba "for all, and for the good of all." These were the "bad Cubans," Pancho's nephew Raoul Alpízar Poyo later called them.

Passage 2: "Turmoil of Ethnic Politics"—Autobiographical

Contextual information:

I was born in NJ of a Cuban father and American mother, but grew up from ages six months to eighteen years in Colombia, Venezuela & Argentina.

I arrived in US to attend university in 1968

My first visit to Key West and Tampa was July 1975

I entered a doctoral program in Latin American history at the University of Florida in August 1975

I possessed an unconventional sense of Cuban Americanness that resided in family memory and history as well as later in the contemporary Cuban community experience. Learning of Cuban Americans in Key West and Tampa came first. Exploring this much earlier Cuban story in Florida helped me sort out my ambiguous identity and begin to come to terms with my displacement from Argentina.

In the nineteenth century, Key West had received José Dolores Poyo and thousands of Cuban immigrants who participated in converting the small fishing village into a major cigar-manufacturing center. A statue of José Martí dedicated in 1932 graces Bayview Park. The historic San Carlos Institute building, which had been the

Cuban community's most important civic and education center still existed, but now sat empty and closed on Duval Street. Now-a-days, tourists visiting Key West regularly gather on the waterfront to witness beautiful sunsets and enjoy the entertainment of jugglers, mimes and other entertainers along with food vendors on the same waterfront where thousands of Cubans, including my family, had arrived from Havana beginning in 1868 to escape Spanish persecution.

At a phone booth, I checked the directory for family surnames. No one with the Poyo surname lived in Key West anymore, but I did find Ana Alpízar, someone no doubt related to the Poyo-Alpízar line. She lived on Bahama Street, more an alley than a street, packed with small and modest wooden cottages known as shotgun houses, originally built for the cigar workers in the late nineteenth century. Confirming the address, I climbed the couple of steps onto the small porch of one small house and knocked. A tiny elderly woman opened the door, and I introduced myself. She smiled when she heard my surname.

Ana stepped out, and closed the door behind her. She offered me a seat on one of several wooden chairs on the small porch. She was in fact Raoul Alpízar Poyo's widow, grandson of José Dolores Poyo and author of the biography I had recently read. She knew my great-grandparents Pancho Poyo and [his wife] Louisa Skillin in Havana. She proudly told me about Bahama Street, known to Cubans as Callejón de Poyo, and pointed to a funeral home at the end of the street. "That is the house where José Dolores lived." She told me that Raoul idolized his grandfather, as did all the Poyos of that generation.

A more formal event precipitated a second visit to Key West the next year with a colleague. We visited the abandoned Instituto San Carlos. A delegation of the elderly club officers greeted us and offered me a formal welcome, as if I were a returning native son. As descendants of the traditional Cuban community, they knew of José D. Poyo and his role in founding the institute. It occurred to me at that moment that Key West was my family's original American space.

Ana Alpízar told me that a relative of my great-grandmother still lived in Key West. I knocked on the door of a middle-class home and introduced myself to a woman about fifty-five-years old. "Is Carmen Delgado available?" I asked. She observed me with suspicion and then with some hesitation announced that her mother-in-law was ill and suffered from dementia. I apologized for troubling her and, just as I turned to leave, I heard from the interior of the house, "¿Quién es? Oí algo de Poyo."

An 80-year-old-woman appeared at the door behind her daughter-in-law and demanded, "Who are you?"

"Luisa Skillin was my great-grandmother," I answered.

"¡Mi tía!" she exclaimed! She pushed her daughter-in-law aside and grabbed my hand saying, "Pase, pase," and walked me into the living room. "I have so many questions," she said.

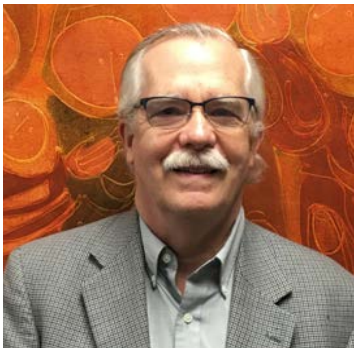
Descended through my great-grandmothers's sister, Carmen Delgado was born in Ybor City, Florida in 1896, the same year my grandfather was born in Key West. She married and moved to Key West in 1920 and raised a son.

She filled me in on the family genealogy, demonstrating full control of her faculties. This was my only encounter with her, but she and Ana Alpízar left me with a sense of the Poyo family's connection to this town and its historical Cuban American community.

Latin American history remained my primary interest, but I found myself spending more and more time thinking about these Florida communities as part of a Cuban American experience that extended long before the mass arrival of Cubans after the triumph of Fidel Castro in 1959.

Key West became the local community I never experienced in my youth. In South America, my parents never even spoke about belonging to a particular locality, just the United States. I was taken with the idea of our family having descended from this Key West Cuban multiracial working-class community--a very different world from mine. That became my fascination.

I carved out a niche for myself exploring the Cuban historical communities within the context of a broader Cuban American story that gave me the confidence to call myself a Cuban American scholar. I settled into my career writing Cuban American history while following the trajectory of the Cuban Revolution and teaching Latin American and US Latino history. This research took me to Cuba for the first time in 1979 when I was twenty-eight years old.



Gerald E. Poyo is O'Connor Professor in the History of Hispanic Texas and the Southwest at St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas. In 1983, he received his PhD in Latin American history from the University of Florida. His research has focused on the intersection of Latin American and U.S. Latino history, especially on the history of Cuban exile communities in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the origins of Tejano communities in colonial and Mexican Texas, and Latino history narratives. He is the author and editor of eight books and numerous academic articles. His most recent books is *A Latino Memoir: Identity,*

Family, and the Common Good (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2019).

Excerpt from *Memoir of a Tampeña* in *Remembering Cuba* Andrea O'Reilly, editor

Maura Barrios



My research on Tampa-Cubans started with a course on Cuban history with Louis A. Perez, Jr. in 1992. I spent the next year reading every document I could find on los cubanos de Tampa. My puzzling past, my own identity began to make sense as I spoke to the ancestors in quiet libraries.

Like most immigrant stories, lo Tampeño includes mythical homelands and a brave new world, forgetting and remembering, two languages, negotiation skills, multiple identities, chronic culture-shocking change -- and resistance.

Andrea asked the Question (the secret code) When did you leave Cuba?

The image shows a handwritten ledger or account book. It consists of a grid of approximately 10 columns and 30 rows. The columns contain various entries, including names, dates, and numerical values. The handwriting is in cursive and appears to be from the late 19th or early 20th century. The paper is aged and slightly yellowed. The ledger is divided into sections by vertical lines, and there are some larger, bolded entries or headings. The overall appearance is that of a historical financial or administrative record.

My family has been leaving Cuba for more than one hundred forty years. Our exile began in 1878 when my great-great grandfather, Innocente Jose Alvarez, encountered a Spaniard who said "The women of Cuba are whores." Jose responded by hitting the Spaniard on the head with a kerosene lamp. The family of ten fled Guanabacoa in a boat that landed in Cayo Hueso ---- the first balseros! It was the Cuban Ten Years War. They left Cuba in order to live. My grandmother was a very patriotic cubana, so she may have invented that story.



My great-grandmother, Juana Alvarez, married cigar-maker Jose Saldaña. They moved between Key West and Barrio Cayo Hueso de la Habana. Juana's generation shaped and defined the tabaquero-cubano communities of Key West and Tampa. They transplanted their Cuban culture to the Florida swampland of the 19th century. They were the Vanguard of Jose Martí!



Abuela *Pepilla* defined Cuban-ness (*cubanidad*) for me: a dignified presence, a clean style --coifed, powdered and perfumed, an attitude --proud, self-assured and opinionated. There is a Cuban *vanidad* -- *cu-vanidad*! I learn that WE are the prettiest, wittiest, most generous, most cultured people in the Americas.

My parents' generation marked the transition from cubano to americano; a confused process. They called themselves cubanos though they had never been in Cuba. They spoke two languages -- and mixed them up. "Ay, que cute!" They loved Hollywood movies and Spanish movies. They went to the Circulo Cubano where they danced cha-cha on the patio and big-band americano music in the ballroom. Real Cuban Americans.

Lost in America, I had to recover me in the histories of Cuban tobacco and Key West factories and Abuela Pepilla and Juana and Guanabacoa and Bejucal and la Habana and Santiago de las Vegas.

I Am Born Again Cuban.



La vida in black and white

Our little black and white television provided instruction

On how to behave american.

In our TV jackets with TV dinners,

We studied hard!

But those narrow hips and thin lips

And Betty Crocker pies

Would not fit, no matter how hard we tried.

They seemed obsessed with getting things white. In black and white we watched police use dogs and hoses,

The caravan of bloody limousines.

And Ricky Ricardo didn't prepare us for

Fidel and Che and Camilo



Abuela Pepilla 1955

We speak English now,
except with Abuela Pepilla,
who has refused to learn.

We speak less and less;
but I listen to the conversations around the garlic kitchen table
at her house on Calle Cherry.

She wants me to learn to remember.

We take the bus to Ybor City, and the Circulo Cubano.

I recall white dresses, white roses, white sun, a white marble head – it is Jose Martí.

“He is father of OUR country who led the fight against the Spaniards!”

Later I asked, (wanting to be),

“Abuela aren’t your ancestors from Spain?”

She scowled, she wrinkled her nose and stated firmly: NOSOTROS SOMOS CUBANOS!!



Exiles on Main Street

My father built a Cape Cod house on Calle Main, surrounded by McFarlane Park.
We left poverty and abuelos behind in the barrio of Llegá y Pon to join America.
The house invited many; family and friends for Noche Buena feasts.
The park invited many; new neighbors with names like Davis, Wallace and McCaffrey.
The morenos were not allowed in the park.
When they came, a cross was burned
in front of the public swimming pool.
Now a mural of Antonio Maceo and Jose Martí on horseback—
look down on the morenos playing basketball at Macfarlane Park.



Abuela Pepilla 1960 Cuba si, Yankee no

I arrive from school to find Abuela Pepilla in deep conversation
with Fidel and the Revolution
At school I have learned the terrible news.
I say, "Abuela, you are a communist!"
She unplugs the radio, takes it to her room,
turns it back on at high volume
and continues her conversation
with the Revolution

JUXTAPOSED

The Gasparilla parade on Bayshore: the "night" parade in Ybor.
The Cold War: The Hot War at the kitchen table
TV moms: Our mothers worked
Father Knows Best; my Pop didn't own a tie
Cuba Si: Yankee No



McCarthyism: W. Tampa Houses splattered with red paint
The Rosenbergs executed: The executions of batistianos on TV
Eisenhower and Nixon: Fidel and Che
Fear of Russian Invasion: The Cuban Missile Crisis Science Fiction Movies: The Red Blob
Rugged Individualism: Family comes first
Jim Crow and the one drop rule: mi negra, mulatta, morena triguena
US Imperialism: Third World Alliance
Lawrence Welk: Machito's Mambo



Maura Barrios (Alvarez) is a community historian focused on Tampa's Cuban immigrant neighborhood of West Tampa and on the connections between Tampa, Florida and Cuba. Maura curated the 2006 Ybor State Museum exhibit, "Tampa Y Cuba: More Than 100 Years". In 2004 she received a major grant from the Florida Humanities Council to direct the 'community autobiography' -- "Our West Side Stories: *Voces de West Tampa*". Maura earned a MA degree in Latin American History from University of South Florida, 1998. She has published works in *Remembering Cuba*, Andrea O'Reilly, editor; 2000; *Hispanic Outlook*; 1999; *Cigar City Magazine*; 2004-2006. Maura was founding member of the Oye Latino radio program on WMNF, Tampa. She has presented her work at Latin American Studies Association, Florida International University-Cuban Research Institute, Latino Arts and Culture Institute at San Antonio, Texas; New College of Florida, Tampa Bay History Center, Carnegie Mellon University, University of Houston, University of Tampa Center for Jose Marti Studies Affiliate.

Maura served as Associate Director of the Latin American Studies Center at University of South Florida, 1997-2004; and retired from the USF Department of History 2014.

***Domingos de tanta luz* by Gabriel Cartaya (review)**

Kenya C. Dworkin y Méndez

Historian and writer Gabriel Cartaya's *Domingos de tanta luz* (Ediciones SurcoSur, 2019), in Spanish, is about the last months, twenty Sundays, to be precise, of Cuban freedom apostle José Martí. It is an extremely well-researched book and truly engaging work of creative non-fiction. By focusing primarily on Martí's arduous work in the United States to orchestrate the final Cuban war for independence from Spain, and his ability to organize myriad people and details in the U.S., Cuba, and internationally, to support the onset of a well coordinated and supported uprising in 1895, provides an extremely intimate portrait of Martí's essentially indomitable spirit. Through exhaustive archival research and interpretation, Cartaya has been able to artfully recreate or give 'voice' to myriad interactions with comrades, enemies, and loved ones in the U.S., other international locations and, in Cuba. This provides readers with sensitive and historically supported insight into the literary and revolutionary giant and lays bare his frequent emotional highs and lows, thus creating a more humanized portrait of a man whose stature in history and literature far exceeds that of the vulnerable human being he was.

Remarkably, Cartaya based the complexity of his subject by meticulously extrapolating information—private and public—from Martí's own correspondence, e.g., his own letters, telegrams, and diaries, and those of his personal correspondents, e.g., revolutionaries Máximo Gómez, Antonio Maceo, Enrique Collazo, Manuel Mantilla, Tomás Estrada Palma, etc., and his most intimate loved ones, e.g., his mother Leonor Pérez Cabrera, Marta Mantilla, Carmen Zayas, Bazán, and so many others. The image that emerges from this carefully reconstructed material is that of man struggling against unimaginable odds to fulfill his dream of Cuban independence. Cartaya slowly but masterfully reveals a Martí who eventually realizes that nothing short of his very own martyrdom will suffice to bring this desire, and leaves the reader with a sense of somehow accompanying the patriot through his private trials and tribulations, right until his untimely end at age 42 while fulfilling what he considered his ultimate service to his country. In penning an episode just one week prior to 'the' end, Cartaya, with his rare gift of creating intimacy from bits and pieces of diaries and letters, is able to instill the Cuban countryside and a steed with consciousness, as he personifies the last two and describes Martí as is about to embark on first and final foray into battle:

For Martí, it is not his first ride; some corner of the Cuban countryside—in Hanábana—had seen him pass before on a bridled steed when he was nine years old. He rode in the U.S., Central America, and the Caribbean, but no mount—not even the spirited Dominican one lent to him by his friend Toño Calderón—was like this particular one. The same was true for the steed: no other man born who had mounted him was like this rider on him now (p. 99, my translation).

An deeply emotional read, It reveals the true humanity of this hero and is a truly special look inside the mind and heart of a great thinker, writer, strategist and, above all, patriot. In an effort to reach a broader, English-language audience, *Domingos de Tanta Luz* historical is now in the process of being translated by a bilingual

Cuban studies scholar, and further commented and footnoted by the author, himself. It should be professionally published in affiliation with the University of Tampa's Center for Martí Studies Affiliate and available for purchase sometime in 2021.



Dr. Kenya Carmen Dworkin y Méndez was born in Havana, Cuba, but raised in New York City. Totally bilingual in Spanish and English, she is a professor of Hispanic Studies and Translation at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA; a scholar of Cuban history, literature, and culture, and U.S. Latinx and Sephardic studies; and serves on numerous editorial and research boards in the U.S. and abroad. Over the past 25 years, she has been studying the pre-1960 Tampa Cuban community's history, theater, and culture. In Pittsburgh, she volunteers as the Executive Director of Coro Latinoamericano, Co-President of the Latin

American Cultural Union, and Co-Director of the CMU Hispanic children's outreach program, CIRCULO. She is also Founder and Director of CubaCivica.

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So Much Light: The Last Twenty Sundays of Cuban Freedom Apostle José Martí

Gabriel Cartaya

He had made it through a taxing but very emotion filled week. It was the afternoon of the 15th, and the sun was setting when they told him that due to his all his service he was being promoted to the rank of Major General of the Liberating Army. This took place at the foot of a ravine. High up the mountain, while in an embrace, he felt humbled: "... they were equating my miserable life with their own arduous ten years of fighting,"⁵⁹ he wrote to Gonzalo. Afterwards, using a table covered with palm fronds to support himself, he wrote to Estada Palma: "The light is now within me."⁶⁰ He confessed to him that now that he was in his homeland, his body was finally healthy, something he and others had sought after using so many methods. Yet, his glee did not detract him from the neverending work he had to do, even when there were hardly enough hours in the day.

Great fortune is too important not to share. He writes Carmita that he has finally come into his own, achieved complete fulfillment, and that he was feeling tremendous joy. In that same Tuesday letter, which was for everyone at Carmen's house, he wrote: "I am well supplied, my María, with a rifle on my shoulder, my machete and revolver at my waist, a satchel filled with a hundred casings on one shoulder, and a large tube containing maps of Cuba on the other; on my back, I have my pack with more than 11 kilos of medicine, clothes, a hammock, blanket, and books. He wrote all that in the paragraph dedicated to María, adding that he kept her photograph by his heart."⁶¹

So it was he and the other men continued traversing that tough terrain of wet forests and sharply angled flanks—like in Pavano—rocky debris in dried up streambeds, swollen rivers that chilled you to the bone, and unavoidable, spiny scrubland; they were always traveling west, searching for the Guantánamo region, and knew they were being pursued by squadrons of native-born mercenaries paid by the Spanish government. On Sunday the 20th they arrived at Palenque, with its impressive landscape: "... we are surrounded by mountains, pointy and sharp; a jagged countryside is unfolding all around us: the sea is to the south."⁶² It was the Imías region, where Martí sleeps in a palm frond hammock strung up amidst the lush mountain's vegetation.

Sunday the 21st there was a half-day's journey that started at 6AM. They came close to San Antonio del Sur as more locals start joining their small group. After crossing the Sabanalamar River, leaping from stone to stone like the local country folk did, they set up a new campsite at a place known as Madre Vieja, in the jurisdiction of Guantánamo. From there, they send a message to Coronel Pedro A. Pérez, the entire region's leader, and wait for his response. Nearly all the country folk protect, guide, and feed them, but many among them also join the troop. A perfect example of this is Luis González's visit to them every Sunday. He was a veteran of the Ten Years War and was now accompanied by a brother, son, and nephew.

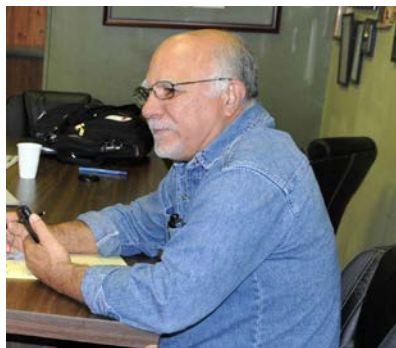
They were enjoying the best lunch they'd had on this entire arduous march when Luis arrived. He had wanted a honeycomb as an aperitif and was already about to enjoy it. Just when he had barely had his first taste,

someone threw a pit-roasted pig surrounded by sweet potatoes on some palm fronds. [Martí writes that] No sooner had he taken the first bite when "... out from the road comes a beautiful, elderly, black man... Luis lifts me with his embrace." Just in time, they all shout at once, finding space for him at the large table, and then engaging in animated conversation. The cassava root González brought is placed on a light colored tablecloth. But the first words heard overshadow the joy on all their faces: "What terribly sad news! Is it true that Flor has died? Brave and gallant Flor?" Luis does not totally accept what he has just heard, although it had been painfully true since April 10th. The next day, they receive confirmation of the news with dramatic details: "Juan, from the squads, was there; he saw Flor; dead, his beautiful head, cold; his lip split; and two bullet holes in his chest."⁶³

That Sunday afternoon, April 21st, they are in Madre Vieja, where they can rest for at least two days. While there, Martí spoke a great deal with Luis González, his son Magdaleno, and other humble, simple men from the Cuban countryside. Our sensitive author offers us a few beautiful glimpses that have passed on to posterity and become history. That is what happens with Luis, about whom he leaves a detailed description in his *Diario*: "Luis... he is beautiful, with smiling eyes... and teeth, his very short, grey beard; and his spacious and serene countenance, with its rich, black color... The total beauty of his agile and majestic body can only emanate from the peace in his soul."

That afternoon, Martí integrates newly acquired knowledge to everything he has been learning about the medicinal value of Cuban plants from people in the know because they've been using them as the only remedies available to them even before their time. The Apostle jots everything down, preserving it all: "Today I saw a *yaguama* tree, [he writes] with its phenic leaves, whose carbolic acid stops bleeding and mere shade benefits the wounded." They explain to him how to accomplish this: thoroughly crush the leaves and introduce them into the wound; that should suffice. He also learns some tricks regarding hikes through mountains on dark, moonless nights. It was old man Luis who explained to him "how to keep wax candles from going out while on the road, which was to thoroughly drench canvas and tightly wrap it around them."⁶⁴ Luis knows so many things! Each dusk he goes into town, only to return later with new provisions.

The next day, Martí, along with some of his comrades, enjoys a good bath in the wide Sabanalamar. While there, he also washes his blue clothes, which are heavily perspired, due to the arduous, hilly journey. The pride and joy with which he observes both nature and the men —sentiments sullied only by the death of Flor—fill him with indefatigable strength. At his side, the Generalísimo continued to be impressed by him, someone whose actions rose far above the limits of what it seemed he could physically accomplish. Even remarking about this magnificent impression he had in his *Diario de Campaña*, Gómez wrote: "Martí, who we assumed to be the weakest one due to his lack of experience with the exhaustion these marches can produce, remains strong and fearless ..."⁶⁵



Gabriel Cartaya. Oriente, Cuba, 1951. Se desempeñó como profesor de Historia, durante más de 20 años, en la Universidad Pedagógica de Granma, Cuba. Es Máster en Estudios de América Latina, El Caribe y Cuba, por la Universidad de La Habana. Especialista en la obra de José Martí, sobre cuyo tema ha publicado los libros *Con las últimas páginas de José Martí*, Editorial Oriente, Cuba, 1995; *José Martí en 1895*, Bayamo, Cuba, 2001 y *Luz al universo*, Gente Nueva, La Habana, 2006. Publicó el libro de cuentos *De ceca en meca*, Editorial Betania, Madrid, 2010. Ha participado en múltiples eventos internacionales relacionados con la obra de José Martí e impartido conferencias sobre este tema en universidades de Cuba y Estados Unidos. Es fundador y director de la Revista *Surco Sur*, de arte y literatura hispanoamericana, publicada digitalmente por la Biblioteca de la Universidad del Sur de la Florida. Actualmente es editor en español del periódico *La Gaceta*, en Tampa.